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EDITORIAL

Por: Dr. Dennis P. Petri, editor en jefe

Siempre es una gran satisfacción presentar una nueva edición de *Derecho en Sociedad*, una revista que pronto celebrará dos décadas de existencia.

Desde nuestra última publicación, hemos continuado con los esfuerzos de modernización, profesionalización e internacionalización de la revista. Entre otras acciones, seguimos ampliando nuestro comité científico y el cuerpo de revisores pares, incrementando el rigor de nuestro proceso de evaluación. Asimismo, hemos decidido publicar exclusivamente artículos científicos —dejando de lado ensayos u otros formatos— con el propósito de ofrecer contribuciones significativas a la comunidad académica.

En este número, el lector encontrará ocho artículos: tres en español y cinco en inglés. Sus enfoques disciplinarios son variados, abarcando desde el derecho hasta reflexiones propias de las relaciones internacionales, la filosofía y las ciencias sociales en general.

Dos de ellos, el de Thomas de Bruin (sobre el impacto del crimen organizado en actores religiosos en México) y el de Dagoberto Valdés-Hernández (acerca de una dimensión poco estudiada del régimen autoritario comunista cubano: el daño antropológico), fueron elaborados en el marco de nuestra cooperación con *Canopy Forum*, la plataforma digital del *Center for the Study of Law and Religion* de Emory University, Estados Unidos. Por su parte, el artículo de Bryan Acuña Obando (sobre el papel de Turquía en la geopolítica de Medio Oriente) se enmarca en nuestra colaboración con el *Centro Costarricense de Estudios Interdisciplinarios sobre Israel y Medio Oriente*.

Me llena de orgullo que esta edición incluya los resultados de trabajos de tesis de dos estudiantes a quienes tuve el privilegio de dirigir en mi etapa como profesor en la Universidad de La Haya de Ciencias Aplicadas: Thomas de Bruin y Brian Bruggeman. El trabajo de este último, sobre educación para la paz, se nutrió de una pasantía realizada en la Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología, durante la cual contribuyó a sentar las bases de una línea de investigación institucional que sigue en desarrollo: la promoción de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en el sector privado.

También me complace haber brindado la oportunidad de publicar a dos colegas con quienes he compartido oficina, física o virtual: Luis Alberto Fierro (quien evalúa el impacto de la segunda presidencia de Donald Trump en las políticas económicas, exteriores y científicas de Estados Unidos) y David

Gamboa Solano (quien analiza la compleja interacción entre la elección racional y las limitaciones ideológicas en la evaluación de políticas públicas en América Latina).

El artículo de Niels de Nutte examina el contexto social y la jurisprudencia de casos polémicos de eutanasia en Bélgica, mientras que el de Benito Villanueva Haro aborda la problemática de la vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral en el Perú, un asunto de gran relevancia en el debate constitucional contemporáneo.

Quisiera destacar especialmente el trabajo de Dagoberto Valdés-Hernández sobre Cuba. Como revista centroamericana, es fundamental que sigamos prestando atención a la realidad de nuestra región, la cual, lamentablemente, no recibe la cobertura que merece en Costa Rica.

Mi más sincero reconocimiento a los autores, revisores y a los integrantes de nuestros comités editorial y científico, cuyo aporte ha hecho posible esta edición.

Confío en que la lectura de los trabajos originales aquí reunidos les resulte tan estimulante como enriquecedora.

ARTICLE

Lighting the spark? Murder Trials in the 1960s and 1970s
in the Liège Court of Assizes and Their Influence on Belgian
and International Attention for the Issue of Euthanasia

¿Encender la chispa? Los juicios por asesinato celebrados en
los años sesenta y setenta en el Tribunal de Primera Instancia
de Lieja y su influencia en la atención prestada por Bélgica
y la comunidad internacional a la cuestión de la eutanasia

Niels de Nutte ¹

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Abstract

Euthanasia, which has been pluriform in its content throughout history, has been a part of human society. Although the practice of actively shortening the life of a fellow human being - whether as mercy killing or at his or her request - was punishable by law in Belgium, ethicist and advocate of a self-chosen end of life Hugo Van den Enden argued that legal convictions were strongly decreasing from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, making use of the options of “irresistible moral pressure” [*onweerstaanbare morele druk*] or “murder with extremely mitigating circumstances” [*moord met extreem verzachtende omstandigheden*]. This paper examines the wider societal context and legal reasoning used in three cases that were prosecuted before the Liège Court of Assizes. The trials took place between 1960 and 1974, and each resulted in the defendants’ acquittal. In addition to the internationally (in)famous Softenon trial, mercy-killing cases from 1972 and 1974 are also examined. For Belgium, this period constitutes somewhat of an intermediate stage in the history of euthanasia. On the one hand, end-of-life advocacy groups would only emerge in the early 1980s, with the French-speaking *Association pour le Droit de Mourir dans la Dignité* (ADMD) in 1981 and the Dutch-speaking *Recht op Waardig Sterven* (RWS) in 1983. On the other hand, significant levels of acceptance for mercy-killing practices already existed among the secular part of the population as early as 1950.

Keywords:

Euthanasia, mercy killing, softenon, end-of-life, murder trial, dementia

Resumen

La eutanasia, de contenido pluriforme a lo largo de la historia, ha formado parte de la sociedad humana. Aunque la práctica de acortar activamente la vida de un semejante - ya sea como homicidio piadoso o a petición suya - estaba penada por la ley en Bélgica, Hugo Van den Enden, especialista en ética y defensor de la autoelección del final de la vida, argumentó que las condenas legales comenzaron a disminuir considerablemente a partir de los años sesenta y setenta, recurriendo a las opciones de “presión moral irresistible” [*onweerstaanbare morele druk*] o “asesinato con circunstancias extremadamente atenuantes” [*moord met extreem verzachtende omstandigheden*]. Este artículo examina el contexto social más amplio y el razonamiento jurídico utilizado en tres casos que se juzgaron ante el Tribunal de lo Penal de Lieja. Los juicios tuvieron lugar entre 1960 y 1974, y todos ellos acabaron con la absolución de los acusados. Además del internacionalmente (in)famoso «juicio Softenon», también se examinan casos de homicidio por piedad ocurridos en 1972 y 1974. Para Bélgica, este periodo constituye una especie de etapa intermedia en el tratamiento de la cuestión de

la eutanasia. Por un lado, los grupos de defensa del final de la vida no surgirían hasta principios de la década de 1980, con la francófona *Association pour le Droit de Mourir dans la Dignité* (ADMD) en 1981 y la neerlandófona *Recht op Waardig Sterven* (RWS) en 1983. Por otra parte, ya existían niveles significativos de aceptación de las prácticas de homicidio por piedad entre la parte laica de la población desde al menos 1950.

Palabras clave:

Eutanasia, homicidio piadoso, softening, final de la vida, juicio por asesinato, demencia

To say that euthanasia is a contentious subject is an understatement. Belgium, having decriminalized a form of this practice in 2002, has proven to be a good case study for current insights into its incidence, location, typologies, and related aspects.² One of the things that remains unclear, however, is when the legal sphere became interested in this issue. Additionally, the question needs to be asked whether specific legislation or depenalization was, in fact, necessary, or if existing legal systems could have made room for a ‘right to die’, as the wider issue would be called from the 1970s onwards. Until the influential study *Handelwijzen van artsen rond het levenseinde van hun patiënten (Approaches of Physicians to End-of-Life of Their Patients - HALP)*, published in the late 1990s, euthanasia incidence in Belgium remained a *Dunkelziffer* (Deliens, 2001). To this day, the same can be said for the prosecution of euthanasic practices prior to the 2002 legislation, while the work of the Swiss legal scholar Jean Graven demonstrates that deaths resulting from actions described as a form of euthanasia have been ever-present in European and American modern-day legal history (Graven, 1964).

By the latter half of the twentieth century, a significant portion of Belgian society — particularly its more secular segments — had begun to move away from traditional Catholic beliefs that framed end-of-life suffering as spiritually meaningful (De Nutte, 2022). Instead, growing emphasis was placed on the value and quality of life itself. This shift in moral perspective naturally led to a heightened public and ethical interest in questions surrounding the end of life. Advances in medical technology following the Second World War further complicated

2 A myriad of qualitative studies have been published throughout the years by people such as Luc Deliens and Freddy Mortier. A worthwhile dataset is published every year by the Federal Commission for the Control and Evaluation of Euthanasia. In 2023 an extensive edited volume analysing the 20-year mark of the euthanasia law was published. See Vansweevelt & Delbeke (2023).

these discussions, as they made it increasingly possible to prolong life in ways that would have been unimaginable in earlier eras.³ These technological developments sparked new inquiries into what it means to live — or die — with dignity.

High-profile cases such as the protracted dying process of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, and the widely publicized situation of Karen Ann Quinlan in the United States — whose family sought to withdraw life-sustaining treatment due to her persistent vegetative state — brought these ethical dilemmas into sharp public focus. Whereas previous work by us has examined how such debates reflect broader concerns about what makes life humane, this study turns to a different, though related, question: what are the implications when life is no longer seen as humane? More specifically, does this shift open the door to a “right to die”? These questions are explored here through both the broader debates of the time and a close examination of three euthanasia-related cases brought before the Court of Assizes in Liège, in the French-speaking part of Belgium, between 1962 and 1974.

One of those cases was the infamous Softenon Trial, in which the Coipel-Vandeput family was acquitted for the mercy killing of their deformed newborn daughter.⁴ The two others, tried in 1972 and 1974 respectively, concerned the mercy killing of women of advanced age suffering from severe forms of dementia (Wilkin & Wilkin, 2022). For Belgium, this period constituted an intermediate stage when looking at the issue of euthanasia. On the one hand, end-of-life advocacy groups would only emerge in the early 1980s, with the French-speaking Association pour le Droit de Mourir dans la Dignité (ADMD) in 1981 and the Dutch-speaking Recht op Waardig Sterven (RWS) in 1983. On the other hand, we have shown the existence of significant levels of acceptance for mercy-killing practices among the secular part of the population as early as 1950 (De Nutte, 2022). This support is confirmed during the 1962 trial. The societal consensus, however, ran significantly ahead of the political reality, as no openings for any law-making initiatives were made until the first coalition without the Christian Democratic Party came into power in the mid-1990s.

The Belgian context presents a particularly compelling case for historical inquiry into end-of-life debates, especially when considered through the lens of religious worldviews and the

3 This was coupled with the emerging field of bioethics and discussions on brain death, for instance. See Baker & McCullough (2008) and Veatch (1980).

4 This trial was followed internationally, as shown by publications in American, French and Swedish cases. Its importance is evident given the response it eluded from the Vatican Radio service and the fact that Jean Graven's treatise opens with a reference to it. See for instance *Le Monde* (1962), *The Monitor* (1962), *New York Times* (1962), *Dagens Nyheter* (1962), Gunzinger (1978) and Triche & Triche (1975).

dynamics of secularization. Belgium's historically strong Catholic roots have long shaped moral and medical perspectives on suffering and death. However, by the mid-twentieth century, a marked shift was underway. As segments of Belgian society began to question the religious framing of suffering as redemptive, they increasingly emphasized individual autonomy and quality of life — trends that paralleled wider European secularization patterns but took on distinctive forms in the Belgian context. What makes Belgium unique is the visibility and persistence of its philosophical-religious divide, which directly influenced discourse around euthanasia from as early as the 1930s. In this setting, ethical attitudes toward end-of-life care often diverged along ideological lines, with secular voices pushing for a more individualized and negotiated approach to dying, while religious perspectives generally maintained a more traditionalist stance. This created fertile ground for competing conceptions of a 'dignified death.'

Although Graven cites examples going back to the beginning of the 20th century, it seems that actual attention to the 'problem' of euthanasia within the European legal sphere only began to awaken in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Examining our three cases allows insights on two fronts. Firstly, there is the national perspective. By looking at three euthanasia cases in which defendants were acquitted, this paper tackles questions about how the legal framework in Belgium dealt with prosecutions for murder in cases where euthanasia was seen as a factor. Given the acquittal in a societal context where mercy killing was, to an extent, deemed acceptable, the results of these trials begged the question in the legal sphere of whether a right to die existed. Could a difference be made between an act with or without the goal of mercy? Did this correspond to a new way of dealing with death? And was legalization or depenalisation of euthanasia practices deemed necessary within the legal community of the 1970s?

Secondly, there is the transnational perspective, for which two points are worth mentioning. First, we will show that the first trial seems to have sparked interest in euthanasia at a European, if not global, level. Though the lasting impact of the trial in Belgium seems very limited, looks can be deceiving, as will be discussed. Secondly, the specific influence of France and its linguistic and cultural commonality with the South of Belgium is much more pronounced than previously assumed. We have shown in earlier work that the 1980s saw a transfer of information towards Belgium through the linguistic commonality of Flanders and the Netherlands, the latter receiving information through their British and American connections — countries that have long-standing traditions in euthanasia advocacy (De Nutte,

2020).⁵ It seems, however, that the lack of historical work on this issue in the French context has obscured important developments. Information on topics such as living wills reached Belgian society approximately a decade earlier through its cultural connections. The attention of the legal sphere came at a time when other scientific disciplines were also experiencing a resurgence of interest in, and shifts toward, issues of death and dying. Yvon Kenis, a prominent president of one of the Belgian right-to-die societies and a medical professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, described this as follows:

Since approximately twenty years, American medical professionals and sociologists and French historians have shown us at what point man's attitude towards death, by the middle of the 20th century, was different from the traditional attitude. It was referred to as 'invisible death' [*mort escamotée*] as opposed to 'tamed death' [*mort apprivoisée*] (Kenis, 1986).⁶

Although the Netherlands and Belgium were among the first countries in the world to depenalize some forms of euthanasia, the influence of France should not be underestimated. Equally, as Dominique Dirlewanger has shown concerning the impact of the Swiss euthanasia trial of the physician Haemmerli on international debates in the mid-1970s, we are convinced that the 1962 Softenon trial also qualifies as an earlier trigger event (Dirlewanger, 2020).

A Spotlight on Death and Dying

If the 1960s and 1970s constituted something of an intermediate stage for the issue of euthanasia in the Belgian context, the period was also marked by a prolific rise in scientific interest in death and dying.⁷ The French historian Philippe Ariès, alongside colleagues such as Michel Vovelle and François Lebrun, is undoubtedly a central figure in this development. His work on the history of mentalities, particularly regarding attitudes toward death—or, as a more apt translation of the French focus, attitudes in the face of death—has enjoyed a wide international readership, especially since the mid-1970s. This is exemplified by the

5 For the American and British history on the matter, we refer to the work of historians Ian Dowbiggin and N.D.A. Kemp respectively.

6 Attitude towards death is a translation of *attitude de l'homme devant la mort*, a direct reference to the influential work of the French historian of death Philippe Ariès.

7 An overview is given by French historian Michelle Vovelle (1980) and by Dirlewanger (2020). After 1970, books on death and dying appeared at a rate of one per month. See Dowbiggin (2003).

substantial number of publications found in various international journals from that time.⁸ In France, as in the United States, Switzerland, and of course Belgium, the work of Philippe Ariès was perceived as that of a man not merely limited by the boundaries of his discipline. An outstanding interdisciplinarian and popularizer, his theses have made contributions to research in demography, sociology, psychology, medicine, education, and history.⁹ Additionally, his work found its way to social actors and the wider society. A Belgian case in point is the articles of the ADMD from the 1980s. The timelines on changing attitudes towards death included in these publications were strikingly similar to those identified by Ariès.¹⁰ These included for instance Geoffrey Gorer's 1955 book *The Pornography of Death*¹¹, the usage of the terminologies *mort apprivoisée* – which is the title of Ariès' first chapter in *L'Homme devant la mort* (1977) – and the *mort escamotée*, used in his book *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident* (1975).

Apart from the interdisciplinary nature of the renewed attention to attitudes towards death, the connection between American and French research is a factor of importance as well. This connection is clear once again when looking at the work of Ariès, both the translations of his articles and the disciplines involved, among them journals of law and sociology. Another connection is to be found with the concept of a living will. Originally theorized by legal professional Lewis Kutner in 1969, we see this idea appearing in almost all French-speaking legal treatises on the issue of mercy killing and self-chosen death by the second half of the 1970s.¹² The concept was translated into *testament biologique*, and articles dealing with this issue often include literal translations of living wills provided by the *Euthanasia Society of America* (ESA).¹³ Here as well, discussions on the issue find their way to contemporary societal actors. These advocacy organizations linked the living wills with the concept of *acharnement thérapeutique* [therapeutic tenacity], a concept originating in France as an issue related to medical deontology since the 1950s (Carol, 2004; Ricot, 2016). The ideas at the base of this concept, namely that physicians were prolonging life unnecessarily rather than mitigating pain, found traction in the United States too (Dowbiggin, 2003, p. Dowbiggin, 110-112). The changing of death's shape – evoking an image of dying comatose and entubed in the hospital – is echoed in ethicist Joseph Fletcher's work in 1973.

8 Some examples include Ariès & Brooks (1969), Mitchell (1978), Chamboredon (1976), Ramsey (1974).

9 “Réception de l'œuvre de Philippe Ariès,” site dédié à Philippe Ariès, last consulted April 5, 2024, <https://philippe-aries.histoweb.net/spip.php?rubrique33>.

10 Even in their first Bulletin, a publication in which they announced their establishment, the work of Ariès featured prominently. See Bulletin de l'Association Belge pour le Droit de Mourir dans la Dignité (1981).

11 This same sequence can be found, for instance in Ariès (1974, p. 536-560).

12 See for instance Chatillon (1977) and Dijon (1982).

13 A prominent example here is Crossard (1976).

The Legal Profession and Euthanasia: Murder in the Balance of a People's Jury

Given what we have described, alongside moral canvassing, the legal profession also showed a growing interest in the issue of medically assisted dying during this same period. Interest across a variety of disciplines rose dramatically by the second half of the 1970s (Young, 2011). Internationally, we can identify several important developments. For instance, the ESA underwent a significant shift in the connotation it assigned to euthanasia during the 1960s. Whereas before this time the organization had advocated for mercy killing, this gradually shifted toward a personal right to die. This transition led to the successful implementation of living wills. In 1976, such a document was legally recognized in the state of California, followed by seven other U.S. states within a year (Dowbiggin, 2003, pp. 116–121). At higher levels of governance, the United States Special Commission on Aging held hearings on death with dignity, while the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution in 1976 on the rights of the sick and dying, confirming that “the true interests of the sick are not always best served by a zealous application of the most modern techniques for prolonging life” (2024).

As Jean Graven pointed out quite eloquently in 1963, euthanasia had a hard time *à naître juridiquement* [of being born in the judicial sphere]. The motive—however disinterested and honorable, inspired by love or compassion—did not change the *nature juridique* of euthanasia as murder. Yet within the French and Belgian legal frameworks, Graven already referred to the public prosecutors power of discretion and to cases dismissed by the prosecution's office (1963, pp. 143–146). Notwithstanding this early work, it seems that substantial attention from the legal sphere only emerged around the mid-1970s.¹⁴ This was true in Belgium, and likewise in France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.¹⁵ Coincidentally, this timeline mirrored the one unfolding in the United States.

Although a few tentative articles on euthanasia in the Belgian legal field date from as early as the 1950s, the first substantial contributions only began to appear by the mid-1970s and early 1980s. As Danny Pieters notes, most earlier publications focused on foreign developments and were hampered either by bias stemming from self-selected definitions of euthanasia or by the conflation of legal analysis with philosophical speculation and advocacy claims (Pieters, 1982). In their 1976 handbook on Belgian penal law, professors Constant Vanhoudt and

¹⁴ Examples are Lust (1972) and Gryssolle (1979)

¹⁵ See for instance Weyers (2004, p. 94-101), Chatillon (1977), Dierkens (1976, p. 386-396) and Dirlewanger (2020, p. 16-21)

Willy Calewaert of Ghent State University—the latter also an influential socialist and secular politician—stated that opening the possibility of using euthanasia as a legal justification in murder trials would, *ipso facto*, result in unacceptable acquittals. From a legal perspective, personal motives should have no bearing on the determination of guilt and, as with the consent of the victim, should not prevent the application of penal sanctions for manslaughter or murder. The authors did, however, recognize that public attitudes no longer fully condemned such acts (Vanhoudt & Calewaert, 1976).

Although Vanhoudt and Calewaert chose to include the topic of euthanasia, comprehensive legal analyses of its status *vis-à-vis* Belgian law would not appear until the early 1980s. The most prominent examples are found in the work of legal scholars Xavier Dijon and Danny Pieters and of Hugo Van den Enden, ethics professor at Ghent University and vice-president of the RWS. Van den Enden's article, when examining both its content and references, appears to be largely based on the work of Pieters—although the authors disagreed on one specific point.

Pieters, then a doctoral student at Leuven Catholic University, demonstrated analytical rigor by deliberately avoiding a fixed definition of euthanasia. Instead, he identified several components that might be present in any event potentially categorized as euthanasia, thereby aiming for a strictly legal analysis. He listed six elements:

1. The intention guiding the act (was death intentionally hastened?).
2. The method used (refusal of treatment, intentional administration of lethal agents, etc.).
3. The intended beneficiary (the deceased, family members, the “race” or public health, etc.).
4. The condition of the person euthanized (terminally ill, dying, mentally or physically disabled).
5. The executor (medical professional, family member, etc.).
6. The degree to which the individual wished for or explicitly requested the act to occur (Pieters, 1982, pp. 237–238).

Having defined these six categories, Pieters proceeded to analyze relevant provisions of the Belgian Penal Code (Pieters, 1982, pp. 238–341). As prior authors had indicated, euthanasia did not exist as a separate legal offense. Dijon similarly noted that French law relied on a penal syllogism in such cases. What was likewise absent—thus not constituting a crime—were situations where the executor and the euthanized individual were the same person, i.e., suicide or assisted suicide.

If, however, the executor was someone other than the deceased, Articles 393, 394, 395, and 397 of the Penal Code applied. These pertained, respectively, to manslaughter (punishable by life with hard labor), murder (punishable by death—although executions were no longer carried out and sentences were almost automatically converted into life imprisonment), parricide, and murder by poisoning. *Stricto sensu*, the victim's consent and the executor's intention were legally irrelevant. Public order could not tolerate a situation in which one individual is permitted to kill another with impunity. Legally, the definition of murder required proof of intent to kill—an element that is present in most forms of euthanasia. A possible exception was what was traditionally referred to as passive euthanasia, in which a physician administers escalating pain medication that, as a side effect, leads to the patient's death. In such cases, the death was considered an unintended consequence; the primary goal was the mitigation of suffering. Some legal interpretations categorized this under involuntary manslaughter, addressed by Article 481. By the 1980s, however, Belgian courts had largely ceased prosecuting such cases altogether. It is likely that by this time there was also minimal judicial effort to suppress active euthanasia cases (Le Soir, 1983).

In practice, however, considerations of consent and intent did influence the way the justice system addressed acts of euthanasia. As far back as 1950, reference was made in an explanatory memorandum to the Belgian Penal Code stating that, if a crime were committed without violence or malice—but rather because of surrendering not to the offender's passions but to the victim's pleas—the consent of the person killed substantially altered the question of guilt. Such factors could therefore warrant a significant reduction in sentencing (Nypels & Servais, 1938, p. 342).

Courts of Assizes were, in principle, empowered to hear such cases. These courts ruled on euthanasia trials through lay juries composed of twelve citizens selected by lot, who were required to rule “according to their conscience and heartfelt conviction” on the question: “Is the accused guilty of this particular crime?” Where the defendant invoked a legally recognized exculpatory circumstance, a second question followed: “Has this fact been established?” Thus, whenever euthanasia was prosecuted in Belgium, it was judged by a non-professional jury tasked with establishing guilt. By taking mitigating circumstances into account, convictions for murder, manslaughter, parricide, or poisoning could be reduced to a prison term of at least three years. Pieters pointed out that some juries, believing three years of imprisonment to be too severe, were inclined to lie and answer “no” to the question of guilt—despite substantial evidence to the contrary. This is where Pieters and Van den Enden diverged in interpretation. While Pieters argued that the jurors were lying, Van den Enden emphasized

that they were simply following their consciences, as the law required, and that those consciences compelled an acquittal (Van den Enden, 1984, pp. 107-108). Although the outcome was the same, the different framing reflects how each scholar approached the subject.

Finally, both authors referenced Article 71 of the Belgian Penal Code, which provides a *schulduitsluitingsgrond* [ground for the exclusion of guilt],¹⁶ stating that no crime has occurred if the accused was compelled by an irresistible force. In one of our case studies, this defense was successfully invoked and resulted in an acquittal.

Three Belgian Trials Prosecuting Cases of Active Euthanasia

We now examine the three euthanasia trials, trying to understand how the acquittals of the defendants in these cases came about. The legal point of view is taken into consideration, as are the arguments of the defense. On a more general level, we ask whether these same arguments correspond to wider developments in society vis-à-vis specific forms of mercy killing. Do they run ahead of, or lag behind, prevailing social sentiments? Did the results inform public debate on the matter?

This brings us to the final level—namely, that of societal change. As we have touched upon earlier, these cases seem to have had little impact in this regard. Advocacy groups and legislative proposals emerged only in the early 1980s. So, did none of these cases constitute a trigger effect in any way? Even today, one finds ample coverage of the 1962 case. If the early 1960s perhaps proved too soon for any lasting societal debate, the 1970s trials represented a tangible opportunity, given both the rising interest in death and dying, and the lasting effects the Swiss Hämmerli trial of 1975 enjoyed in an international context.¹⁷

The Softenon Trial of 1962

In November 1962, five people—four family members and one general practitioner—were accused of conspiring to kill a newborn baby in the Coipel-Vandeput family. The daughter was born, as was the case with several babies during this period, with severe physical defor-

¹⁶ This term is elaborated upon in Casier, Gutwirth, Distelmans & De Herdt (2014, p. 126-131).

¹⁷ Peter Hämmerli was a gastroenterologist accused of and acquitted for murdering his dying patients. See Dirlewanger (2020, p. 105).

mities: specifically, a lack of limbs and embryonic, non-functional hands attached directly to the torso.¹⁸ This was a direct consequence of the mother's use of Softenon (Wilkin & Wilkin, 2020, pp. 111-112). This drug, with the active component thalidomide, was brought to market in the 1950s by Grünenthal GmbH to help pregnant women combat nausea. It was commercially sold in Belgium in 1959. The killing of the newborn infant in this case occurred at a time when doctors were just beginning to understand and warn against the consequences of the drug for fetuses. These complications led to the drug being discontinued in Belgium by June 1962 (Wilkin & Wilkin, 2020, p. 112; McBride, 1961, p. 1358).

The trial itself generated a substantial amount of both national and international sensation, much to the frustration of some in the Belgian legal profession. The inhabitants of the city of Liège, for instance, amassed over 5,000 signatures in support of the acquittal of Dr. Casters, the accused GP (Wilkin & Wilkin, 2020, p. 112; McBride, 1961, p. 1358). Quite some debate in wider intellectual circles emerged as well. This is illustrated clearly by the attention given to this case by preeminent French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (Cormann, 2018, pp. 203-238). In two unpublished papers, he developed concepts such as *mort dans la vie* and *technologie mal appliquée*. He argued that the child would have a life that was equivalent to death without end. Here, he clearly refuted any notion of the sanctity of life and echoed contemporary activist voices that slowly began to see life as something that should be a choice, not a given. His second concept seems to be an embryonic manifestation of what would become a central trope in the euthanasia advocacy of the 1980s—namely, the notion of *acharnement thérapeutique* (therapeutic tenacity) mentioned earlier.

The indictment sums up what transpired.¹⁹ It seems the pregnancy occurred only months after the marriage of Coipel and Vandeput. Although both had imagined starting a family later, no effort was spared to bring the pregnancy to term under optimal conditions. Since both parents worked as civil servants, it was decided that raising the child would be left to the maternal grandmother.

The child's birth defects were identified in the hospital only after delivery. This news was immediately communicated to both the father and the maternal grandmother. The mother herself, however, was left uninformed for four days. Both the father and the grandmother immediately asked the attending physician whether the child's life could be terminated. The same was true for the mother's sister, who was informed by the grandmother. Like her

18 State Archives of Liège (SAL), Court of Assizes 1962 second semester, 154, Coipel-Vandeput, indictment.

19 SAL, Court of Assizes 1962 second semester, 154, Coipel-Vandeput, indictment.

family members, she appealed to the attending nurse for termination, only to be met with refusal once again. In the indictment, the nurse described the sister's reaction as "a violent scene of blasphemy."

Following these events, both women contacted their general practitioner to pose the same question they had asked at the hospital. The indictment states—and this is reflected in later media coverage of the trial—that the actions were initiated by the women of the family. The husband is described as passive and unimpressive.²⁰ The GP prescribed barbiturates to be injected into the baby, but later contacted the family, explaining that since an injection would leave physical marks, another method of administration would be more favorable. When the child was brought home after four days, the family convened at night, and the mother fed the baby a bottle containing a lethal dose of barbiturates, which resulted in death. It was the attending physician at the hospital who alerted other staff to the family's intentions, which led to a police visit that brought to light what had transpired.

The accused, as a group, did not dispute the facts presented in the indictment, but in a letter to the court, they refuted the insinuation of a "conspiracy of silence." The family and the GP cited an error of science and stated that they had wanted to spare the child a life of misery. If confronted with the same situation again, the group explicitly stated they would act in the same manner.²¹ The accused were prosecuted, with varying degrees of guilt, for manslaughter and death by poisoning. The defense argued, as one might have expected (De Standaard, 1962). Their arguments included the claim that the child's death occurred in her own interest, as well as a demonstration of the extreme moral pressure and emotional conflict experienced by family members because of the position taken by the maternity hospital. The defense further elaborated on the nature of a "normal and humane" life. They also focused on society's negligence toward the family: "What has the community done to protect these people from the consequences of Softenon?"²² The trial eventually resulted in all questions of guilt being answered negatively by all twelve members of the jury (De Standaard, 1962).

Using the categories developed by Pieters, let us look more closely at what transpired. The goal of the family's actions was to kill the child to spare her from what they perceived as a life not worth living. This was carried out by way of poisoning. The question of the beneficiaries, however, remains somewhat unclear. Financially speaking, the act had no consequence.

20 For instance *Le Soir* (1962, p. 7)

21 SAL, Court of Assizes 1962 second semester, 154, Coipel-Vandeput, statement of the defence.

22 *Ibidem*.

For the family itself, two arguments can be made: first, that the family gained nothing and lost a child; second, that the family was relieved of the responsibility of caring for a severely deformed child.

The executor, in a narrow sense, was the mother; in a broader sense, it was the family and the physician. The act itself cannot be construed as consensual, given that it concerned the death of a newborn. Did this constitute a wholly exceptional case? The actions of the GP are telling. The fact that he was aware of what could be done and immediately appeared sympathetic to the family's plight may suggest a personal familiarity with practices of mercy killing. His concern about possible prosecution following an autopsy is also of interest.

The Picquereau Trial of 1972

In the indictment of our second case, the prosecution of Picquereau for the killing of his retired wife, the story begins with policemen finding the wife of the accused dead on a couch in their residence.²³ The document further recounts him strangling his wife in the residence they occupied together with their son and daughter-in-law. His wife suffered from vascular dementia (arteriosclerosis) since 1969 and was cared for at home. Two months before the incident, the relatively quiet demeanor of the wife changed abruptly. No longer did she recognize close relatives. She also became physically abusive and prone to hallucinatory episodes. The accused felt exceedingly desperate in this situation. On the day of his wife's death, the husband consulted the secretariat of the communal administration to find a place for his wife in a dedicated care facility. The administration responded that no places would become available in the foreseeable future. The husband, fearing to become an additional burden on the young couple in the house, had written a goodbye letter a month before. His intention was not only to kill his wife but also himself. Picquereau was accused of both murder and manslaughter.²⁴

In this trial, a variety of mitigating circumstances were put forth. Firstly, a psychiatric evaluation concluded that the accused was fully mentally competent, but that the responsibilities and circumstances of his married life had a profound impact on his mental health.²⁵ Second, the defense stressed several points. As we have mentioned, the husband began the day by

23 Idem, Court of Assizes 1972, 166, Picquereau, Indictment.

24 Ibidem.

25 Idem, Court of Assizes 1972, 166, Picquereau, psychiatric evaluation.

seeking help from the communal administration, only to be met with a seemingly endless waiting list for care institutions. A request to have his spouse institutionalized constituted a particularly difficult step for the accused, as his brother-in-law had previously died in a similar setting.²⁶ His testimony further explicitly referred to the many times his wife had asked for her life to be ended. The defense coupled this with their “exceptionally loving” marriage of over 40 years. Following the act, Picquereau immediately summoned a physician to the house. His former colleagues also provided a signed statement attesting to his exemplary moral fiber.²⁷ As was the case in the previous trial, the questions of guilt were answered negatively by all members of the jury.

In this case, the goal was twofold: to spare the wife further suffering and to honor her wish, as well as to avoid burdening the next generation of the family. The method was strangulation. The intended benefit was for the next generation, which was not involved in the act and therefore not prosecuted. The executor was once again a family member, and in this case, there is strong reason to believe that the act corresponded to the expressed wishes of the deceased.

The Hoyoux Trial of 1974

The third case is much more concise. The indictment paints a picture of a wife returning home from a weekend away to find her husband holding a rifle at the foot of the bed, where her mother-in-law lay dead, holding a crucifix between her arms.²⁸ In the kitchen, she was confronted with empty pill containers and written instructions detailing financial and other affairs. These were accompanied by a short statement in imperfect French: “Goodbye, my mother is too much and so am I.”

The deceased woman was described as having a difficult disposition, which was aggravated by the advanced form of vascular dementia from which she suffered. Despite brief periods of lucidity, her ability to interact was almost completely gone. This led the son to accept underpaid jobs that allowed him to remain permanently at his mother’s side. Prior to this, a healthcare facility had been selected, and the deceased had spent some time there. Utterly

26 Idem, statement of the defence.

27 Idem, file 28.

28 Idem, indictment.

shocked by what his mother's life had been reduced to, Hoyoux checked her out. The crucifix she held after her death had also been placed in her hands by her son.

As with the previous case, the psychiatric evaluation found no particular imbalances in the accused—neither at the moment of the act nor in the time that followed.²⁹ The expert also referred to an increase in responsibility and emotional strain experienced by the accused. This psychiatrist concluded by stating that Hoyoux exhibited reduced cognitive abilities as a consequence of depression. The defense added arguments referencing both his flawless professional record and a petition from the local community requesting the immediate release of the defendant. Once again, the members of the jury answered negatively to all charges, resulting in an acquittal.

Although this case was perceived by some as a form of euthanasia (Wilkin & Wilkin, 2020, p. 188), the goal is much less clear in this instance. It is evident that, as in the previous case, the sense of being a burden was a primary motivator. The fact that Hoyoux also considered himself a burden further complicates the matter. The method in this case was a combination of drugging and shooting. The perceived beneficiary was the wife, although there is no indication of any material gain. Once again, the advanced dementia clearly defined the state of the euthanized individual. The executor was, as in earlier cases, a family member acting in a caregiving role. Unlike the previous case, however, there is no record of an expressed wish to die.

Support and Tolerance do not Trigger Change?

We began this article by stating that the 1960s and 1970s can be identified as something of an intermediate period when it comes to the subject of euthanasia. Although we are now able to draw some noteworthy conclusions about what occurred during these decades, it is safe to say that the prosecutions we have examined appear to have informed certain developments. We have attempted to test Hugo Van den Enden's claim from the early 1980s, in which he argued that convictions for mercy killings—or what we now call modern euthanasia—no longer existed in post-1960 Belgium. As such, the question remains: did a right to die exist at the time?

²⁹ Idem, psychiatric evaluation.

The three cases we have studied seem to support this notion. The absence of similar cases lends weight to assertions about the legal community's reluctance to prosecute euthanasia during this period. The outcomes of the trials are also consistent with what we know about broader societal acceptance of mercy-killing practices. Even the factual proceedings serve as relevant examples. Not only was the defense based on arguments about the failure of science, but it also emphasized the desperation experienced by the accused—acts seemingly forced upon individuals with otherwise good moral standing. The juries rejected the accusations entirely, despite substantial evidence to the contrary. In the 1970s cases, the defense was further supported by psychiatric evaluations and public petitions calling for the acquittal of the accused. One detail that cannot be overlooked when assessing whether a right to die existed at the time is the behavior of the general practitioner in the early 1960s. His willingness to assist the family—and his caution to avoid being caught—raises the question: did contemporary GPs experience any scruples about such actions?

We have also sought to understand whether these trials influenced debates on euthanasia and whether they instigated calls for depenalization. It is quite clear that the Softenon trial contributed to debates in broader society and intellectual circles—even appearing in foreign legal treatises. The other trials, however, were for all intents and purposes obscured from the public eye and absent from widespread discussion. One case in point is the press review covering the period from 1962 to 1983, published by the ADMD in the mid-1980s. This 300-plus-page collection of newspaper clippings mentions the first trial on several occasions but contains no coverage of the others. As a rule, legal treatises from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s further argued against the need for, or desirability of, the depenalization of euthanasia. Here, contemporary legal scholars and right-to-die advocates found common ground in promoting a changing attitude toward death and dying—without explicitly endorsing active euthanasia.

One of the trials, however, did lead to societal change—though not in the area of euthanasia. Rather, it spurred momentum in abortion advocacy. As is made clear in the work of Marc Hooghe (1990) and Els Witte (1990), the societal outrage generated by the Softenon trial fueled debates around the right to abortion. This moment coincided with Witte's observation of the emergence of personal choice as a central theme in ethical debates in Belgium, as well as Ian Dowbiggin's analysis of similar developments in euthanasia advocacy in the United States. That this specific case prompted abortion-related debates, rather than those about euthanasia—despite numerous foreign articles linking the trial to euthanasia discourse—is likely explained by two key factors in Belgian society at the time: first, the presence of acti-

ve groups advocating for abortion rights (in contrast to the near-total absence of euthanasia advocacy groups), and second, the conceptual confusion surrounding euthanasia itself. Advocating for a “right” to a practice that had yet to be clearly defined was, to put it mildly, problematic. In conclusion, a right to die did exist to some extent; the trials did inform broader debates; and societal acceptance—and toleration within the legal system—were evident in Belgium during the 1960s and 1970s. But advocacy and political change had not yet emerged.

From the 1980s onward, however—as we have shown in earlier work (De Nutte, 2025)—Belgian proposals for living wills (now more broadly referred to as Advance Care Directives) and associated draft legislation aimed, quite successfully in our view, to prevent court cases related to euthanasia altogether. These documents, along with the proposed laws in which they were embedded, were clearly oriented toward enhancing patients’ rights while also offering a degree of legal and moral protection to physicians willing to engage in end-of-life care practices, including euthanasia. Though lacking formal legal status until the euthanasia depenalization law of 2002, these documents were designed both as instruments of patient autonomy and as practical tools for communication between patients and their healthcare providers. They allowed individuals to articulate their wishes about treatment refusal, pain relief, and—in some cases—requests for life-ending interventions, thus asserting control in situations where they might later become incapacitated.

The dual function of these living wills is particularly noteworthy. On the one hand, they were framed as instruments to ensure the patient’s voice would be respected in clinical settings, addressing widespread concerns about *acharnement thérapeutique* (therapeutic obstinacy). On the other hand, they implicitly served as safeguards for physicians by demonstrating the consistency and sincerity of a patient’s end-of-life wishes. In theory, this provided doctors with moral and professional cover should they choose to act in accordance with those wishes—particularly in an environment where active euthanasia remained technically illegal but was increasingly practiced within a legal grey zone.

In this way, Belgian living wills and early legislative proposals bridged the gap between patient-centered care and physician accountability—elements that were still absent in the 1960s and 1970s, but which aligned with the global emergence of right-to-die societies from the mid-1980s onwards. They anticipated the integrated approach formalized in the 2002 euthanasia law, which sought not to frame end-of-life care as a site of moral conflict, but rather as one of negotiated dignity and mutual trust.

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ARTICLE

Rational Choice and Ideological Constraints in Public Policy Evaluation: An Analysis of Trust and Satisfaction in Latin America

Elección racional y limitaciones ideológicas en la evaluación de políticas públicas: Un análisis de la confianza y la satisfacción en América Latina

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Abstract

This study investigates the complex interplay between rational choice and ideological constraints in evaluating public policy in Latin America. It examines trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction, using data from the Latinobarómetro survey from 2013 to 2023. The analysis employs Cumulative Link Mixed Models (CLMM) to explore how rational economic evaluations and deep-seated ideological beliefs influence these variables. The research reveals that institutional trust, governance perceptions, and ideological orientations significantly influence government trust. Economic satisfaction and employment status are crucial determinants of satisfaction with democracy, underscoring the significance of economic stability in shaping political attitudes. Ideological alignment with democratic values further enhances trust and satisfaction, demonstrating the impact of ideological constraints on political evaluations. The findings suggest that while rational factors such as economic performance play a crucial role, ideological beliefs and partisanship also profoundly shape public perceptions and policy evaluations. The study highlights the need for policymakers to consider both rational and ideological factors in designing and communicating policies that foster public trust and satisfaction in Latin America.

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Rational choice, ideological constraints, public policy, trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, economic satisfaction, Latin America

Resumen

Este estudio investiga la compleja interacción entre la elección racional y las limitaciones ideológicas en la evaluación de las políticas públicas en América Latina. Analiza la confianza en el gobierno, la satisfacción con la democracia y la satisfacción económica, utilizando datos de la encuesta Latinobarómetro de 2013 a 2023. El análisis emplea Modelos Mixtos de Vínculos Cumulativos (MMVC) para explorar cómo las evaluaciones económicas racionales y las creencias ideológicas arraigadas influyen en estas variables. La investigación revela que la confianza institucional, las percepciones de gobernabilidad y las orientaciones ideológicas influyen significativamente en la confianza en el gobierno. La satisfacción económica y la situación laboral son determinantes cruciales de la satisfacción con la democracia, lo que subraya la importancia de la estabilidad económica en la configuración de las actitudes políticas. La alineación ideológica con los valores democráticos también aumenta la confianza y la satisfacción, lo que demuestra el impacto de las limitaciones ideológicas en las evaluaciones políticas. Los resultados sugieren que, aunque los factores racionales, como los resultados económicos, desempeñan un papel crucial, las creencias ideológicas y el partidismo también influyen profundamente en las percepciones públicas y las evaluaciones de las políticas. El estudio subraya la necesidad de que los responsables políticos consideren tanto los factores racionales como los ideológicos a la hora de diseñar y comunicar políticas que fomenten la confianza y la satisfacción ciudadana en América Latina.

Palabras clave:

Elección racional, restricciones ideológicas, políticas públicas, confianza en el gobierno, satisfacción con la democracia, satisfacción económica, América Latina

Introduction

“La vida no es la que uno vivió sino la que uno recuerda y como la recuerda para contarla”

— Gabriel García Márquez (2002), *Vivir para contarla*.

“Life is not what one lived but what one remembers and how one remembers it to tell it.”

— Gabriel García Márquez (2002), *Living to Tell the Tale*.

Gabriel García Márquez’s insight into the power of memory and perception provides a compelling entry point for this study, which investigates the complex layers of public policy evaluation in Latin American democracies. His assertion prompts us to examine not only the events themselves but also how societies remember and interpret them, shaping political narratives and public opinion in the process. This study seeks to unravel these narratives by analyzing how public perceptions of governance are constructed.

By examining the interplay between ideological and rational perspectives, this work aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction in a region characterized by vibrant cultural diversity and significant political transitions.

This investigation draws on data from the Latinobarómetro survey, spanning seven waves from 2013 to 2023 and encompassing more than 19,205 interviews across 16 countries. The Latinobarómetro’s methodology—characterized by extensive face-to-face interviews—provides an empirical foundation to explore the nuanced political, economic, and social contexts shaping policy evaluations in the region. This rich archive of public opinion offers a critical lens through which to examine the multifaceted and interlinked relationships between government conduct and public perception.

Through the synthesis of theoretical and empirical analysis, this study offers insights that enhance our understanding of how public opinion changes over time. At the core of this investigation lies the central question:

“To what extent have rational choices and ideological constraints shaped public policy evaluations—specifically trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction—across Latin American nations over the past decade?”

Trust, Democracy and Economy Satisfaction in Latin America

The importance of examining trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction in Latin America cannot be overstated, given their profound implications for governance and public policy. These variables are pivotal in assessing the broader political climate and citizens' engagement with their governmental systems, which, in turn, influence the stability and effectiveness of democratic institutions.

Trust in government is a cornerstone of democratic governance, as it reflects the public's confidence in their leaders and institutions to act effectively and fairly (Hetherington, 2005). In Latin America, where political instability and corruption have historically undermined trust, understanding the dynamics that shape this trust is crucial. It directly impacts citizens' compliance with laws and the success of public initiatives (Booth & Seligson, 2009). Similarly, satisfaction with democracy is a crucial indicator of a country's democratic health. It measures public contentment with the functioning of democracy and is linked to political participation and support for democratic norms (Norris, 2011). In regions like Latin America, where transitions to democracy have been both recent and fragile, gauging satisfaction provides insights into the consolidation of democratic regimes (Pérez-Liñán, 2007).

Economic satisfaction encapsulates the public's assessment of economic policies and their outcomes, serving as a critical measure of a government's visible actions. In many Latin American countries, economic instability often leads to considerable public discontent, influencing electoral outcomes and support for governmental reforms (Sachs, 1989). Tracking shifts in economic satisfaction is thus essential, as it gauges public reaction to economic policies and their broader implications for social stability and policy continuity.

The interrelation of these variables with selected independent variables—such as ideological, rational, economic perceptions, and policy salience predictors—will be analyzed through Conditional Mixed Multilevel Models (CMMLs) to uncover patterns and establish causal relationships that transcend the idiosyncrasies of individual countries. This approach provides a

more comprehensive understanding of the underpinnings of policy impact and public sentiment across the region.

Trust

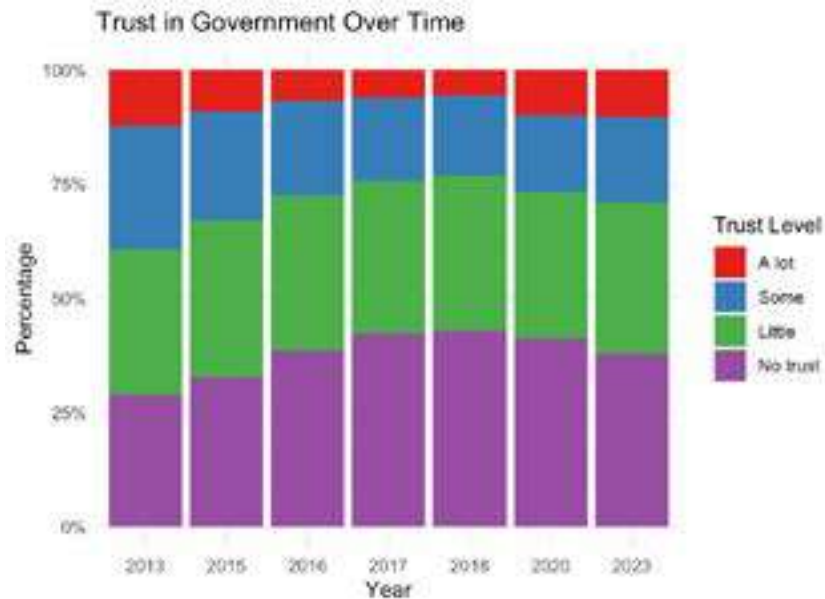
Trust in government is a crucial indicator of public confidence in the capacity and integrity of political institutions. It reflects citizens' belief that their government acts in the public interest, administers laws fairly, and effectively manages public resources (Levi & Stoker, 2000). This trust is essential for government legitimacy, as it underpins citizens' willingness to comply with laws and accept government decisions—even under adverse circumstances.

In political science, trust in government is commonly linked to the concept of political efficacy. Higher levels of trust can enhance citizens' perceived influence over political processes, thereby contributing to greater democratic engagement and stability (Hetherington, 2005). Conversely, a lack of trust can lead to political disengagement, increased skepticism toward public officials, and a heightened likelihood of civil unrest.

The importance of trust goes beyond abstract democratic principles: it has practical implications for policy implementation. Governments perceived as trustworthy are more likely to secure compliance with public measures—ranging from tax collection to public health campaigns. Trust acts as a facilitating mechanism in governance, lowering enforcement costs through voluntary compliance and enhancing overall administrative effectiveness (Tyler, 2006).

Analyzing changes in trust levels in Latin America, as tracked by Latinobarómetro data, provides insights into the dynamic relationship between government performance, public perception, and socio-economic conditions. These fluctuations not only react to political events but also capture long-standing systemic challenges.

Figure 1: Trends in trust levels towards government across Latin America from 2013 to 2023

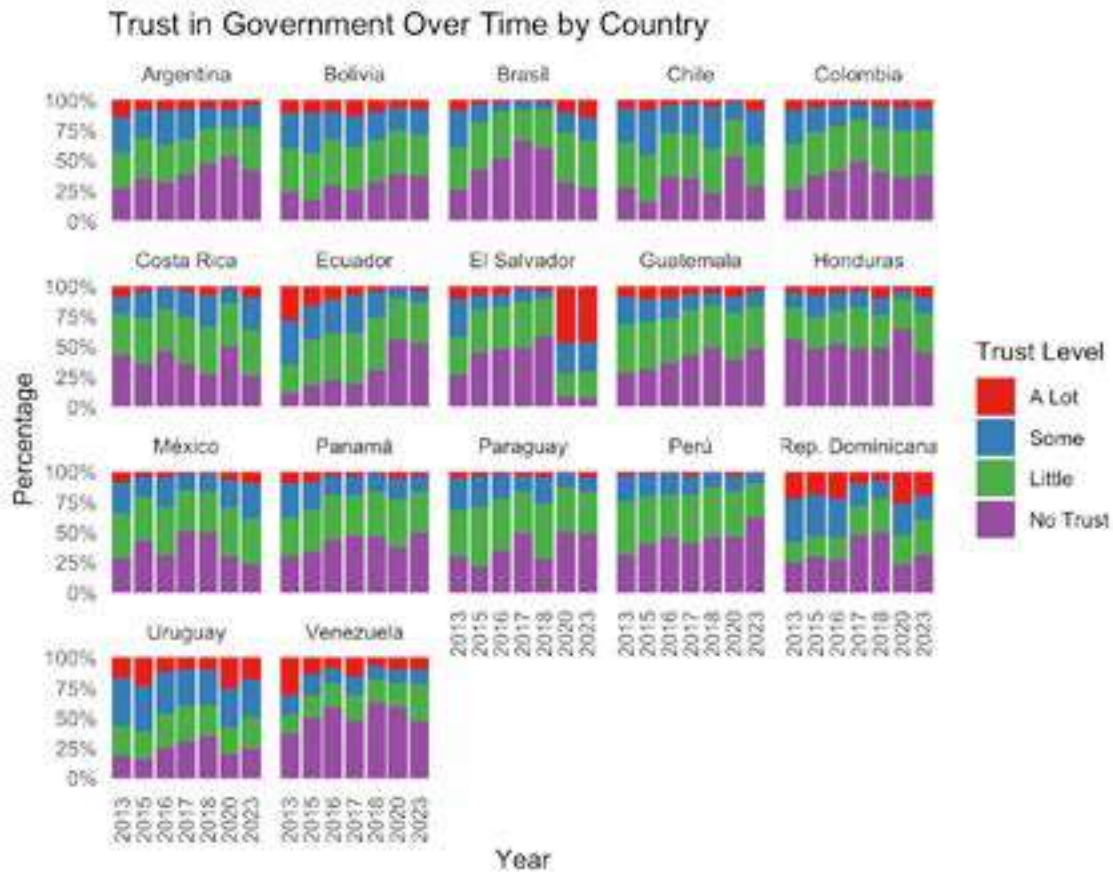


Source: Latinobarómetro.

Figure 1 shows a fluctuating but generally decreasing trend in the percentage of the population expressing high trust in government, paralleled by a rise in those expressing little or no trust. For example, in 2013, approximately 11.98% of respondents expressed high trust, compared to 10.09% in 2023—marking a modest but notable decline. The proportion of respondents indicating “No trust” rose more sharply—from 28.41% in 2013 to a peak of 42.05% in 2018, before declining slightly to 37.40% in 2023. These trends suggest growing disenchantment with governmental institutions, potentially due to economic mismanagement, unmet public expectations, and corruption scandals.

The case of El Salvador under President Nayib Bukele provides an illustrative exception to this regional pattern. Since taking office, Bukele has experienced a remarkable surge in public trust, likely reflecting approval of his assertive leadership style and policy agenda—despite international concerns over democratic backsliding. This deviation underscores the complexity of trust dynamics: charismatic leadership and decisive governance can bolster trust in the short term, even amid broader institutional erosion.

Figure 2: Trends in trust levels towards government by country in Latin America from 2013 to 2023



Source: Latinobarómetro.

As Figure 2 illustrates, persistent high trust in a charismatic leader, such as in El Salvador, can lead to the centralization of power, potentially circumventing democratic checks and balances and increasing the risk of authoritarian drift. McCoy and Somer (2019) warn of the dangers of pernicious polarization under such circumstances, which can deepen societal divisions and weaken democratic norms. Indeed, the Salvadoran case invites reflection on whether popular trust, absent institutional constraints, can paradoxically enable democratic backsliding.

Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) stress that without strong institutions, democracies are vulnerable—even when political leaders enjoy widespread popularity. As such, analyzing trust in

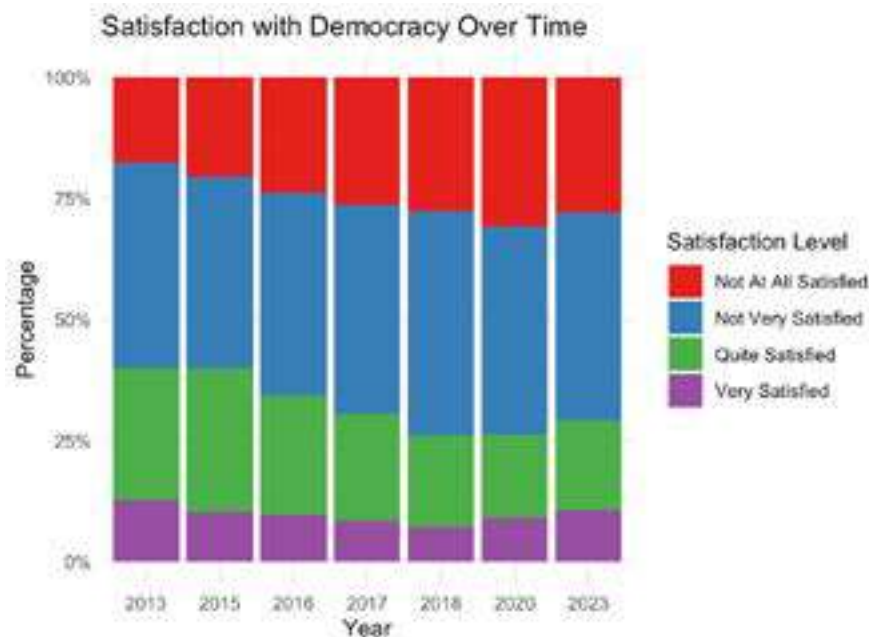
government is vital not only to assess public satisfaction, but also to understand how citizen perceptions influence democratic stability across Latin America. The evidence suggests that fostering trust requires more than charisma and short-term success; it demands transparency, institutional strength, and long-term accountability.

Satisfaction with Democracy

Satisfaction with democracy is a critical gauge of how citizens perceive the effectiveness and integrity of their democratic institutions. This variable measures the public's contentment with the functioning of democracy in their country, reflecting views on political representation, governance quality, and adherence to democratic principles.

This study reveals considerable variability in democratic satisfaction across the region, with some countries showing more pronounced shifts in public sentiment than others. This variation can be attributed to factors such as political stability, economic conditions, and the perceived responsiveness of governments.

Figure 3: Trends in Satisfaction with Democracy in Latin America from 2013 to 2023



Source: Latinobarómetro.

The data indicate a concerning decline in satisfaction with democracy across Latin America, pointing to growing disillusionment with democratic processes. This downward trend may stem from perceived corruption, ineffective governance, and unfulfilled economic and social expectations. For example, the share of respondents who reported being “Very satisfied” with democracy decreased steadily over the decade—from 12.12% in 2013 to 10.29% in 2023—signaling an erosion of democratic confidence, as shown in Figure 3.

The percentage of respondents who were “Quite satisfied” also fluctuated, reflecting a population that, though not fully disenchanted, perceives notable deficiencies in how democracy is functioning. More significantly, the share of individuals who reported being “Not at all satisfied” rose from under 20% in earlier years to over 25% recently. This increase underscores a pivotal shift in public sentiment, likely driven by dissatisfaction with how democracies are addressing economic instability, social inequality, and corruption.

These patterns suggest a crisis in democratic satisfaction, warranting deeper inquiry within the broader context of policy evaluation. Dissatisfaction with democracy can have wide-ranging consequences, including lower political engagement, heightened polarization, and increased social unrest. Disillusioned citizens may eschew traditional democratic mechanisms in favor of alternative—and sometimes undemocratic—forms of political expression.

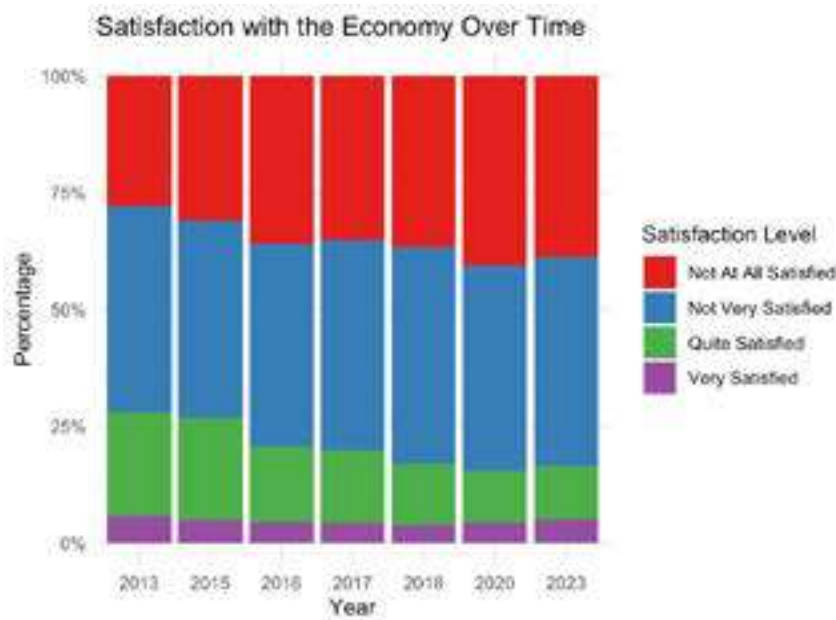
The disparities in satisfaction levels across countries highlight the importance of context-specific factors in shaping democratic attitudes. These include the efficacy of government responses, levels of political freedom, and transparency in political and electoral processes. Understanding these nuances is essential to identify the roots of discontent and formulate policies that genuinely reflect the democratic aspirations of the Latin American public.

Satisfaction with Economy

Satisfaction with the economy is a vital metric that reflects the public’s perceptions of their country’s economic conditions and government economic policies. It measures how citizens evaluate the effectiveness of economic management across key areas such as inflation, unemployment, fiscal policy, and overall economic growth. This variable is particularly salient in Latin America, a region characterized by economic volatility and significant wealth disparities.

Over the past decade, Latinobarómetro data reveal a persistent decline in the proportion of respondents reporting high levels of satisfaction with the economy, as shown in Figure 4. This trend points to growing public frustration with economic policies and their tangible effects on both individual well-being and national prosperity.

Figure 4: Trends in public satisfaction with the economy in Latin America from 2013 to 2023



Source: Latinobarómetro.

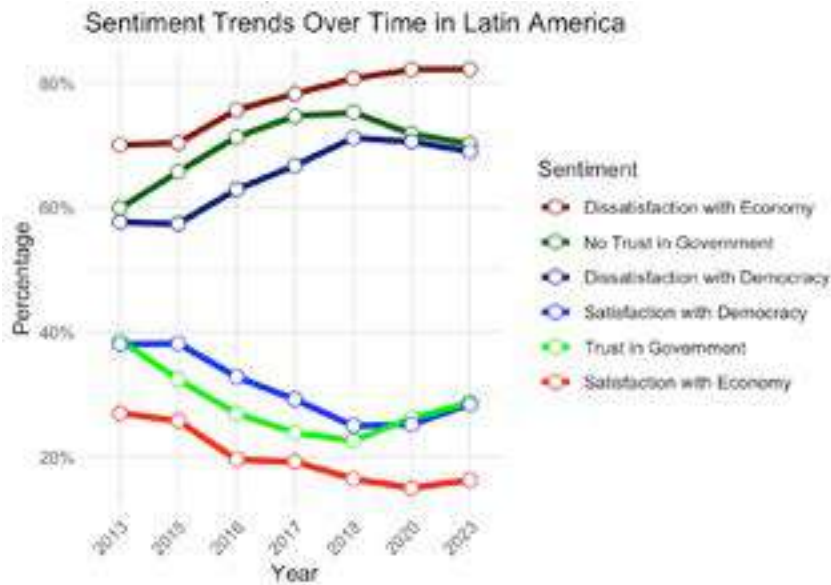
In 2013, approximately 5.56% of respondents expressed that they were “*Very satisfied*” with the state of the economy. By 2023, this figure had only modestly recovered to 4.94%, signaling enduring discontent. Meanwhile, the proportion of those who responded “*Not at all satisfied*” remains high, indicating a consistently negative perception of economic performance. This dissatisfaction is likely compounded by recurrent recessions, inflationary pressures, and persistently high unemployment, all of which undermine public confidence in the government’s economic stewardship.

Furthermore, disaggregated data by country reveal significant variation, reflecting the distinct economic trajectories and challenges faced by individual nations. For instance, countries that have undergone sharp economic downturns or prolonged crises during this period

tend to exhibit markedly higher levels of dissatisfaction. This context-specific analysis is essential to understanding how both national policies and global economic trends shape public sentiment in diverse settings.

Trends and Correlations among Trust, Democracy, and Economic Satisfaction

Figure 5: Levels of trust in government, democracy satisfaction and economy satisfaction in Latin America (2013-2023).

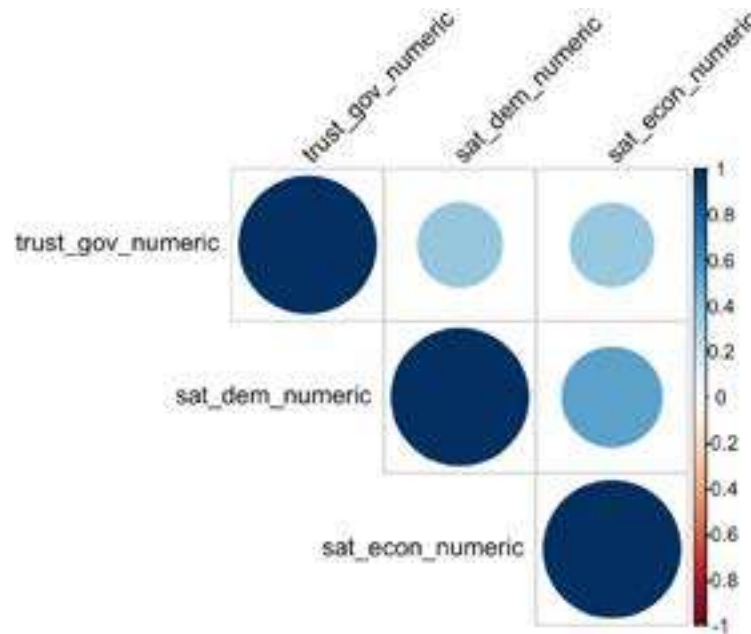


Source: Latinobarómetro.

Figure 5 illustrates the evolution of trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction in Latin America from 2013 to 2023. To enhance clarity, aggregated categories are used: for trust, “A lot” and “Some” are merged as *Trust*, while “Little” and “No trust” are combined as *No Trust*. Similarly, for satisfaction with democracy and the economy, “Very satisfied” and “Quite satisfied” are grouped as *Satisfaction*, while “Not very satisfied” and “Not at all satisfied” are merged as *Dissatisfaction*. This visualization highlights the parallel movements in satisfaction with democracy and the economy, indicating that economic and political perceptions tend to move in tandem among the population. In contrast, trust in government displays a more distinct trajectory, especially diverging after 2018, suggesting

the presence of unique influencing factors that might not align directly with those affecting the other two metrics.

Figure 6: Correlation Matrix of Trust in Government, Satisfaction with Democracy, and Economic Satisfaction (2013-2023)



Source: Latinobarómetro.

The correlation analysis summarized in Figure 6 offers key insights into the interrelationships between trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction. Trust in government exhibits a moderate positive correlation with satisfaction with democracy ($r = 0.381$) and with the economy ($r = 0.371$), suggesting that higher levels of trust tend to correspond with greater public contentment in these domains. The strongest association is observed between satisfaction with democracy and economic satisfaction ($r = 0.530$), indicating a noteworthy alignment in public sentiment regarding these aspects.

This analysis is further supported by the results of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF): Trust in Government (1.23), Satisfaction with Democracy (1.47), and Satisfaction with the Economy (1.46). These values, well below the standard threshold of 5, confirm the absence of prob-

lematic multicollinearity. Thus, while these variables are interconnected, their associations do not undermine their distinctiveness or independence for regression analysis.

Therefore, it is appropriate to use these variables as independent predictors in separate models, which helps ensure the analytical integrity of investigations into the nuances of public sentiment in Latin America.

Literature Review

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) provides a foundational framework for both political science and economics. It posits that individuals make decisions by systematically evaluating the costs and benefits of various alternatives to maximize their utility. This theory has profoundly influenced the study of political behavior, voting patterns, and policy decision-making.

Initially rooted in economics, Rational Choice Theory asserts that individuals act based on rational calculations to optimize their personal advantage (Downs, 1957). This approach views political behavior through market analogies, where political actors—similar to consumers and producers in an economic market—engage in strategic interactions to achieve desirable outcomes. For instance, voters are seen as consumers who select candidates or parties offering the most appealing policy packages, while politicians resemble entrepreneurs who craft policies to win electoral support.

Anthony Downs' seminal work, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), laid the groundwork for applying economic principles to the study of politics. Downs conceptualizes the democratic process as a competitive market, wherein political parties act as firms seeking to maximize votes. His model suggests that parties may formulate policies not out of ideological commitments but to strategically attract the greatest number of voters.

However, Rational Choice Theory has faced criticism for its assumptions of perfect rationality and complete information. Critics argue that these assumptions are often unrealistic in the complex, information-scarce environments where political decisions are made. Green and Shapiro (1994), in their critique *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, argue that the theory's predictive power diminishes when confronted with cognitive biases, emotional factors, and social norms. They advocate for a more nuanced understanding of decision-making that incorporates insights from psychology and sociology.

Despite these criticisms, Rational Choice Theory remains influential—particularly for its methodological contributions. It has introduced formal modeling techniques and quantitative analysis into political science, enabling the development of precise and testable hypotheses about political behavior. Its clarity and simplicity offer a structured approach to analyzing complex political phenomena.

Integrating Rational Choice Theory with other theoretical frameworks has enriched its explanatory depth. For example, incorporating insights from behavioral economics into RCT acknowledges that individuals often deviate from pure rationality due to cognitive biases and heuristics (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). This integration fosters a broader understanding of political behavior that balances rational calculations with psychological influences.

In Latin America, Rational Choice Theory provides valuable insights into voter behavior and policy-making dynamics. The region's diverse and unstable political landscape—marked by oscillations between democratic and authoritarian regimes—offers fertile ground for observing how rational calculations drive political decisions. For example, electoral volatility in countries such as Brazil and Argentina can, in part, be explained by the strategic adaptations of voters and politicians to shifting economic and political incentives (Mainwaring & Scully, 1995).

Moreover, Rational Choice Theory helps explain the persistence of clientelism and patronage in the region. Voters in economically disadvantaged areas may rationally support candidates offering immediate material benefits, even at the expense of long-term governance quality. This behavior aligns with RCT's principle of utility maximization under individual constraints (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007).

The theory also sheds light on the strategic conduct of political elites. Leaders often engage in calculated actions—such as manipulating electoral rules or forming opportunistic coalitions—to preserve power (Geddes, 1994). These tactics align with RCT's core assumption: political actors are rational agents seeking to maximize utility, often defined as political survival and influence.

Exploring Ideological Constraints

Ideological constraints significantly shape political behaviour and policy evaluation by influencing how individuals perceive and respond to political information and stimuli. Unlike Rational Choice Theory (RCT), which assumes that individuals act primarily out of self-interest to maximize utility, ideological constraints highlight the role of deeply held beliefs, values, and identities in guiding political behaviour.

Ideological constraints function as frameworks through which individuals interpret political realities. They often lead citizens to support policies and political actors that align with their core values, even when these choices contradict their immediate economic interests (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). As a result, political behaviour may appear irrational from a purely economic standpoint but remains coherent within an individual's ideological commitments.

A foundational concept in this field is ideological polarisation, which refers to the extent to which opinions on key issues are divided along ideological lines (McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006). In highly polarised environments, individuals are more likely to interpret political information through a biased lens, reinforcing pre-existing beliefs. This dynamic often leads to ideological sorting, where individuals align with political parties or movements that mirror their ideological stance, thereby deepening political divisions (Levendusky, 2009).

In contexts marked by strong political identities and partisan loyalty, ideological constraints become even more salient. Research demonstrates that partisanship can heavily influence how individuals assess policy effectiveness and government performance. For instance, Bartels (2002) shows that individuals tend to perceive the economy more favourably when their preferred party controls government.

In Latin America, ideological constraints are deeply embedded in the region's historical, cultural, and social contexts. The political landscape has been shaped by enduring ideological battles—from Cold War-era struggles between leftist and right-wing forces to contemporary conflicts over neoliberalism and populism (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011). These historical dynamics continue to inform ideological affiliations and shape how citizens evaluate political actors and policies.

The region's history, oscillating between authoritarian regimes and democratic governance, has left a lasting imprint on political alignments. During the Cold War, many Latin American

countries witnessed intense ideological conflicts, with leftist movements frequently opposing right-wing military governments. This polarisation persists today (Skidmore & Smith, 2005). For example, in Chile, the neoliberal reforms of the Pinochet regime starkly contrasted with the socialist agenda of Salvador Allende, creating a political divide that endures. Similarly, in Argentina, the legacy of Peronism continues to define its political discourse, as both supporters and critics remain divided over its ideological legacy (Levitsky, 2003).

Ideological constraints shape how individuals evaluate both policy content and governmental performance. For example, left-leaning individuals are more inclined to support policies promoting social welfare and economic redistribution, even when not personally beneficial. Conversely, right-leaning individuals often prefer free-market policies and reduced state intervention (Carlin, Singer, & Zechmeister, 2015). In Venezuela, the Bolivarian Revolution led by Hugo Chávez and continued by his successors has been consistently supported by those aligned with leftist ideologies, who view redistributive policies as central to social justice—even amid severe economic deterioration. In contrast, right-leaning parties and voters have consistently opposed these policies, framing them as economically disastrous regardless of specific outcomes (Corrales & Penfold, 2015).

Partisanship plays a critical role in shaping ideological constraints. Strong party identification often leads individuals to adopt the policy positions and ideological stances of their preferred parties. This phenomenon can result in biased evaluations of political and economic conditions, as individuals tend to view policies through the lens of partisan allegiance (Dalton, 2013).

The media also plays a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing these ideological constraints. Media outlets often cater to specific ideological audiences, creating echo chambers in which individuals are primarily exposed to information that aligns with their preexisting beliefs (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in Latin America, where media ownership is frequently highly concentrated and politically aligned. Such media bias can deepen ideological divides and significantly influence how policies and political actions are perceived and evaluated (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

While Rational Choice Theory focuses on individuals' strategic, utility-maximizing behaviour, integrating ideological constraints provides a more comprehensive understanding of political behaviour. Ideological beliefs act as filters through which rational choices are interpreted, influencing how individuals assess costs and benefits in a political context (Fiorina,

Abrams, & Pope, 2005). This integrated approach helps explain why individuals may support policies that do not align with their immediate economic interests but instead resonate with their deeper ideological commitments.

Integration of Rational Choice and Ideological Constraints in Policy Evaluation

Combining Rational Choice Theory with ideological constraints offers a more nuanced understanding of political behaviour, particularly in the realm of policy evaluation. This integrated approach recognises that decisions in the political arena are not solely driven by rational calculations aimed at maximising utility, but are also significantly influenced by deep-seated ideological beliefs. The idea that individuals balance rational self-interest with ideological commitments suggests that policy evaluations are inherently complex, involving a dynamic interplay between calculated benefits and value-driven motivations.

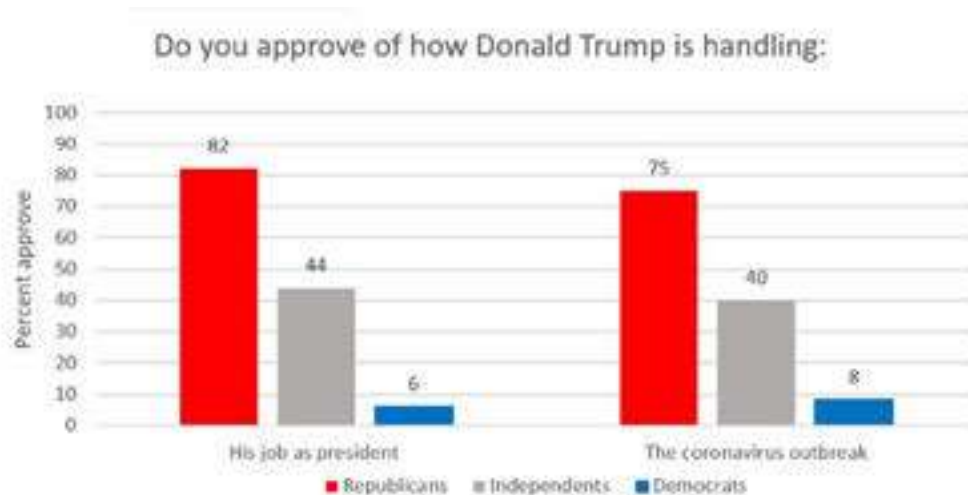
Theoretical contributions from scholars such as March and Olsen (1989) articulate this interaction through two logics: the “logic of appropriateness” and the “logic of consequence.” The logic of appropriateness reflects behaviour aligned with an individual’s identity and institutional norms, indicative of ideological influence. In contrast, the logic of consequence corresponds to Rational Choice Theory, focusing on expected outcomes and instrumental benefits.

Empirical evidence supports the profound impact of ideological orientations on policy perception. For example, environmentalists may favour costly sustainability measures as essential long-term investments, while proponents of free-market ideologies may oppose these same policies, viewing them as obstacles to economic growth—regardless of their environmental benefits (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992). This type of policy divergence highlights the complex nature of political behaviour, where ideological predispositions critically shape perceptions of policy efficacy and desirability.

**Figure 7: Approval Ratings by Political Affiliation:
President Donald Trump's Job and Coronavirus Response**

Questions: Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?

[The coronavirus outbreak]



Source: AP-NORC Poll conducted May 14-18, 2020, with 1,056 adults.

Integrating Rational Choice Theory and ideological constraints becomes especially critical in environments marked by strong political polarization. Polarization tends to magnify ideological influences on policy evaluation, resulting in divergent interpretations of the same policy across different ideological spectrums. This phenomenon is starkly illustrated in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, where public approval of President Donald Trump's response varied dramatically along party lines, as depicted in Figure 7. Despite widespread criticism of the administration's handling of the crisis, approval ratings among Republicans remained significantly higher than among Democrats. This disparity underscores how ideological alignments can shape public perceptions independently of objective policy outcomes.

The OECD's paper on trust in public institutions provides a contemporary framework for understanding the dynamics of institutional trust in Latin America. Brezzi et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of government responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness as key drivers of public trust. These findings align closely with the perspectives de-

veloped in this study, reinforcing the argument that both rational and ideological dimensions influence trust in governance, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The updated OECD framework offers empirical evidence that can enrich the analysis of trust in Latin American contexts, where state legitimacy is often contested.

The interplay between rational choice and ideological constraints holds significant implications for policymakers. It suggests that the success of public policy initiatives depends not only on their economic rationality, but also on their resonance with prevailing ideological beliefs among the citizenry. As such, effective policy communication must bridge ideological divides by articulating benefits that appeal across political identities and value systems. Ultimately, synthesizing Rational Choice Theory with ideological constraint theory offers a more comprehensive lens for evaluating political decision-making.

This dual-framework approach emphasizes both material evaluations and symbolic legitimacy, providing a nuanced understanding of how individuals respond to public policy. As political landscapes evolve and polarisation intensifies, recognising the combined influence of rational calculations and ideological commitments becomes increasingly essential for analysing political behaviour and crafting strategically effective and socially responsive public policy.

Public Opinion and Satisfaction with Public Policy

Public opinion and satisfaction with public policy are critical areas of study in comparative politics, particularly in understanding how citizens perceive and evaluate governmental actions. This focus is essential for assessing the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic governance, especially in regions like Latin America, where political and economic volatility can significantly influence public sentiment.

Public opinion serves as a fundamental measure of policy effectiveness and government performance, reflecting the extent to which citizens believe the state meets their needs and expectations. Studies have shown that public satisfaction with policy outcomes can significantly impact political stability, voter behaviour, and overall trust in government (Hetherington, 2005; Norris, 2011). Understanding public opinion is thus crucial for evaluating the success of democratic transitions and policy reforms in Latin America. Surveys such as the *Latinobarómetro* provide invaluable data on how citizens perceive their governments'

performance in areas like economic management, public service provision, and democratic governance (Latinobarómetro, 2023).

Several factors influence public satisfaction with government policies, including economic performance, perceived corruption, and the quality of public services. Economic stability and growth are often directly correlated with higher levels of public satisfaction, as they represent tangible indicators of governmental effectiveness (Sachs, 1989). Conversely, high levels of perceived corruption tend to erode trust and satisfaction, thereby undermining the legitimacy of political institutions (Morris & Klesner, 2010). Research indicates that citizens' evaluations of both their personal economic situations and broader national economic conditions strongly influence their satisfaction with government policies (Booth & Seligson, 2009). In Latin America, where economic fluctuations are common, public satisfaction often mirrors economic cycles—rising during periods of growth and falling during downturns (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011).

Perceived corruption is another key factor affecting public satisfaction. Elevated corruption levels can lead to widespread public disillusionment with political institutions, resulting in reduced trust and satisfaction (Morris & Klesner, 2010). In Latin America, corruption scandals have frequently provoked political crises, reinforcing the urgency of transparency and accountability in governance (Blake & Morris, 2009).

The quality of public services, including healthcare, education, and security, also plays a vital role in shaping public satisfaction. Accessible and equitable services tend to strengthen citizens' trust in institutions, while deficiencies in service delivery can provoke dissatisfaction and even political unrest (Grindle, 2010). In regions marked by significant social inequalities, equitable provision of public services is fundamental to maintaining public support and institutional legitimacy.

Methodologically, studying public opinion involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Large-scale surveys like the Latinobarómetro offer comprehensive cross-national datasets, while qualitative methods—including interviews and focus groups—provide in-depth insight into the motivations and reasoning behind specific attitudes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A mixed-methods approach ensures a more holistic understanding of public satisfaction and opinion.

Understanding public satisfaction and opinion has significant implications for policy development and governance. Policymakers can draw on insights from public opinion research to design and implement policies that are more responsive to citizens' needs and expectations. Moreover, maintaining high levels of satisfaction is essential to democratic consolidation, as it fosters civic engagement and political stability (Diamond & Morlino, 2005).

In conclusion, public opinion and satisfaction are essential elements in evaluating public policy outcomes in Latin America. By examining how economic performance, perceived corruption, and the quality of public services influence citizen sentiment, researchers can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness and legitimacy of democratic governance in the region. These insights can inform the development of more responsive, inclusive, and equitable public policy, ultimately contributing to the strengthening of democratic institutions.

Latin America as a Case Study

Latin America is an exemplary context for examining the interplay between Rational Choice Theory and ideological constraints within political dynamics. Characterised by its varied political landscapes and intense political activity, the region showcases a broad spectrum of political polarisation and a history rich in both democratic and authoritarian practices. This diversity makes it an ideal setting for exploring the complex behaviours associated with political decision-making and public policy evaluation.

The political decisions and behaviours of voters in Latin America often go beyond pure economic rationality, being profoundly shaped by deep-seated ideological affiliations. For example, countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina have witnessed the rise and fall of prominent political figures propelled by ideological motivations that resonate with large segments of the population—even when such support runs counter to economic logic (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011). These instances demonstrate the significant influence of rooted ideological beliefs on political landscapes, sometimes challenging the core assumptions of Rational Choice Theory.

Additionally, Latin America's historical backdrop of economic turbulence, enduring social inequalities, and pervasive corruption complicates public perceptions of governance and economic management. These conditions often lead to fluctuating levels of trust and confidence in governmental institutions, making the region especially conducive to studying how

ideological biases interact with rational evaluations of state performance (Booth & Seligson, 2009).

Issues of inequality and social justice are particularly salient in Latin America and are crucial for assessing the role of ideological constraints in policy evaluation. Policies targeting these deeply entrenched societal problems often receive strong public support—not merely for their economic benefits, but also because they align with the moral and ideological values widely held across the region (Murillo, Oliveros, & Vaishnav, 2011). This alignment underscores the role of ideology in shaping public policy preferences, often overriding purely economic considerations.

This case study of Latin America seeks to illuminate how ideological predispositions can not only influence but also reshape the structure of rational choice frameworks, highlighting the dynamic interplay between economic self-interest and ideological commitment. Such an exploration offers valuable insights into how public opinion and political behaviour are formed, deepening our understanding of the mechanisms driving politics in emerging democracies. By focusing analytically on this region, the study advances the broader discourse on comparative political behaviour in politically diverse and economically volatile contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This study proposes five hypotheses to explore the interaction between rational evaluations and ideological constraints in shaping public policy assessments across Latin America. These hypotheses synthesize key insights drawn from Rational Choice Theory and ideology-focused analyses, capturing the interplay of instrumental reasoning and identity-driven political orientations in contexts marked by volatility and contestation.

Priming theory (Miller & Krosnick, 2000) holds that national political and economic crises increase the salience of certain issues in public opinion, amplifying the effects of specific determinants of political attitudes. In Latin America—where democratic institutions often coexist with economic instability and fragmented party systems—it is expected that citizens' evaluations of trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction will be highly sensitive to both performance-based assessments and enduring ideological commitments.

This framework thus anticipates that negative perceptions of governance and adverse economic experiences, particularly those that are egocentric and retrospective, will strongly influence trust and satisfaction. At the same time, ideological orientations should mediate or moderate these effects—meaning that individuals whose political identities align with democratic values or the incumbent regime’s ideological position are more likely to evaluate political outcomes positively, even in unfavorable circumstances.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H1: Trust in Political Institutions and Trust in Government:

- Higher trust in political institutions—particularly Congress and the judiciary—will be positively associated with higher trust in government. This reflects the notion that confidence in foundational institutions underpins perceptions of state legitimacy and effectiveness (Mishler & Rose, 2001), especially where institutional credibility is fragile.

H2: Economic Satisfaction and Satisfaction with Democracy

- Greater economic satisfaction will be positively related to higher satisfaction with democracy. Citizens who view their own economic condition favorably are more likely to perceive democratic institutions as effective and legitimate, reinforcing regime approval (Anderson & Guillory, 1997).

H3: Perception of Governance and Trust in Government

- Positive perceptions of governance serving the general interest (as opposed to elite or private interests) will be positively related to trust in government. Conversely, perceptions of elite capture or exclusionary governance are expected to erode trust. This highlights the importance of fairness and inclusivity for fostering institutional legitimacy (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008).

H4: Employment Status and Satisfaction with Democracy

- Being employed is expected to be positively associated with satisfaction with democracy. Employment secures both economic stability and shapes perceived political efficacy and regime responsiveness, whereas unemployment may fuel alienation and discontent with democracy (Jensen & Svendsen, 2003).

H5: Ideological Orientation and Policy Evaluation

- Individuals whose ideological orientations align with democratic principles or the regime’s ideological stance are expected to evaluate democratic and economic outcomes more positively. Ideological congruence reinforces perceived legitimacy and can buffer negative assessments during adverse events (March & Olsen, 1989).

Dataset Description

To investigate the hypotheses concerning trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction, this study draws on data from the Latinobarómetro survey.² Conducted by the non-profit Corporación Latinobarómetro, based in Santiago, Chile, this survey captures public opinion dynamics across Latin America, focusing on a range of demographic, political, and economic factors. Selected survey waves from 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, and 2023 are utilised,³ as they provide consistent variables across a ten-year period, allowing for an appropriate timeframe to account for social, demographic, and political changes.

Since its inception in 1995, the Latinobarómetro has served as a key source for capturing detailed regional insights. It assesses public perceptions of governance, ideological orientation, and institutional trust. Each round typically includes 1,200 respondents from the larger South American countries and Mexico, and 1,000 respondents from smaller Central American nations and the Dominican Republic. Participants are adults aged 18 and older, except in Brazil, where the eligible age is 16. The surveys maintain a 95% confidence level, with a margin of error between $\pm 2.8\%$ and $\pm 3.1\%$ per national sample, ensuring high standards of reliability and precision.

The countries included in this study are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Spain was excluded due to its limited participation and its location outside the region, and Nicaragua was excluded due to incomplete data from the 2020 survey, which was affected by regime pressures and the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴

2 <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>

3 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1A4ZVQYadhWtlwwUoMucl7-otfdGuyAgy?usp=drive_link
Access to the data files used in this work.

4 Data for 2020 includes an online component for Argentina due to pandemic-related restrictions, surveyed between April 26 and May 16, 2021.

Table 1: Data collection dates and number of respondents for each survey round

Latinobarómetro Rounds	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020	2023
Data Collection Dates	May 31 - June 30	Jan 15 - Feb 15	May 15 - June 15	June 22 - Aug 28	June 15 - Aug 2	Oct 26 - Dec 15, Apr 26 - May 16, 2021 (Argentina)	Feb 20 - Apr 18
Number of Respondents	20,204	20,250	20,204	20,200	20,204	20,204	19,205

Variables

For the longitudinal analysis of the **Latinobarómetro** data, an initial process of **variable matching** was crucial to ensure that relevant variables were consistently present across all seven surveyrounds selected for this study.⁵ This step was necessary to maintain the **integrity of the comparative analysis** over a decade, enabling an accurate assessment of trends and changes in public opinion across diverse political and economic contexts. The selected variables were chosen based on their **consistent availability** across all survey waves and their **relevance to the central research questions**.

Methods

This study employs Cumulative Link Mixed Models (CLMMs) to analyze data derived from the Latinobarómetro survey. The choice of CLMMs is guided by the need to effectively handle the hierarchical and ordinal nature of the dataset. The responses to key survey questions are ordinal, ranging from very low to very high levels of trust or satisfaction. CLMMs are well-suited to such data, as they can model ordered response categories while accounting for the nested structure—specifically, responses nested within countries and across different survey rounds. This method also allows for the inclusion of random effects to address

5 <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cNH6ooXzaBIPyWoLKyhOjvayv0gU7Dvy?usp=sharing> Excel table with matching variables from 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2020.

variations across countries and over time, providing robust and generalizable conclusions regarding the factors that influence public opinion in Latin America.

The CLMM approach facilitates the control of both spatial and temporal variance, which is crucial in a region characterized by significant political and economic diversity. The models incorporate random effects for both countries and years, capturing unobserved heterogeneity that could influence observed outcomes. This structure aligns with the insights provided by Luke Keele (2007) on the dynamics of trust in government, allowing the models to account for both fixed and random effects for country and year—essential for understanding temporal variations in trust and satisfaction.

To test the research hypotheses concerning trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and economic satisfaction, the following general model is specified for each outcome variable:

Where:

$$Y_{ijk} = \beta_0 + \sum_{p=1}^n \beta_p X_{ijkp} + u_j + v_{k(j)} + \epsilon_{ijk}$$

- Y_{ijk} is the dependent variable (TrustGov, SatDem, SatEcon) for individual i , in country j , during survey round k .
- X_{ijkp} represents the predictor variables (Ideological, EconomicPerceptions, Rational, InstitutionalConfidence, Controls, PolicySaliency).
- β_0 is the intercept, and β_p are the coefficients for the predictor variables.
- u_j and $v_{k(j)}$ are the random effects for countries and survey rounds, respectively.
- ϵ_{ijk} is the error term.

Each of the outcome variables is modelled separately as follows:

Trust in Government (TrustGov):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{TrustGov}_{ijk} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Ideological}_{ijkp} + \beta_2 \text{EconomicPerceptions}_{ijkp} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Rational}_{ijkp} + \beta_4 \text{InstitutionalConfidence}_{ijkp} + \beta_5 \text{Controls}_{ijkp} \\ & + \beta_6 \text{PolicySaliency}_{ijkp} + u_j + v_{k(j)} + \epsilon_{ijkp} \end{aligned}$$

Satisfaction with Democracy (SatDem):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{SatDem} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Ideological}_{ijkp} + \beta_2 \text{EconomicPerceptions}_{ijkp} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Rational}_{ijkp} + \beta_4 \text{InstitutionalConfidence}_{ijkp} + \beta_5 \text{Controls}_{ijkp} \\ & + \beta_6 \text{PolicySalience}_{ijkp} + u_j + v_{k(j)} + \epsilon_{ijkp} \end{aligned}$$

Economic Satisfaction (SatEcon):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{SatEcon} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Ideological}_{ijkp} + \beta_2 \text{EconomicPerceptions}_{ijkp} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Rational}_{ijkp} + \beta_4 \text{InstitutionalConfidence}_{ijkp} + \beta_5 \text{Controls}_{ijkp} \\ & + \beta_6 \text{PolicySalience}_{ijkp} + u_j + v_{k(j)} + \epsilon_{ijkp} \end{aligned}$$

This study employs robust statistical models in many respects but is also subject to several limitations that merit consideration. First, the models do not incorporate interaction effects—between predictors. Such interactions could reveal complex interdependencies between variables—for example, how economic perceptions may differentially influence trust in government depending on ideological orientation. The absence of these effects simplifies analysis but may also overlook nuanced dynamics that could yield deeper insights into the data.

More significantly, regional variations—particularly distinctions between urban and rural areas—play an essential role in shaping public policy opinions across Latin America. These geographical disparities are critical, as they influence levels of trust and satisfaction with public services. Urban and rural areas differ markedly in terms of access to services, economic opportunities, and state presence, all of which contribute to divergent perceptions of governmental effectiveness and trustworthiness. For instance, a study in Ecuador employed a tax-based measure to assess subnational state capacity, validated with survey data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (Harbers, 2015). It found that citizens in municipalities with higher state capacity reported greater satisfaction with public services, underlining a clear correlation between perceived state effectiveness and public satisfaction. Notably, the models used in this study do not include variables that directly measure state capacity or policy implementation effectiveness—factors that are central to citizens' lived experiences and, consequently, to their levels of trust and satisfaction.

The study's focus on individual-level predictors, influenced by theoretical frameworks such as those proposed by Easton (1965)—who emphasized the role of personal attitudes in political systems—may result in the underrepresentation of broader systemic and institutional

variables. The exclusive use of data from the Latinobarómetro survey is justified by its extensive scope, consistent methodology, and rich set of relevant indicators across multiple Latin American countries and time periods. This dataset enables robust cross-national and longitudinal analysis unmatched by comparable sources. Nevertheless, relying on a single dataset may limit the generalisability and explanatory breadth of the findings.

Results

In refining the predictive models for public policy evaluation, three separate models were developed, each focusing on trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and satisfaction with the economy. This process involved a systematic approach to identifying significant predictors, constructing comprehensive models, and subsequently refining these models for parsimony and robustness.

First, statistical tests were conducted to determine significant relationships between the independent variables and each of the three dependent variables. This included chi-squared or Fisher's exact tests for categorical variables and Pearson's correlation for continuous variables. Significant predictors were identified using a stringent p-value threshold (< 0.001) to minimize the risk of Type I errors. Following this preliminary step, a comprehensive linear model was constructed, and stepwise regression was applied to refine the model—ensuring both parsimony and explanatory power.

Comparison of R-squared values, Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) between the full and reduced models showed that the reduced models retained most of the explanatory power of the full models, thereby justifying their adoption.

Finally, the models were constructed using Cumulative Link Mixed Models (CLMMs) to appropriately handle the ordinal nature of the dependent variables and to account for the hierarchical structure of the data, with responses nested within countries and survey rounds.

Cumulative Link Mixed Model for Trust in Government

The final model for trust in government was fitted using the Cumulative Link Mixed Model (CLMM) approach with the Laplace approximation. The model included several predictors,

such as approval of the president, political capital, trust in various institutions (Congress, judiciary, political parties, police), age groups, attitudes toward democracy, perception of national progress, family political orientation, past economic situation, and the main perceived issue of a lack of freedom of expression. Random effects were included for both the individual's identity (*idenpa*) and survey year (*año*) to account for the hierarchical structure of the data. The formula for the model is as follows:

$$\text{trust_gov} \sim \text{aprob_pre} + \text{pol_capt} + \text{trust_cgr} + \text{trust_jud} + \text{trust_part} + \text{trust_pol} + \text{age_group} + \text{att_dem} + \text{prgs} + \text{fampart} + \text{econ_pst} + \text{main_issue_Lack_of_freedom_of_expression} + (1|\text{idenpa}) + (1|\text{año})$$

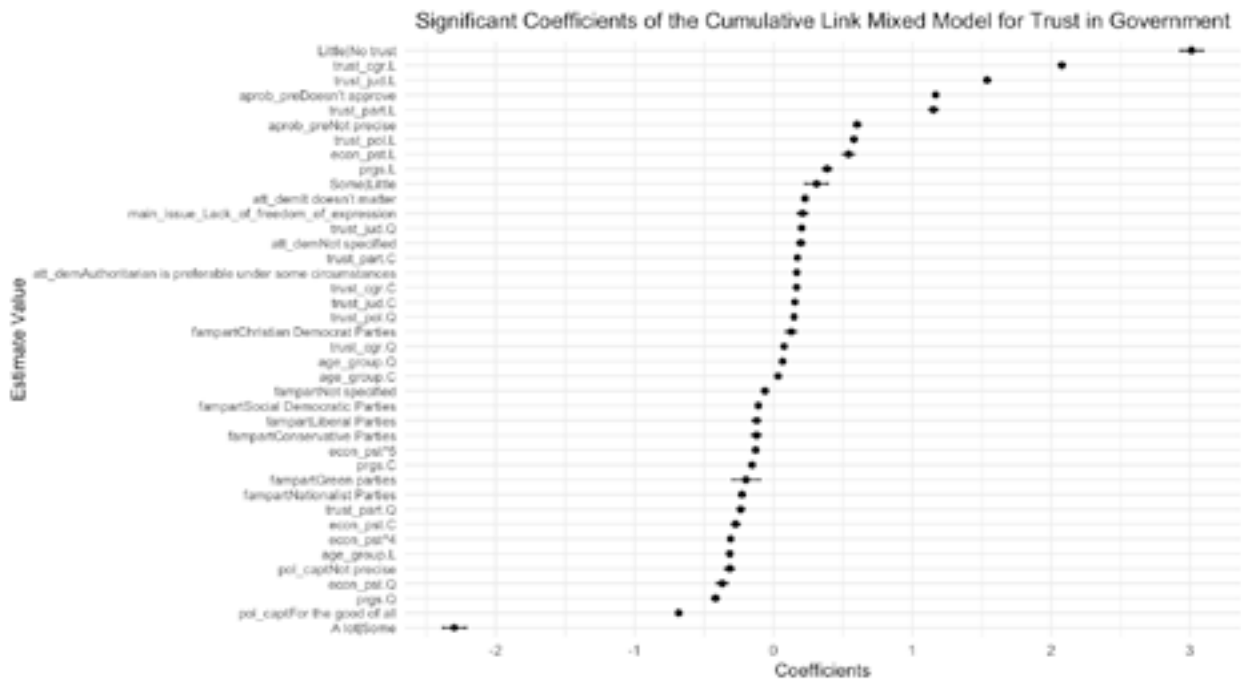
Table 2 summarises the model and highlights the estimated coefficients and their statistical significance. It also shows the fixed effects, which include variables like “approval of the president,” “political capital,” “trust in various institutions,” and more, along with their corresponding estimates, standard errors, z-values, and p-values.

Table 2: Data collection dates and number of respondents for each survey round

Summary of the CLMM Model for Trust in Government				
Variable	Estimate	Standard Error	z-value	p-value
A lot/Some	-2.2984410	0.0833867	-27.5636541	0.0000000
Some/Little	0.3098928	0.0829863	3.7342656	0.0001883
Little/No trust	3.0113113	0.0834205	36.0979955	0.0000000
aprob_preDoesn't approve	1.1678663	0.0150076	77.8183766	0.0000000
aprob_preNot precise	0.6019961	0.0263226	22.8699696	0.0000000
pol_captFor the good of all	-0.6831640	0.0165739	-41.2192705	0.0000000
pol_captNot precise	-0.3155147	0.0351942	-8.9649597	0.0000000
trust_cgr.L	2.0764892	0.0255915	81.1398172	0.0000000
trust_cgr.Q	0.0755952	0.0195979	3.8573145	0.0001146
trust_cgr.C	0.1659163	0.0136270	12.1755518	0.0000000
trust_jud.L	1.5384436	0.0231532	66.4462547	0.0000000
trust_jud.Q	0.2029339	0.0177606	11.4260706	0.0000000
trust_jud.C	0.1550168	0.0130209	11.9052630	0.0000000
trust_part.L	1.1521653	0.0321335	35.8555255	0.0000000
trust_part.Q	-0.2364008	0.0249681	-9.4681213	0.0000000
trust_part.C	0.1716674	0.0163833	10.4781835	0.0000000
trust_pol.L	0.5790419	0.0178475	32.4437821	0.0000000
trust_pol.Q	0.1483588	0.0145032	10.2293820	0.0000000
trust_pol.C	0.0158586	0.0115946	1.3677535	0.1713892
age_group.L	-0.3148217	0.0148234	-21.2381055	0.0000000
age_group.Q	0.0656822	0.0130664	5.0267940	0.0000005
age_group.C	0.0328850	0.0114074	2.8827696	0.0039420
att_demAuthoritarian is preferable under some circumstances	0.1669531	0.0179890	9.2808452	0.0000000
att_demIt doesn't matter	0.2272390	0.0158407	14.3452310	0.0000000
att_demNot specified	0.1970287	0.0273084	7.2149611	0.0000000
prgs.L	0.3858361	0.0333869	11.5564961	0.0000000
prgs.Q	-0.4175021	0.0264807	-15.7662947	0.0000000
prgs.C	-0.1537789	0.0155272	-9.9038555	0.0000000
fampartGreen parties	-0.1977098	0.1006671	-1.9639970	0.0495304
fampartCommunist parties	-0.0363464	0.0468925	-0.7751018	0.4382795
fampartSocial Democratic Parties	-0.1090978	0.0217148	-5.0241269	0.0000005
fampartLiberal Parties	-0.1217064	0.0283552	-4.2922035	0.0000177
fampartChristian Democrat Parties	0.1282940	0.0396422	3.2362980	0.0012109
fampartConservative Parties	-0.1228544	0.0345049	-3.5604864	0.0003702
fampartNationalist Parties	-0.2273140	0.0219575	-10.3524506	0.0000000
fampartNot specified	-0.0613319	0.0226632	-2.7062308	0.0068052
econ_pst.L	0.5412110	0.0438992	12.3285040	0.0000000
econ_pst.Q	-0.3688093	0.0398156	-9.2629244	0.0000000
econ_pst.C	-0.2733210	0.0295709	-9.2429066	0.0000000
econ_pst^4	-0.3085416	0.0192359	-16.0398977	0.0000000
econ_pst^5	-0.1288859	0.0130250	-9.8952655	0.0000000
main_issue_Lack_of_freedom_of_expression	0.2087097	0.0349854	5.9656173	0.0000000

Figure 8 visualises the significant coefficients of the model, plotting the estimated values, along with their confidence intervals. This visualisation aids in understanding the impact of each variable on trust in government.

Figure 8: Significant Coefficients of the Cumulative Link Mixed Model for Trust in Government.



Source: Latinobarómetro.

The random effects capture deviations from the overall intercept associated with each level of *idjenja* and *año*, indicating regional differences in trust in government as well as temporal trends. The calculated marginal and conditional R-squared values for the cumulative link mixed model are 0.627 and 0.635, respectively. These values suggest that the model exhibits strong explanatory power, with the fixed effects alone accounting for a substantial portion of the variance, and the addition of random effects offering a modest but meaningful improvement.

Cumulative Link Mixed Model for Satisfaction with Democracy

The final model for satisfaction with democracy was fitted using the Cumulative Link Mixed Model (CLMM) approach with the Laplace approximation. The model included several predictors, such as political capital, economic perceptions (present, past, and future), fairness of distribution, attitudes toward democracy, approval of the president, support for democracy, perception of national progress, and trust in Congress. Random effects were included for both the individual's identity (*idenpa*) and survey year (*año*) to account for the hierarchical structure of the data. The formula for the model is as follows:

$$\text{sat_dem} \sim \text{pol_capt} + \text{econ_prs} + \text{econ_pst} + \text{fair_dist} + \text{att_dem} + \text{aprob_pre} + \text{pro_dem} + \text{econ_ftr} + \text{prgs} + \text{trust_cgr} + (1|\text{idenpa}) + (1|\text{año})$$

The summary of the model is presented in Table 2, which highlights the estimated coefficients and their statistical significance. This table reports the fixed effects—such as political capital, economic perceptions, fairness of distribution, attitudes toward democracy, approval of the president, support for democracy, perception of progress, and trust in Congress— together with their corresponding estimates, standard errors, z-values, and p-values.

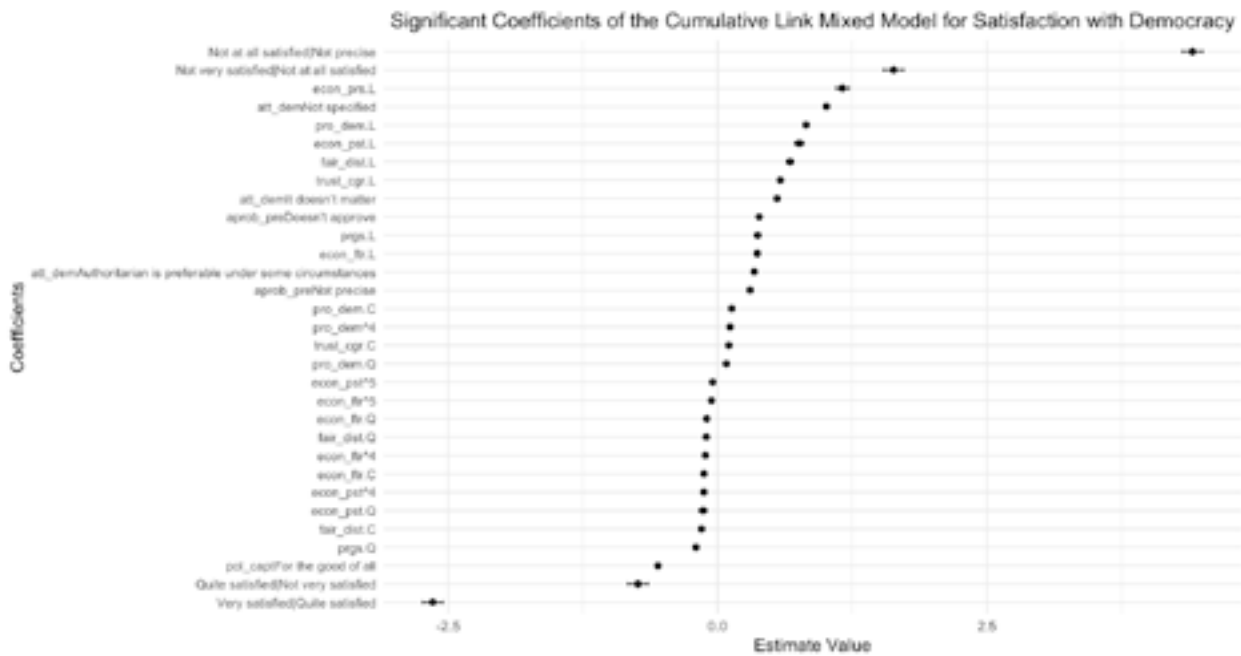
Table 3: Significant Coefficients of the Cumulative Link Mixed Model for Satisfaction with Democracy.

Summary of the CLMM Model for Satisfaction with Democracy				
Variable	Estimate	Standard Error	z-value	p-value
Very satisfied Quite satisfied	-2.6434381	0.0927820	-28.4908428	0.0000000
Quite satisfied Not very satisfied	-0.7407110	0.0924957	-8.0080607	0.0000000
Not very satisfied Not at all satisfied	1.6336402	0.0925745	17.6467662	0.0000000
Not at all satisfied Not precise	4.4080282	0.0936788	47.0546813	0.0000000
pol_capt For the good of all	-0.5548618	0.0147942	-37.5053234	0.0000000
pol_capt Not precise	-0.0473497	0.0304302	-1.5560116	0.1197053
econ_psr.L	1.1588858	0.0588300	19.6988868	0.0000000
econ_psr.Q	-0.0922338	0.0529258	-1.7427018	0.0813857
econ_psr.C	-0.0332559	0.0380682	-0.8735879	0.3823427
econ_psr^4	-0.0353712	0.0222088	-1.5926651	0.1112353
econ_psr^5	-0.0059512	0.0120318	-0.4946201	0.6208683
econ_pst.L	0.7576968	0.0385547	19.6524957	0.0000000
econ_pst.Q	-0.1366541	0.0347335	-3.9343615	0.0000834
econ_pst.C	0.0409261	0.0257288	1.5906720	0.1116834
econ_pst^4	-0.1278977	0.0164549	-7.7726412	0.0000000
econ_pst^5	-0.0442521	0.0111806	-3.9579446	0.0000756
fair_dist.L	0.6728680	0.0303401	22.1775486	0.0000000
fair_dist.Q	-0.1043669	0.0257584	-4.0517669	0.0000508
fair_dist.C	-0.1510720	0.0185044	-8.1641162	0.0000000
fair_dist^4	0.0093186	0.0109558	0.8505621	0.3950127
att_dem Authoritarian is preferable under some circumstances	0.3382505	0.0155890	21.6979957	0.0000000
att_dem It doesn't matter	0.5527087	0.0136714	40.4281582	0.0000000
att_dem Not specified	1.0090480	0.0235977	42.7604374	0.0000000
aprob_pre Doesn't approve	0.3859994	0.0131351	29.3867702	0.0000000
aprob_pre Not precise	0.3015501	0.0230704	13.0708527	0.0000000
pro_dem.L	0.8189233	0.0225288	36.3500288	0.0000000
pro_dem.Q	0.0827270	0.0196457	4.2109530	0.0000254
pro_dem.C	0.1317502	0.0197332	6.6765827	0.0000000
pro_dem^4	0.1154452	0.0155687	7.4152152	0.0000000
econ_ftr.L	0.3686280	0.0200988	18.3407567	0.0000000
econ_ftr.Q	-0.1007554	0.0180550	-5.5804831	0.0000000
econ_ftr.C	-0.1272081	0.0182878	-6.9558964	0.0000000
econ_ftr^4	-0.1128500	0.0167249	-6.7474291	0.0000000
econ_ftr^5	-0.0561947	0.0144118	-3.8992235	0.0000965
prgs.L	0.3723100	0.0277808	13.4017125	0.0000000
prgs.Q	-0.2023370	0.0222111	-9.1097109	0.0000000
prgs.C	-0.0036399	0.0128075	-0.2841994	0.7762576
trust_cgr.L	0.5807355	0.0183642	31.6232430	0.0000000
trust_cgr.Q	-0.0222703	0.0146823	-1.5168180	0.1293126
trust_cgr.C	0.1027527	0.0112844	9.1057318	0.0000000

Source: Latinobarómetro.

Figure 9 visualises the significant coefficients of the model, plotting the estimated values, along with their confidence intervals. This visualisation aids in understanding the impact of each variable on satisfaction with democracy.

Figure 9: Significant Coefficients of the Cumulative Link Mixed Model for Satisfaction with Democracy.



Source: Latinobarómetro.

The random effects indicate regional and temporal variations in satisfaction with democracy. For instance, the random effects for *idenpa* show that countries like Brazil (*idenpa* 76), Honduras (*idenpa* 340), and Panamá (*idenpa* 591) have positive deviations, suggesting higher satisfaction in these regions. In contrast, countries like Argentina (*idenpa* 32), Chile (*idenpa* 152), and Costa Rica (*idenpa* 188) exhibit negative deviations, indicating lower satisfaction. Temporal variations are also evident, with years like 2017 and 2018 showing higher satisfaction while years like 2013 and 2016 have lower satisfaction.

The proportional odds assumption was tested using a VGLM model. The summary of this model shows that the assumption holds as the coefficients are estimated and their significance is evaluated. The results from the likelihood ratio test indicate a significant difference between the null and final models.

The calculated marginal and conditional R-squared values for the satisfaction with democracy model are 0.301 and 0.327, respectively. This suggests that approximately 30.1% of the variance in satisfaction with democracy is explained by the fixed effects alone and 32.7% by both the fixed and random effects. These values indicate that the model has good explanatory power, with the fixed effects contributing significantly to the variance explained.

Cumulative Link Mixed Model for Satisfaction with Democracy

The final model for satisfaction with the economy was fitted using the CLMM approach with the Laplace approximation. The model included several predictors such as political capital, economic perceptions (present and past), fairness in distribution, attitudes towards democracy, approval of the president, support for democracy, future economic perceptions, perception of progress, and trust in Congress. Random effects were included for the individual's identity (*idenpa*) and year (*año*) to account for the hierarchical structure of the data. The formula for the model is as follows:

$$\text{sat_econ} \sim \text{pol_capt} + \text{econ_prs} + \text{econ_pst} + \text{fair_dist} + \text{att_dem} + \text{aprob_pre} + \text{pro} \\ \text{prgs} + \text{trust_cgr} + (1|\text{idenpa}) + (1|\text{año})$$

Table 4 summarises the model, highlighting the estimated coefficients and their statistical significance. The table shows the fixed effects, which include variables like “political capital,” “economic perceptions,” “fairness in distribution,” “attitudes towards democracy,” and more, along with their corresponding estimates, standard errors, z-values, and p-values.

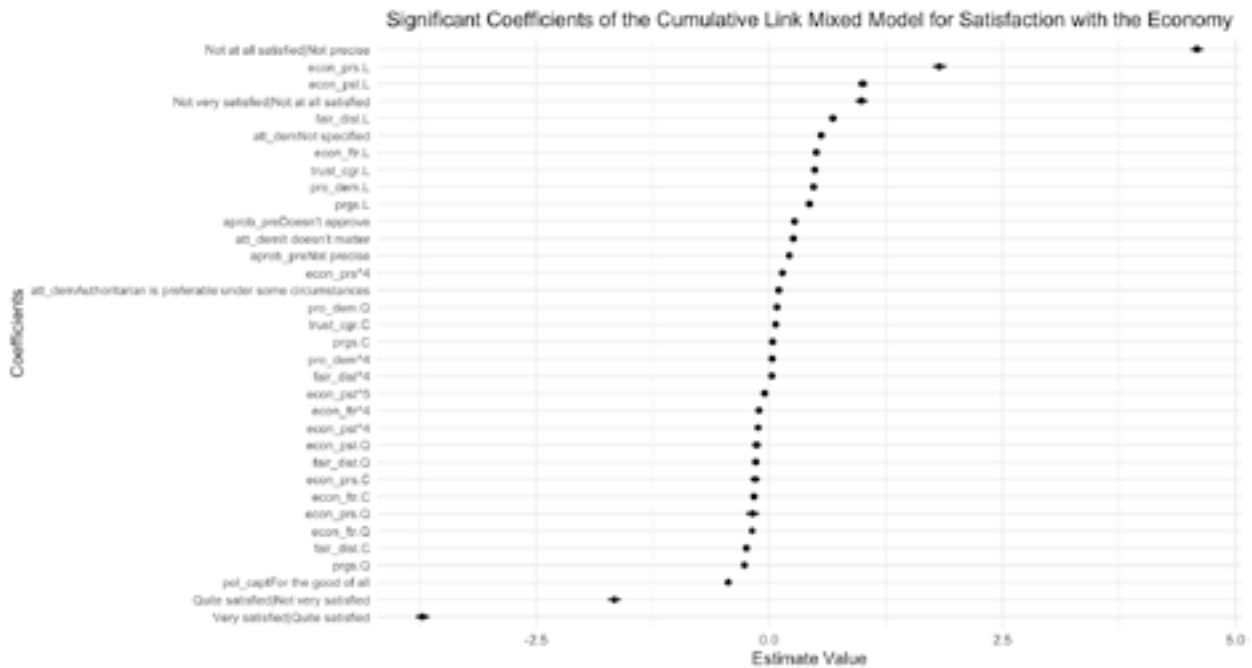
Table 4: Significant Coefficients of the Cumulative Link Mixed Model for satisfaction with democracy.

Summary of the CLMM Model for Satisfaction with the Economy				
Variable	Estimate	Standard Error	z-value	p-value
Very satisfied Quite satisfied	-3.7190731	0.0590658	-62.9648796	0.0000000
Quite satisfied Not very satisfied	-1.6605820	0.0579476	-28.6566199	0.0000000
Not very satisfied Not at all satisfied	0.9896491	0.0578163	17.1171204	0.0000000
Not at all satisfied Not precise	4.5870251	0.0601499	76.2599547	0.0000000
pol_capt For the good of all	-0.4382004	0.0151808	-28.8655283	0.0000000
pol_capt Not precise	0.0100400	0.0312937	0.3208315	0.7483381
econ_prs.L	1.8251376	0.0627989	29.0631944	0.0000000
econ_prs.Q	-0.1769900	0.0564355	-3.1361473	0.0017118
econ_prs.C	-0.1517055	0.0404101	-3.7541447	0.0001739
econ_prs^4	0.1404646	0.0234596	5.9875123	0.0000000
econ_prs^5	-0.0135958	0.0125406	-1.0841485	0.2782990
econ_pst.L	1.0032786	0.0401527	24.9865961	0.0000000
econ_pst.Q	-0.1341300	0.0361673	-3.7085949	0.0002084
econ_pst.C	0.0139079	0.0267283	0.5203421	0.6028252
econ_pst^4	-0.1170111	0.0170698	-6.8548425	0.0000000
econ_pst^5	-0.0481256	0.0115388	-4.1707774	0.0000304
fair_dist.L	0.6841703	0.0309562	22.1012254	0.0000000
fair_dist.Q	-0.1441308	0.0262766	-5.4851357	0.0000000
fair_dist.C	-0.2450673	0.0189284	-12.9470854	0.0000000
fair_dist^4	0.0286050	0.0112503	2.5425936	0.0110033
att_dem Authoritarian is preferable under some circumstances	0.1038085	0.0161194	6.4399755	0.0000000
att_dem It doesn't matter	0.2585449	0.0140831	18.3585165	0.0000000
att_dem Not specified	0.5564485	0.0239290	23.2541142	0.0000000
aprob_pre Doesn't approve	0.2729425	0.0134570	20.2826379	0.0000000
aprob_pre Not precise	0.2152046	0.0236783	9.0886906	0.0000000
pro_dem.L	0.4745791	0.0228376	20.7805882	0.0000000
pro_dem.Q	0.0818265	0.0200111	4.0890619	0.0000433
pro_dem.C	0.0158293	0.0205572	0.7700131	0.4412921
pro_dem^4	0.0329721	0.0163148	2.0209965	0.0432801
econ_ftr.L	0.5055506	0.0208444	24.2535135	0.0000000
econ_ftr.Q	-0.1823622	0.0186777	-9.7636470	0.0000000
econ_ftr.C	-0.1636025	0.0191524	-8.5421312	0.0000000
econ_ftr^4	-0.1082647	0.0176435	-6.1362457	0.0000000
econ_ftr^5	-0.0279080	0.0150840	-1.8501803	0.0642876
prgs.L	0.4312765	0.0283866	15.1929739	0.0000000
prgs.Q	-0.2655576	0.0227210	-11.6877464	0.0000000
prgs.C	0.0382884	0.0131788	2.9053052	0.0036690
trust_cgr.L	0.4865118	0.0185890	26.1719804	0.0000000
trust_cgr.Q	0.0284738	0.0148902	1.9122484	0.0558443
trust_cgr.C	0.0691049	0.0115427	5.9868832	0.0000000

Source: Latinobarómetro.

Figure 10 visualises the significant coefficients of the model, plotting the estimated values along with their confidence intervals. This visualisation aids in understanding the impact of each variable on satisfaction with the economy.

Figure 10: Significant Coefficients of the Cumulative Link Mixed Model for Satisfaction with the Economy.



Source: Latinobarómetro.

The conditional R-squared value of 0.349 and the marginal R-squared value of 0.341 suggest that the model explains a substantial portion of the variability in satisfaction with the economy. Including both fixed and random effects provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing economic satisfaction.

The model for trust in government included variables such as trust in Congress (`trust_cgr`) and trust in the judiciary (`trust_jud`). The coefficients for `trust_cgr` (Estimate = 2.07649, $p < 0.001$) and `trust_jud` (Estimate = 1.53844, $p < 0.001$) were positive and highly significant, supporting the hypothesis that higher levels of trust in political institutions are associated with greater trust in government. This finding aligns with Mishler and Rose (2001), who ar-

gue that trust in fundamental institutions enhances overall governmental trust. The results underscore the importance of institutional integrity and effectiveness in fostering public confidence in government.

In the model for satisfaction with democracy, economic satisfaction (*econ_prs*) was included as a predictor. The coefficient for *econ_prs* (Estimate = 1.158886, $p < 0.001$) was positive and significant, indicating that higher economic satisfaction correlates with higher satisfaction with democracy. This supports the hypothesis that individuals' economic well-being significantly influences their evaluation of democratic governance. Consistent with Anderson and Guillory (1997), the findings suggest that economic prosperity and stability are key drivers of citizens' contentment with democratic processes.

The trust in government model also included perception of governance (*pol_capt*). The coefficient for the perception that governance serves the good of all (Estimate = -0.68316, $p < 0.001$) was negative and significant. This indicates that when governance is perceived as serving elite interests, trust in government declines. This finding supports the hypothesis that inclusive governance fosters trust, whereas perceptions of exclusivity erode it, in line with Rothstein and Teorell (2008). The negative coefficient reinforces the idea that fairness and inclusivity are central to maintaining public trust in institutions.

In the model for satisfaction with democracy, employment status (*econ_pst*) was also a significant predictor. The coefficient for *econ_pst* (Estimate = 0.757697, $p < 0.001$) was positive and significant, indicating that employment improves satisfaction with democracy. This supports the view that employment provides economic stability and enhances perceptions of government responsiveness, consistent with Jensen and Svendsen (2003). Employed individuals are more likely to view democratic institutions positively, seeing them as effective and responsive to citizen needs.

The models also included ideological orientation (*att_dem*) as a predictor. In the trust in government model, the coefficient for preference for democracy (Estimate = 0.338250, $p < 0.001$) was positive and significant. This suggests that individuals with a strong commitment to democratic values are more likely to positively evaluate democratic and economic outcomes. This supports the view that ideological alignment with dominant political values enhances perceived legitimacy and reinforces positive policy evaluations, consistent with March and Olsen (1989).

Comparative analysis of the models shows strong support for all hypotheses. Trust in political institutions, economic satisfaction, perception of governance, employment status, and ideological orientation all emerged as significant predictors of trust in government, satisfaction with democracy, and satisfaction with the economy. Notably, the model for trust in government explained the highest proportion of variance among the three. The conditional $R^2 = 0.635$ and marginal $R^2 = 0.627$ confirm strong explanatory power, with fixed effects alone accounting for much of the variance and random effects adding a modest improvement. These high R-squared values emphasise the central role of institutional trust and other predictors in shaping public confidence in government.

In contrast, the satisfaction with democracy model yielded lower variance explained (conditional $R^2 = 0.327$, marginal $R^2 = 0.301$). These results suggest that while predictors such as economic satisfaction and employment status are important, other explanatory factors likely shape democratic satisfaction—factors not fully captured in this model.

The satisfaction with the economy model showed conditional $R^2 = 0.349$ and marginal $R^2 = 0.341$, indicating that the model explains a reasonable portion of the variability in economic satisfaction. Including both fixed and random effects allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the determinants. However, as with the democracy model, the lower R^2 values compared to the trust model suggest that other unmeasured factors may also significantly influence economic satisfaction.

Discussion

Rational factors, grounded in economic perceptions and direct personal experiences, shape public opinion. In the model for trust in government, variables such as approval of the president (*aprob_pre*) and perception of governance (*pol_capt*) emerged as significant predictors. The positive coefficient for presidential approval indicates that citizens who approve of the president are more likely to express trust in government. This finding aligns with Rational Choice Theory, which posits that individuals evaluate political actors based on perceived performance and the benefits delivered to their personal and collective well-being (Downs, 1957). Conversely, the negative coefficient for the perception that governance serves the interests of a few powerful groups underscores the critical role of perceived fairness and inclusivity. This supports the argument that citizens' trust is eroded when they view the government as catering to elites rather than serving the broader public (Rothstein & Teorell, 2008).

Similarly, in the model for satisfaction with democracy, economic satisfaction (*econ_prs*) was a significant predictor. The positive relationship between economic satisfaction and democratic satisfaction highlights the importance of material well-being in shaping political attitudes. This result is consistent with Anderson and Guillory (1997), who argue that favourable economic conditions enhance citizens' evaluations of democratic governance. Employment status (*econ_pst*) also proved significant, supporting the notion that financial security contributes to higher satisfaction with democratic institutions (Jensen & Svendsen, 2003).

Reflecting deeply held beliefs and values, ideological constraints also significantly influence public evaluations of political outcomes. The inclusion of ideological orientation (*att_dem*) as a predictor demonstrates the impact of ideological alignment on evaluations of trust and satisfaction. The positive coefficient for the preference for democracy suggests that individuals committed to democratic ideals are more likely to express trust in government and satisfaction with the democratic process. This observation supports the literature on ideological constraints, which suggests that individuals' core values and worldviews structure their political perceptions and behaviours (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009).

Partisanship likewise plays a critical role in shaping political evaluations. The positive coefficients for institutional trust—particularly in Congress (*trust_cgr*) and the judiciary (*trust_jud*)—indicate that confidence in these institutions is associated with higher trust in government. This finding supports the argument that institutional trust serves as a proxy for broader political trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001), particularly in contexts where ideological alignment reinforces institutional legitimacy.

A comparative analysis of the models reveals that the included predictors explain trust in government more comprehensively than they do satisfaction with democracy or satisfaction with the economy. The conditional R^2 value of 0.635 for the trust in government model indicates strong explanatory power. This result underscores the pivotal roles of institutional trust, governance perceptions, and ideological orientation in shaping public trust.

By contrast, the models for satisfaction with democracy ($R^2 = 0.327$) and satisfaction with the economy ($R^2 = 0.349$) exhibit lower explanatory power. While economic satisfaction and employment status are clearly influential, the more modest R^2 values suggest that additional factors—beyond those captured in the current models—also shape public sentiment. These factors may include media influence, social inequality, and political stability, all of which merit further investigation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that both rational-economic evaluations and ideological orientations significantly shape public policy assessments in Latin America. By analysing ten years of Latinobarómetro data across 16 countries, the findings confirm that perceptions of institutional performance and alignment with democratic values jointly influence public trust and satisfaction. This dual explanatory model contributes to the comparative politics literature by integrating instrumental and identity-based determinants of political attitudes, offering an empirically grounded framework for assessing public opinion in contexts marked by volatility, inequality, and democratic erosion.

Trust in government emerged as the most robustly explained dependent variable, with conditional and marginal R-squared values of 0.635 and 0.627, respectively. This result underscores the pivotal role of institutional trust—particularly in Congress and the judiciary—as a stabilising cognitive anchor in political evaluation. In many Latin American democracies, where executive overreach, corruption, and policy instability are pervasive, citizens appear to rely on broader perceptions of institutional fairness and legitimacy when assessing government performance. These findings reaffirm the importance of transparent, inclusive governance and procedural integrity as foundations for maintaining citizen trust, particularly in fragile political environments.

Satisfaction with democracy, by contrast, showed only moderate explanatory power, with conditional and marginal R-squared values of 0.327 and 0.301. While economic satisfaction and employment status remain important, they do not fully account for the observed decline in democratic satisfaction in recent years. The post-2018 divergence between satisfaction with democracy and trust in government suggests a potential shift in how citizens conceptualise legitimacy—favouring outcome-based evaluations of leadership over normative attachments to democratic procedures. This phenomenon is especially visible in countries like El Salvador, where concentrated executive power has earned popular support despite clear signs of institutional weakening. These patterns point to a growing risk of democratic detachment, with implications for regime resilience and democratization efforts in the region.

Satisfaction with the economy was also moderately explained, with conditional and marginal R-squared values of 0.349 and 0.341. Present economic perceptions and perceived fairness in distribution were key determinants, reinforcing the idea that both material outcomes and normative assessments of justice shape public evaluations. However, persistent economic

volatility in Latin America—marked by inflation surges, fiscal austerity, and abrupt policy reversals—may weaken the connection between macroeconomic data and individual satisfaction. In such environments, distributive fairness is not only about outcomes but also about perceived responsiveness and inclusion. The findings suggest that governments must address both structural inequality and the symbolic framing of economic policy in order to foster durable economic legitimacy.

The comparative analysis reveals that the predictors employed explain trust in government more consistently than they do satisfaction with democracy or the economy. This disparity suggests that institutional trust may rest on longer-term perceptions of procedural fairness, while satisfaction is more susceptible to short-term events, crises, and perceptions of immediate wellbeing. The relatively lower explanatory power of the satisfaction models reflects the multidimensional nature of these attitudes—intersecting with lived experience, identity, collective memory, and public narratives. Addressing these attitudes requires more than technical policy interventions; it calls for an integrated strategy that combines structural reform with symbolic and communicative efforts.

The findings yield several actionable insights for policymakers. First, reinforcing public trust requires not only transparency and institutional accountability, but also visible responsiveness to everyday concerns. Governments must demonstrate—both symbolically and substantively—that governance serves collective, not elite, interests. Second, economic policy should go beyond aggregate growth to prioritise redistribution and frame equity as a democratic imperative. Finally, because ideological alignment shapes citizen interpretation of performance, policy communication must be crafted to bridge ideological divides, connecting value-based narratives with evidence-informed governance. This dual emphasis on material outcomes and ideational legitimacy is crucial in a region marked by polarisation and institutional fragility.

In conclusion, this study advances the understanding of public policy evaluation in Latin America by showing that rational assessments and ideological commitments function as interdependent drivers of trust and satisfaction. By bridging economic indicators with belief systems and institutional perceptions, it offers a theoretically integrated and empirically validated framework for analysing political attitudes in transitional and contested democracies. The findings highlight that public opinion is simultaneously shaped by material conditions and the symbolic legitimacy of governance. Future research should expand this dual framework by examining the role of media ecosystems, subnational variation in state capacity, and

the temporal evolution of ideological commitments during successive crises. Such inquiries are essential to developing lasting strategies for strengthening democratic resilience and rebuilding citizen-state relations in Latin America's fragmented political landscape.

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ARTÍCULO

El daño antropológico provocado por el totalitarismo en Cuba. Causas, consecuencias y procesos de sanación

The Anthropological Damage Caused by Totalitarianism in Cuba: Causes, Consequences, and Healing Processes

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Resumen

Este artículo, parte de una investigación doctoral, estudia el fenómeno del daño antropológico causado por el totalitarismo en Cuba, sus causas y consecuencias, así como la necesidad de iniciar procesos de conversión y sanación antropológica, con vistas a transitar del *Homo saucius* al *Homo vivens*, creando las bases para un desarrollo humano integral, una adecuada ecología humana y una democracia de calidad en Cuba. El tema se aborda desde cuatro dimensiones o visiones: la antropología sociocultural, la antropología de inspiración cristiana, la psicología social y la filosofía política, estudiadas con un enfoque articulador en el ámbito de la antropología filosófica y desde una epistemología convergente: el hombre en situación.

Palabras clave:

Daño antropológico, Cuba, totalitarismo, humanismo, sanación antropológica, desarrollo humano integral, educación, vida en la mentira, *Homo saucius*, *Homo vivens*.

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2 Este artículo es parte de la tesis doctoral del autor.

3 This manuscript builds upon a publication that originally appeared in Canopy Forum, a digital platform from the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University: <https://canopyforum.org/canopy-forum-in-collaboration-with-derecho-en-sociedad/>

Abstract

This article, part of a doctoral research project, examines the phenomenon of anthropological damage caused by totalitarianism in Cuba, its causes and consequences, as well as the need to initiate processes of anthropological conversion and healing, with a view to transitioning from *Homo saucius* to *Homo vivens*, thereby creating the foundations for integral human development, a sound human ecology, and a quality democracy in Cuba. The topic is approached from four perspectives: sociocultural anthropology, Christian-inspired anthropology, social psychology, and political philosophy, studied with an integrative approach within the field of philosophical anthropology, and from a convergent epistemological perspective: humankind in situation.

Keywords:

Anthropological damage, Cuba, totalitarianism, humanism, anthropological healing, integral human development, education, life in lies, *Homo Saucius*, *Homo vivens*.

Introducción

Un aspecto fundamental en la transformación de un régimen totalitario, populista o autoritario a una democracia de calidad, y a una gobernanza con participación ciudadana, es concebir, entre todos, un proyecto de país. El Centro de Estudios de Convivencia (CEC-Cuba) se ha transformado poco a poco en un think tank independiente, es decir, en un laboratorio de ideas con académicos, intelectuales y especialistas, de la Isla y de la Diáspora, que formamos parte de la única nación cubana y trabajamos en conjunto para pensar prospectivamente qué país queremos proponer.

El problema que justifica la pertinencia, originalidad y urgencia de este estudio es que en Cuba, luego de más de seis décadas de totalitarismo inspirado por una ideología marxista-leninista, se ha experimentado un daño significativo a la persona humana.

Otra arista del problema es que, al no haberse articulado hasta el momento de esta investigación un corpus filosófico a partir de los fundadores de la nacionalidad y cultura cubanas, se constataba la primordial necesidad de identificar unos fundamentos antropológico-filosóficos de raíz cubana para la sanación del daño antropológico y que sirvieran, además, para inspirar la reconstrucción de Cuba; es decir, proponer un proyecto humanista cubano frente a una ideología foránea como “religión secular” (cf. Voegelin 1938).

Ese daño antropológico fue estudiado mediante entrevistas cualitativas realizadas dentro de la Isla y en la Diáspora, además de una revisión bibliográfica y la búsqueda de una hermenéutica del fenómeno, mediante una epistemología convergente de la persona en situación, a partir de cuatro abordajes desde disciplinas complementarias. Aunque el autor venía tratando este tema de forma empírica y periodística desde 1994, el marco temporal de esta investigación académica abarca siete años, desde la tesis de Maestría en Acción Política y Fortalecimiento Institucional en la Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, Madrid (2018-2019), hasta la defensa de la tesis doctoral en Humanidades (2025) en la misma casa de estudios.

Cuba necesita un humanismo renovado y renovador que sirva de inspiración para los procesos de “conversión antropológica” que el Papa Francisco (2019) expresó de esta manera:

No estamos viviendo simplemente una época de cambios, sino un cambio de época. Por tanto, estamos en uno de esos momentos en que los cambios no son más lineales, sino de profunda transformación; constituyen elecciones que transforman velozmente el modo de vivir, de interactuar, de comunicar y elaborar el pensamiento, de relacionarse entre las generaciones humanas, y de comprender y vivir la fe y la ciencia... Sería siempre... realizado a partir del centro mismo del hombre, es decir, una conversión antropológica.

Esa conversión antropológica debe ser continuada por un proceso de sanación y reconstrucción de la persona humana de los cubanos. Esta sanación se lograría principalmente a través de proyectos educativos para la formación integral.

Esta necesidad surge de los resultados de una investigación realizada por el autor en 2018-2019, en la que llegó a la conclusión de que existe en Cuba un daño antropológico, definiendo el concepto como “el debilitamiento, la lesión o el quebranto de las facultades y dimensiones de la persona humana, conservando siempre su esencia”, y señalando algunas de sus causas y consecuencias. En ese mismo trabajo se afirma que el daño antropológico no es propio de un solo sistema político, modelo sociopolítico, cultura o geografía. Se especifica también que ese daño tiene diferentes grados en cada persona y generación, aunque en su definición se precisa que, a pesar de ello, siempre se conserva intacta la esencia y la dignidad intrínseca de la persona humana.

Es justamente en esta precisión donde se remarca que, a pesar de cualquier daño, cada persona conserva intacta la imago Dei (Génesis 1, 27), la imagen y semejanza de su Creador, que

es su esencia y la fuente de su dignidad y derechos, y por la cual es posible la conversión y sanación del daño antropológico, descubriendo y corrigiendo las causas, e identificando y sanando sus consecuencias, especialmente mediante procesos de educación humanista basados en valores y virtudes que conduzcan al mejoramiento humano en el que creía José Martí, el más grande humanista cubano.

Debido a la manipulación y absolutización con las que, con frecuencia, se ha usado el concepto, así como por su reducción a una sola causa y por concebirlo como un quebranto irremediable, en este trabajo se especifica, por tanto, la descripción del daño antropológico en un contexto acotado, que es Cuba, y se recomienda su estudio en otros sistemas, épocas históricas, culturas y geografías en las que el daño antropológico tendría sus propias características. Se explican los matices del concepto y se afirma que, si se ponen los medios, se eliminan las causas y se sistematizan estructuralmente las condiciones de formación y reeducación humanas, es posible la sanación del daño antropológico mediante la promoción de un humanismo integral, en una ecología humana y en una democracia de calidad.

Consideramos que Cuba tiene, en sus raíces fundacionales, en la filosofía de sus patricios y en el acervo de su cultura y espiritualidad, la necesaria inspiración, enseñanzas, criterios de juicio, líneas de pensamiento y ejemplos de vida que necesita para la conversión y sanación del daño antropológico.

Cuatro abordajes y una epistemología convergente para una hermenéutica del concepto daño antropológico

Para estudiar el daño antropológico en Cuba causado por el totalitarismo, así como sus causas, consecuencias y posibles respuestas y soluciones, se abordaron, por un lado, las conceptualizaciones relacionadas, debido a que el término “daño antropológico” no había sido utilizado para definir el impacto de los regímenes totalitarios en las personas y sociedades que han sufrido este fenómeno.

Por otro lado, como podrían surgir dudas sobre su significado y ubicación en el ámbito de las ciencias sociales y la filosofía, se necesitaba precisión según las investigaciones relacionadas con este novedoso término y la importancia de su conceptualización para futuros estudios sobre el tema, así como para su aplicación en la práctica cultural, social y política.

Al principio de este estudio resultó necesario y pertinente realizar una búsqueda teórica desde variados campos del saber para, a partir de estas referencias, aproximarnos a una posible definición que pudiera describir dicho daño cuando es causado por el totalitarismo de signo marxista-leninista, con las peculiaridades caribeñas de ese fenómeno político en Cuba. Para ello, tres líneas clave de búsqueda guiaron esta inmersión en las referencias teóricas: una premisa empírica, una ubicación en la antropología y sus campos de estudio, y un posible “retrato-robot” identificativo para orientar la investigación referida al totalitarismo.

Habiendo establecido estas tres premisas —un acercamiento empírico al daño antropológico, su ubicación en el campo de la antropología sociocultural, y unos rasgos generales para poder identificar un régimen totalitario—, elegimos cuatro diversos abordajes del tema y su enfoque articulador en la antropología filosófica. A partir de estas tres premisas y de los siguientes cuatro abordajes pudimos llegar, más adelante, como resultado de aquella investigación, a la conceptualización del daño antropológico en Cuba, así como a la identificación de sus causas y consecuencias.

Un enfoque articulador: la antropología filosófica

Antes de reseñar las cuatro perspectivas o abordajes desde las que, como diversos árboles, pudimos analizar el daño antropológico causado por el totalitarismo en Cuba, deseamos al menos señalar el bosque que las engloba: la antropología filosófica. Este enfoque global articula mejor las cuatro perspectivas, que no deben ser consideradas como yuxtapuestas. Se trata de una cuestión de epistemología general.

Por tanto, se ha fundamentado teóricamente este fenómeno del daño antropológico desde cuatro dimensiones o visiones: la antropología sociocultural, la antropología de inspiración cristiana, la psicología social y la filosofía política.

Primer abordaje: una visión del daño antropológico desde la antropología sociocultural

Este estudio sobre el daño antropológico en Cuba se ha ubicado en el campo de la antropología social, pero en evidente correlación con la antropología cultural. Cabe señalar, para ser más precisos, que, para ciertos autores, como Barret (2009): “actualmente estos dos términos no denotan una división de enfoque precisa, lo que ha llevado a algunos antropólogos a

ignorar tal distinción”. Por ello, no hay que exagerar la diferencia entre lo social y lo cultural. Concordamos en que lo social está imbricado en lo cultural y viceversa. Lo social constituye la base histórica de lo cultural y lo cultural es la encarnación existencial de lo antropológico.

Desde el punto de vista teórico, se deja claro el enfoque diferenciador para fijar el marco de nuestro estudio en su dimensión antropológica. En ese sentido, nos acogemos a lo dicho por Barret (1984), quien afirma que, mientras “la antropología cultural, en la tradición de Boas, pretende aprehender la totalidad de la vida cultural humana, la antropología social aborda las bases organizativas de las sociedades humanas”, y continúa diciendo:

En la explicación que ofrecen tanto Radcliffe-Brown [...] como Evans-Pritchard [...] de los orígenes intelectuales de la disciplina, las figuras clave no son ni Hobbes ni Locke, que especularon sobre las condiciones fundamentales de la sociedad, sino Montesquieu (1689-1755) y los pensadores de la Ilustración escocesa, como Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) y Adam Smith (1723-1790), quienes, a partir del análisis de casos concretos, se propusieron deducir principios generales en materia de interrelaciones estructurales de la sociedad. Los antropólogos culturales han considerado la antropología social como una especialización dentro de la antropología cultural.

Es a esta última consideración a la que se acoge esta investigación. Al finalizar este primer abordaje, podemos resumir que el daño antropológico estudiado es un fenómeno que corresponde a la antropología social, la cual, a su vez, es una especialización de la antropología cultural. Este estudio se realiza como en círculos concéntricos, siendo el cultural el más amplio y abarcador.

Segundo abordaje: una visión del daño antropológico desde una antropología de inspiración cristiana

En el ámbito de la antropología se ha tenido muy en cuenta una referencia fundamental al humanismo de inspiración cristiana, que es más que lo estrictamente eclesial y cuyo eje central es la primacía de la persona humana, junto con la búsqueda del bien común. En efecto, el Concilio Vaticano II, en su Constitución Pastoral *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), declara que “El principio, el sujeto y el fin de todas las instituciones sociales es y debe ser la persona huma-

na”. Por esta razón, en nuestra investigación, que se desarrolla en el campo de la antropología filosófica, hemos dado especial importancia a este abordaje desde la inspiración cristiana.

La primacía de la persona humana

En este sentido, se han tenido en cuenta algunas de las fuentes inspiradoras de la concepción antropológica aportada por el humanismo cristiano, especialmente en las obras: Humanismo integral de Jacques Maritain (1937), Emmanuel Mounier (2002), con su visión en El personalismo comunitario, y Paul Ricoeur (1955), especialmente en su obra Historia y Verdad.

Otro error de carácter antropológico del totalitarismo marxista es, según san Juan Pablo II (1991), que este sistema viola el concepto de que “la libertad es valorizada en pleno solamente por la aceptación de la verdad. En un mundo sin verdad la libertad pierde su consistencia y el hombre queda expuesto a la violencia de las pasiones y a condicionamientos patentes o encubiertos”. Al vivir en la mentira y negar la verdad sobre el hombre, “el marxismo había prometido desenraizar del corazón humano la necesidad de Dios; pero los resultados han demostrado que no es posible lograrlo sin trastocar ese mismo corazón”. Esto marca y lesiona el modo de vida, las relaciones humanas, la convivencia social y la relación del hombre con su Creador.

En Cuba tenemos larga experiencia de ese intento de control sobre todas las esferas de la vida humana, incluida la Iglesia. Por ello, es importante para esta investigación y para su aplicación práctica el postulado que san Juan Pablo II (1991) expresaba en el documento citado acerca de la relación entre la defensa de la libertad religiosa y de la soberanía de la sociedad civil, de las familias y de cada ciudadano:

El Estado totalitario tiende, además, a absorber en sí mismo la nación, la sociedad, la familia, las comunidades religiosas y las mismas personas. Defendiendo la propia libertad, la Iglesia defiende la persona, que debe obedecer a Dios antes que a los hombres (cf. Hechos 5, 29); defiende la familia, las diversas organizaciones sociales y las naciones, realidades todas que gozan de un propio ámbito de autonomía y soberanía.

Por tanto, el error antropológico del totalitarismo abarca tanto la subjetividad personal como la subjetividad social, e introduce anomalías en la familia, la educación, los grupos inter-

medios de la sociedad civil, la política, la economía, la cultura, la religión y los medios para solucionar la conflictividad social. De ahí podríamos inferir lo que constituye la razón de ser de nuestra investigación, a saber, que la sanación del daño antropológico a partir del proyecto humanista de José Martí⁴ podría contribuir a subsanar las anomalías que, en el futuro de Cuba, pudieran afectar gravemente a la familia, la educación, la sociedad civil, la política, la economía, la cultura y a todos los ámbitos de la vida humana.

La actual batalla cultural es una expresión del influjo del carácter hegemónico de algunas ideologías o “doctrinas” que, ante el fracaso de los métodos de la lucha armada y de los regímenes totalitarios del siglo XX, intentan penetrar la cultura de las naciones para cambiar los paradigmas, poner en crisis los valores, cambiar los criterios de juicio y deformar las conciencias. Por ello, en relación con la llamada batalla cultural, también consideramos pertinente nuestra investigación, y adquiere vigencia y urgencia aquella alerta profética del Papa san Pablo VI (1975) en la Exhortación apostólica *Evangelii nuntiandi*, cuando dice:

Para la Iglesia no se trata solamente de predicar el Evangelio en zonas geográficas cada vez más vastas o poblaciones cada vez más numerosas, sino de alcanzar y transformar con la fuerza del Evangelio los criterios de juicio, los valores determinantes, los puntos de interés, las líneas de pensamiento, las fuentes inspiradoras y los modelos de vida de la humanidad, que están en contraste con la palabra de Dios y con el designio de salvación.

Esta frase de san Pablo VI constituye un paradigma y una visión programática para incidir en el desarrollo de una verdadera cultura humanista. Consideramos que es una propuesta estratégica indispensable para la sanación del daño antropológico en Cuba.

El error fundamental del socialismo es de carácter antropológico

En el propio documento citado, y resumiendo otros varios documentos de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia (DSI), el Papa san Juan Pablo II (1991) llega a la conclusión que define el carácter y las consecuencias del daño antropológico que produce un sistema que va contra la natu-

4 El autor busca, en su investigación doctoral, los fundamentos antropológico-filosóficos en la obra de José Martí, articulando, por primera vez, un corpus humanista siguiendo la escala de valores del propio Martí, que puede servir de inspiración para los procesos de sanación del daño antropológico en Cuba.

raleza humana. Este constituye, desde el punto de vista de la DSI, el principal fundamento bibliográfico que podría considerarse como sustento para nuestra investigación.

Hay que añadir aquí que el error fundamental del socialismo es de carácter antropológico. Efectivamente, considera a todo hombre como un simple elemento y una molécula del organismo social, de manera que el bien del individuo se subordina al funcionamiento del mecanismo económico-social. Por otra parte, considera que este mismo bien puede ser alcanzado al margen de su opción autónoma, de su responsabilidad asumida, única y exclusiva, ante el bien o el mal. El hombre queda reducido así a una serie de relaciones sociales, desapareciendo el concepto de persona como sujeto autónomo de decisión moral, que es quien edifica el orden social mediante tal decisión.

Las consecuencias de ese error antropológico son señaladas por el Pontífice citado, tanto las de carácter ético como las de orden jurídico y económico. Así lo expresa:

De esta errónea concepción de la persona provienen la distorsión del derecho, que define el ámbito del ejercicio de la libertad, y la oposición a la propiedad privada. El hombre, en efecto, cuando carece de algo que pueda llamar “suyo” y no tiene posibilidad de ganar para vivir por su propia iniciativa, pasa a depender de la máquina social y de quienes la controlan, lo cual le crea dificultades mayores para reconocer su dignidad de persona y entorpece su camino para la constitución de una auténtica comunidad humana. (san Juan Pablo II, 1991)

La negación de la verdad: principal causa del daño antropológico

El Papa san Juan Pablo II (1991), en el mismo documento, expone la relación entre la negación de la verdad y el totalitarismo, afirmando que la raíz profunda de todo daño antropológico causado por el totalitarismo es la negación sistemática y estructural de la verdad. En efecto, la causa principal de los sistemas totalitarios y del daño antropológico que han provocado en la persona humana la expresa el Pontífice de la siguiente manera:

El totalitarismo nace de la negación de la verdad en sentido objetivo. Si no existe una verdad trascendente, con cuya obediencia el hombre conquista su plena identidad, tampoco existe ningún principio seguro que garantice relaciones

justas entre los hombres: los intereses de clase, grupo o nación los contraponen inevitablemente unos a otros. Si no se reconoce la verdad trascendente, triunfa la fuerza del poder, y cada uno tiende a utilizar hasta el extremo los medios de que dispone para imponer su propio interés o la propia opinión, sin respetar los derechos de los demás. Entonces el hombre es respetado solamente en la medida en que es posible instrumentalizarlo para que se afirme en su egoísmo.

En este sentido, consideramos que el segundo fundamento bibliográfico que, desde el punto de vista de la DSI, podría considerarse como sustento para nuestra investigación es que la causa fundamental del error antropológico causado por el totalitarismo es la negación de la verdad, es decir, la vida en la mentira.

La negación del carácter trascendente de la persona humana

El tercer fundamento fundamental, desde el abordaje de la DSI, para nuestra investigación es que el daño antropológico es causado, sobre todo, por la negación del carácter trascendente de la persona humana. Como una deducción de la negación de la verdad sobre el hombre, el Pontífice polaco aborda, desde otro ángulo, el daño más profundo del sistema:

La raíz del totalitarismo moderno hay que verla, por tanto, en la negación de la dignidad trascendente de la persona humana, imagen visible de Dios invisible y, precisamente por esto, sujeto natural de derechos que nadie puede violar: ni el individuo, el grupo, la clase social, ni la nación o el Estado. No puede hacerlo tampoco la mayoría de un cuerpo social, poniéndose en contra de la minoría, marginándola, oprimiéndola, explotándola o incluso intentando destruirla. (san Juan Pablo II, 1991)

Al finalizar este abordaje desde una antropología de inspiración cristiana, podemos hacer una formulación sintética de los tres fundamentos⁵ que hemos considerado nucleares para nuestra investigación:

5 Debemos tener en cuenta que estos tres basamentos no son exclusivos de una antropología de inspiración cristiana, pues los comparten otras, básicamente “humanistas”.

1. Que el error fundamental del totalitarismo de inspiración marxista-leninista es de carácter antropológico.
2. Que ese error tiene como dos causas fundamentales: la negación de la verdad y la negación del carácter trascendente de la persona humana.
3. Esta doble negación operada por el modelo totalitario causa un daño, una dislocación, tanto en las facultades y dimensiones de la persona humana como en las estructuras de la sociedad y de la política.

Tercer abordaje: una visión del daño antropológico desde la psicología social

Al abarcar todos los sectores y dimensiones de la vida humana, el daño antropológico causado por el totalitarismo debe ser estudiado también desde el punto de vista de la psicología, especialmente de la psicología social. Aunque este estudio prioriza su visión desde la antropología social, se ha considerado necesario abordarlo también bajo el aspecto psicológico, porque de no hacerlo habría, además de una laguna metodológica, algo peor: en un daño “antropológico”, so pena de una antropología “dualista”, lo más profundamente afectado es la conciencia, la subjetividad, el espíritu, todos ellos nombres centrales para una “identidad” de signo trascendente y que no se “aliena” literalmente en las “objetivaciones”, en la exterioridad de las estructuras sociales, políticas y culturales.

El abordaje del daño antropológico interpretado desde la psicología se ha realizado, en esta investigación, específicamente desde la psicología social. Esta es una de las cuatro ramas de esta ciencia, junto con la clínica, la educativa y la organizacional, y es concomitante con la sociología, ya que, según Allport (1985): “estudia cómo los pensamientos, sentimientos y comportamientos son influidos por la presencia y acciones reales, imaginadas o implícitas de otras personas o grupos”.

Orsini (2012) ofrece una descripción más completa de esta ciencia y sus confluencias con otros campos del saber humano cuando dice que la psicología social:

Estudia la interrelación dinámica entre lo individual y lo social y su atravesamiento con la historia, la cultura, la política, la lengua y otros aspectos presentes en la realidad. Desde su comienzo, la psicología social fue entendida como un campo de confluencia entre la psicología y la sociología. [...] En las últimas

décadas son muchas más las disciplinas que lo constituyen: antropología, lingüística, historia, comunicación, economía.

Por su parte, y desde una concepción más dialéctica, Enrique Pichon-Rivière (1981), psiquiatra y psicoanalista argentino, fundador de la Escuela de Psicología Social Argentina, señala esta finalidad para la psicología social:

La psicología social que postulamos tiene como objeto de estudio el desarrollo y la transformación de una relación dialéctica, la que se da entre estructura social y fantasía inconsciente del sujeto, asentada sobre sus relaciones de necesidad. Dicho de otra manera, la relación entre estructura social y configuración del mundo interno del sujeto, relación que es abordada a través de la noción de vínculo... En última instancia, esta disciplina apunta al pleno desarrollo de la existencia humana.

La psicología social estudia a la persona en relación; en este sentido, Pichon-Rivière (1981) formula que:

Si esa relación es el objeto de la psicología social, su campo operacional privilegiado es el grupo, que permite la indagación del interjuego entre lo psicosocial (grupo interno) y lo sociodinámico (grupo externo), a través de la observación de las formas de interacción, los mecanismos de adjudicación y asunción de roles.

Entonces, para estudiar los efectos del sistema totalitario sobre la persona humana, se ha tenido muy en cuenta ese “interjuego”, que es una relación dialéctica entre lo que Pichon-Rivière (1981) distingue como “una psicología individual, que estudia lo endopsíquico; una psicología social, que trata de las interrelaciones intragrupalas (endogrupo); y la sociología, que trata de las interrelaciones intergrupales (exogrupo)”.

El daño antropológico desde una epistemología convergente: el hombre en situación

El daño antropológico, por tanto, se ha estudiado desde su índole social, puede definirse como el intento de descubrir, entre otras cosas, cierto tipo de interacciones que entorpecen el desarrollo pleno de la existencia humana. Pero esto representa solo un aspecto de los pro-

pósitos, pues toma también como objeto de indagación el descubrimiento de los factores que favorecen aquel desarrollo aludido. [También propone] una visión integradora del “hombre en situación”... ubicado en una determinada circunstancia histórica y social. (Pichon-Rivière, 1985)

Para Pichon-Rivière (1981), la psicología social se describe como:

La indagación de la estructura y sentido de la conducta, en la que surgió el descubrimiento de su índole social, se configura como una praxis que se expresa en un esquema conceptual, referencial y operativo, siendo la síntesis actual de esa indagación la propuesta de una epistemología convergente.

Según Cazau (2010), la epistemología convergente “es la postura según la cual las ciencias del hombre convergen sobre un objeto único: el hombre en situación”. En este sentido, Pichon-Rivière (1981) destaca siempre la índole social y pluridimensional de la estructura y sentido de la conducta. La denominación “epistemología” utilizada por Pichon-Rivière obedece al hecho de que no se trata de una postura frente a cierta realidad llamada “hombre en situación”, sino de una postura frente a las ciencias que estudian esa realidad.

La epistemología se define, en efecto, genéricamente, como el estudio del conocimiento científico. Esta epistemología convergente nos permite hacer un abordaje pluridimensional del daño antropológico causado por el totalitarismo en Cuba, a fin de no caer en una indagación reductiva del fenómeno, simplificándolo al plano de la psicología individual, o reduciéndolo al plano de la antropología social o, de manera simplista, apreciar únicamente una relación unívoca y aislada de un régimen político sobre la conducta de la persona, de los grupos sociales y de la sociedad en su conjunto.

El daño antropológico: su pluralidad fenoménica y su policausalidad

Desde esa visión de una epistemología convergente centrada en la persona del hombre en situación, se ha investigado la estructura de su conducta en esta sociedad cubana que ha estado sometida durante más de sesenta años y, por tanto, en el devenir de cuatro generaciones, a un vínculo estructural entre el totalitarismo y el ciudadano indefenso.

Pichon-Rivière, en su obra *El proceso grupal: del psicoanálisis a la psicología social*, afirma que “la configuración de las estructuras, sean normales o patológicas, está regida por los principios de policausalidad, pluralidad fenoménica, continuidad genética y funcional, y movilidad de las estructuras”.

Aunque los cuatro principios son inseparables, se ha profundizado en los dos primeros por la índole de este trabajo. El daño antropológico debe ser descrito desde una “pluralidad fenoménica”. Precisemos que Husserl entendía la fenomenología como un método de descripción más que de investigación analítica o empírica. Según Pichon-Rivière, “la pluralidad fenoménica encuentra su expresión en una gran diversidad (pluralidad) de manifestaciones de la conducta que involucran, en mayor o menor medida, sus tres áreas de expresión: el área 1 (área de la mente), el área 2 (área del cuerpo) y el área 3 (área del mundo externo)”.

El daño antropológico como respuesta de adaptación pasiva al medio

Aunque este trabajo no tiene como objetivo el tratamiento psiquiátrico o psicológico del daño antropológico, no es posible abordar, aunque sea de manera aproximada, una descripción del fenómeno que se estudia sin ubicar dicho daño antropológico en el campo que media entre la salud y la enfermedad mental.

Describir estos estados personales para poder comprender las conductas de los ciudadanos que han sido lesionados por un régimen totalitario es de suma utilidad para, una vez investigada su policausalidad y su pluralidad fenoménica, poder acceder a su sanación in radice, a un acompañamiento remedial o a una aceptación activa y crítica del daño crónico o persistente. En esta investigación se entiende que “daño” no siempre es una lesión irreparable, sino que existen diferentes grados de este: unos sanables, otros remediables y otros, en fin, crónicos.

Según Cazau (2010) y Pichon-Rivière (1981), “enfermedad mental es el proceso que resulta de un intento fallido del sujeto de adaptarse activamente a la realidad y de enfrentar y resolver las ansiedades básicas y, en especial, el núcleo depresivo patogenético universal. Encuentra su expresión en la conducta desviada, enferma o anormal”. Sin embargo, aquí no nos referimos a conductas que pudieran tipificarse como “socialmente” anómalas y que, en el fondo, son una “sana reacción” de los organismos, individuales o sociales, para contrarrestar situaciones externas “patógenas”, como es el caso de la desobediencia civil frente a la injusticia o

la objeción de conciencia frente a leyes que vayan contra la opción ética de una persona con conciencia recta, verdadera y cierta.

Como en este trabajo se trata de describir el daño antropológico, y también de sugerir propuestas para ayudar a su sanación, debemos conocer igualmente cómo se define la salud mental:

[La salud mental] es el proceso en el cual se realiza un aprendizaje de la realidad a través del enfrentamiento, manejo y solución integradora de los conflictos. La adaptación activa a la realidad, que implica la transformación constructiva del medio y la modificación del propio sujeto, es entonces el criterio básico de salud. Podemos decir también que consiste en una relación, o mejor dicho en una aptitud sintetizadora y totalizante, en la resolución de las antinomias que surgen en su relación con la realidad. (Cazau 2010; Pichon-Rivière, 1981)

Así, según los mismos autores, un sujeto es sano “en la medida en que aprehende la realidad en una perspectiva integradora, en sucesivas tentativas de totalización y tiene capacidad para transformarla, modificándose, a su vez, él mismo. El sujeto es sano en la medida en que mantiene un interjuego dialéctico en el medio y no una relación pasiva, rígida y estereotipada”. No debe entenderse que el ideal sea simplemente “adaptarse”, cuando esto puede ser el acompañante obligado de toda conducta acomodaticia, conservadora o fundamentalista.

Por tanto, concordamos con Cazau (2010) en que una persona estará dañada en mayor o menor grado por el totalitarismo en la medida en que haya asumido procesos de “adecuación o inadecuación, coherencia o incoherencia, de la respuesta a las exigencias del medio, a la conexión operativa o inoperante del sujeto con la realidad”. La adaptación es definida en relación con las ideas de salud y enfermedad mental, calificándose entonces “como activa y como pasiva, respectivamente”.

Cuarto abordaje: una visión del daño antropológico desde la filosofía política

Hemos abordado el impacto del totalitarismo sobre el ciudadano, los grupos y sus relaciones sociales desde las perspectivas antropológica, personalista de inspiración cristiana y desde el punto de vista de la psicología social. A continuación, haremos el análisis del daño antro-

pológico desde un cuarto abordaje: la perspectiva de la filosofía política, específicamente en un régimen totalitario de corte marxista-leninista como el que existe en Cuba desde hace sesenta y cinco años.

Toda la obra de Hannah Arendt, pensadora judía alemana, filósofa, socióloga, politóloga e historiadora, es de indispensable consulta para abordar el daño antropológico causado por un régimen totalitario, sea cual fuere el color político de dicho régimen. En su obra *Verdad y Política*, Hannah Arendt (2012) sostiene que todo comenzó a partir de la deconstrucción de la verdad mediante lo que ella llamó “ruido o monólogos pautados”, refiriéndose a las ideologías cuando estas se convierten en “credos” seculares que se intentan imponer como respuestas globales. Entonces, no solo se oculta la verdad, eliminada por un voluntarismo totalitario, sino que se produce lo que la misma Arendt (1972) explica:

El sujeto ideal del gobierno totalitario no es el nazi convencido o el comunista convencido, sino las personas para quienes la distinción entre realidad y ficción (es decir, la realidad de la experiencia) y la distinción entre verdadero y falso (es decir, las normas del pensamiento) ya no existe.

La vida en la verdad comienza a ser marginada y reprimida. No se trata de decir mentiras o disimular un hecho concreto, sino de vivir permanentemente en la mentira, lo que equivale a creer que el bien es mal y que el mal es bien, en un nihilismo existencial. De ahí se puede identificar que la primera causa del daño antropológico provocado por el totalitarismo es la negación de la verdad, y aún más, la destrucción de la vida en la verdad.

Se construye la “mentira política” para consumo de esos ciudadanos que, al asumirla, comienzan a sufrir un daño en su coherencia interna y en su actuación interpersonal y social. Al mismo tiempo, esa vida en la mentira lesiona o trastoca su capacidad de discernimiento ético, y va convirtiendo a la persona en sujeto pasivo y obediente de las explicaciones globales y las razones impuestas por el sistema totalitario, que ha convertido la ideología marxista-leninista en una “religión secular” o pseudo-religión (Voegelin, 1938) que debe ser acatada por todos, so pena de ser excomulgados de la sociedad. Esa ha sido la experiencia que hemos vivido en Cuba durante seis largas décadas, mientras medio mundo creía verdaderos los “ruidos” de la vida en la mentira, vale decir, lo que, en una acepción de la ideología que Arendt (1993) presenta, se conoce como “prejuicios particulares, pseudoteorías que, como cosmovisiones homogéneas o ideologías iluminadoras, pretenden abarcar toda la realidad histórica y política”.

Pero en este proceso, que remite al pasado, el origen del problema es vivir en la mentira. Arendt (1974) establece un paralelo entre los dos grandes totalitarismos del siglo XX y define la regla de conducta del totalitarismo de tipo soviético cuando afirma que:

Así como la “solución final” de Hitler realmente significaba que la élite del partido nazi estaba obligada a cumplir el mandamiento “matarás”, de igual forma un comunicado de Stalin explicaba el “darás falso testimonio” como regla de comportamiento para todos los miembros del partido bolchevique.

El “falso testimonio” como regla conductual y la negación de la verdad, señalada por Arendt como la primera y principal causa del daño antropológico, coinciden con lo que el Papa san Juan Pablo II (1991) ha afirmado: “el totalitarismo nace de la negación de la verdad en sentido objetivo”.

Por su parte, Sahuí (2012) reseña que:

Arendt atribuye a la destrucción de la verdad el mayor daño a la sociedad bajo el totalitarismo... Lo primero que hizo el totalitarismo fue suprimir la manifestación de las opiniones plurales, y esto podía haber sido suficiente para destruir la vida pública... Pero Arendt dice mucho más. Lo que señala de manera explícita es que fue la destrucción sistemática de la verdad, no su ocultamiento, lo que hizo el mayor daño al espacio público.

El daño antropológico como fruto de las “patologías modernas”: las ideologías

Al quedar vacío el lugar de la verdad y, consecuentemente, el espacio de la libertad, el totalitarismo viene a llenarlos con una ideología convertida en “religión secular”; es decir, impuesta como absoluta, consagrada como irreversible, defendida por todo el aparato del Estado, exclusiva y excluyente de todos los demás sistemas de pensamiento, los cuales son condenados como malignos y repudiables por la “nueva sociedad”.

Esta dogmatización de una sola ideología⁶ es identificada por Arendt (1951) como una de las peores “patologías modernas”. Es importante, entonces, deducir que la implantación de esta ideología excluyente por todas las vías —entre ellas la escuela, los medios de comunicación, las redes sociales, la propaganda oficial, los planes de adoctrinamiento del Partido y todos los discursos de dirigentes partidistas y estatales— no solo contribuye a la desinformación de los ciudadanos y a la deconstrucción de la verdad en esa sociedad, sino que también produce una severa confusión interior, una inversión en la escala de valores y profundos errores estructurales en las decisiones que toman los ciudadanos.

Hannah Arendt (1951), que —como se acaba de señalar— considera a las ideologías convertidas en religión secular como “patologías modernas”, va más allá del daño antropológico personal en cada ciudadano que vive bajo el totalitarismo. En su Prólogo a la primera edición de *Los orígenes del totalitarismo*, escrito en el verano de 1950, llega a la visión de la destrucción de la humanidad si no hubiera sido por las fuerzas de Occidente que lo evitaron. Al mismo tiempo, la filósofa de origen judío, con la experiencia vivida (en particular por su comunidad de origen) en su país natal, Alemania, afirma haber conocido la naturaleza radical del mal como consecuencia de su experiencia del totalitarismo.

El totalitarismo va contra la naturaleza humana: del “Hombre nuevo” al Homo saucius

Podemos afirmar que el totalitarismo va contra la naturaleza humana. No solo sojuzga al ciudadano, sino que implanta una vida de conculcación de la verdad, la libertad y la felicidad, que se opone estructuralmente a la esencia de la naturaleza humana. En este sentido, concordamos con Hannah Arendt (1951) en que “la característica principal del hombre-masa no es la brutalidad y el atraso, sino su aislamiento y su falta de relaciones sociales normales”.

El proyecto del *Homo novus sovieticus*, el llamado “hombre nuevo” comunista, lo que dio como resultado fue el *Homo insipiens* (hombre necio, falto de sabiduría o ciencia); no porque no quiera o no pueda conocer la verdad, sino porque se le impide acercarse a ella y se le somete a un mundo en la mentira. Por tanto, el *Homo insipiens* llega a convertirse en un *Homo saucius* (hombre herido o dañado). Arendt, citada por Rubio (2014) en *Más allá de la*

6 En consonancia no sólo con el pensamiento de H. Arendt, sino con una extensa tradición ampliamente documentada, asumimos aquí “ideología” en su sentido negativo, de origen napoleónico-marxista, de concepto “práctico-militante”, para encubrimiento y distorsión de la realidad, y no el “positivo” de poder imaginativo para contribuir a la identidad del grupo social. Cf. La obra de P. Ricoeur: *Ideología y utopía*.

filosofía, afirma “que no se puede llamar feliz a quien no participa en las cuestiones públicas, que nadie es libre si no conoce por experiencia lo que es la libertad pública, y que nadie es libre ni feliz si no tiene ningún poder, es decir, ninguna participación en el poder público”.

En Hannah Arendt (1951) encontramos también esta conclusión, que se refiere al germen autodestructor que la esencia antihumana del totalitarismo lleva en sus entrañas:

La dominación totalitaria, como la tiranía, porta los gérmenes de su propia destrucción. De la misma manera que el miedo y la impotencia de la que surge el miedo son principios antipolíticos y lanzan a los hombres a una situación contraria a la acción política, así la soledad y la deducción lógico-ideológica de lo peor que procede de ella representa una situación antisocial y alberga un principio destructivo para toda la vida humana en común. Sin embargo, la soledad organizada es considerablemente más peligrosa que la impotencia inorganizada de todos aquellos que son regidos por la voluntad tiránica y arbitraria de un solo hombre.

Arendt (1951), siguiendo también un espíritu esperanzador, concluye su obra más conocida, *Los orígenes del totalitarismo*, con esta verdad que puede contribuir a liberarnos de todo derrotismo:

Permanece la verdad de que cada final en la Historia contiene necesariamente un nuevo comienzo: este comienzo es la promesa, el único “mensaje” que le es dado producir al final. El comienzo, antes de convertirse en un acontecimiento histórico, es la suprema capacidad del hombre; políticamente, se identifica con la libertad del hombre. *Initium ut esset homo creatus est* (“para que un comienzo se hiciera fue creado el hombre”), dice Agustín (en *San Agustín, De Civitate Dei*, libro 12, capítulo 20). Este comienzo es garantizado por cada nuevo nacimiento; este comienzo es, desde luego, cada hombre.

En esta misma línea se desarrolla la escuela del neurólogo y psiquiatra vienes Viktor Frankl (1946), padre de la tercera escuela vienesa de psicología basada en la logoterapia. Él proponía que la voluntad de sentido es la motivación primaria del ser humano y que la recuperación integral del paciente depende de la atención que se dé a la búsqueda del sentido de la vida,

especialmente en situaciones extremas. Se estudió su obra más conocida, *El hombre en busca de sentido*, en la que describe la última de las libertades del ser humano en regímenes totalitarios o de discriminación radical:

El hombre puede conservar un vestigio de la libertad espiritual, de independencia mental, incluso en las terribles circunstancias de tensión psíquica y física. Los que estuvimos en campos de concentración recordamos a los hombres que iban de barracón en barracón consolando a los demás, dándoles el último trozo de pan que les quedaba. Puede que fueran pocos en número, pero ofrecían pruebas suficientes de que al hombre se le puede arrebatar todo salvo una cosa: la última de las libertades humanas —la elección de la actitud personal ante un conjunto de circunstancias— para decidir su propio camino.

Hemos querido reunir estas tres amplias citas porque ellas argumentan, desde tres disciplinas —la teología, la política y la psicología— que, a pesar de todo, siempre queda a salvo la esencia de la condición humana que, desde “el principio”, es la *imago Dei*. Esta es la fuente y el contenido de la dignidad y supremacía de toda persona.

Al finalizar estos cuatro abordajes para una hermenéutica del daño antropológico en Cuba —desde la antropología social, la antropología de inspiración cristiana, la psicología social, así como desde la filosofía política—, debemos insistir en que estas cuatro dimensiones no están separadas entre sí. Al contrario, están indisolublemente unidas en una sinergia que les da sentido y plenitud, sobre todo y principalmente porque estas cuatro dimensiones tienen como único sujeto y fin a la persona humana y su relación con la sociedad en la que vive y aspira a ser feliz.

A continuación, procederemos a hacer un resumen de los resultados de la investigación realizada en Cuba, Isla y Diáspora, mediante la consulta a autores cubanos que hemos comenzado a estudiar el tema y mediante entrevistas realizadas acerca de lo que se entiende empíricamente como daño antropológico y lo que se considera como sus causas y consecuencias principales.

Definición de daño antropológico causado por el totalitarismo en Cuba

Como resultado de la investigación bibliográfica y de las entrevistas realizadas, se presenta a continuación una definición del daño antropológico, sus causas y consecuencias, con el fin de orientar su sanación y prevenirlo en el futuro. En el estudio académico realizado por Valdés-Hernández (2019), se arribó a la siguiente definición:

El daño antropológico causado por el totalitarismo en Cuba es el debilitamiento, la lesión o el quebranto de las facultades: cognitiva, afectiva y volitiva, así como de las dimensiones: ética, social y espiritual de la persona humana, todas o en parte, según sea la profundidad del deterioro o trastorno causado, no obstante subsistir siempre la esencia de la persona humana y su dignidad.

El daño antropológico puede tener, por tanto, seis dimensiones: cognitiva, afectiva, volitiva, ética, social y espiritual. Estas dimensiones pueden presentarse todas o en parte, según sea el grado del trastorno causado y el tiempo en que se haya estado bajo este régimen. Se debe tener presente que el totalitarismo y otros regímenes autoritarios tratan de invadir la persona del ciudadano y que, sin ciudadanos formados y sanos subjetivamente, no hay democracia.

Estas seis dimensiones pueden haber sido afectadas en distinto grado: lesionadas, debilitadas o quebrantadas en los casos más graves. El grado podría depender de la cantidad de años de autoritarismo o de régimen totalitario que ese país haya sufrido o de la capacidad de resiliencia de la persona. Se ha notado que las generaciones de cubanos que recibieron más años de totalitarismo están más dañadas en casi todas estas estructuras internas de la condición humana. Esto provoca un impacto muy serio en los diferentes ámbitos sociales: la familia, el trabajo, el estudio, el compromiso social y la vida política.

En resumen, el proyecto político que proclamaba la creación de un “hombre nuevo” provocó la aparición de un hombre enfermo: el “Homo saucius”. La lesión antropológica afecta a la persona, “lesionada, debilitada o quebrantada”, en las diferentes dimensiones de su estructura interna o en todas ellas.

Causas del daño antropológico en Cuba

Se identificaron algunas de las causas principales del daño antropológico en Cuba a partir de las entrevistas realizadas para la anterior investigación. A continuación, mencionaremos solo doce de ellas:

1. Convertir la vida en la verdad en una vida en la mentira.
2. Menoscabar la libertad interior y el ejercicio de las libertades y derechos de los ciudadanos.
3. Entronizar una sola ideología como “religión secular”, excluyente de todas las demás, ya que, según la Constitución de la República (2019), “solo en el socialismo y en el comunismo el ser humano alcanza su dignidad plena”.
4. La imposición de un partido único, de acuerdo con la misma Constitución (2019), como “fuerza política dirigente superior de la sociedad y del Estado”.
5. Adoctrinamiento mediante un sistema educativo obligatorio e ideologizado, ya que según la Constitución citada: “la enseñanza es función del Estado” en exclusiva.
6. Utilizar todos los medios de comunicación para la propaganda oficial, porque, según la Constitución (2019): “los medios fundamentales..., en cualquiera de sus manifestaciones y soportes, son de propiedad socialista de todo el pueblo...”.
7. El uso de la represión, la violencia verbal, mediática, física o psicológica contra los que se oponen y también contra quienes intentan salirse del control total de sus vidas y proyectos, reconociendo que “los ciudadanos tienen el derecho de combatir, por todos los medios, incluyendo la lucha armada, cuando no fuera posible otro recurso, contra cualquiera que intente derribar el orden político, social y económico establecido por esta misma Constitución”.
8. La separación de los miembros de la familia por largos períodos de tiempo o la alteración de los espacios, tiempos y roles familiares.
9. Desarticulación del tejido de la sociedad civil, con control estatal de organizaciones, asociaciones de masas afines al Partido, e ilegalización de grupos independientes al no reconocerles personalidad jurídica, mediante una ley de asociaciones excluyente.
10. La organización de una estructura capilar de delación desde la familia, el barrio, el lugar de estudio o trabajo, todo tipo de organizaciones, las Iglesias, asociaciones fraternales y actividades de recreación.
11. Reescribir la historia: desde el inicio se intenta borrar el pasado, en especial aquel que transcurrió exitosamente antes del triunfo de la revolución socialista en 1959 y, de hecho, se reescriben selectivamente los libros de historia nacional y mundial.

12. La creación de un nuevo “lenguaje” en el discurso, en los medios, en la escuela y en las organizaciones, pues se secuestran las palabras y se les atribuyen nuevos significados conforme a los “dogmas” de la ideología única. Una nueva “semántica revolucionaria” trastorna tanto el sentido como la denotación y la connotación de las palabras, así como de los signos.

Consecuencias del daño antropológico

De la misma información aportada por los entrevistados en Cuba y en su Diáspora para la investigación realizada en 2019, se identificaron las principales consecuencias del daño antropológico en Cuba. A continuación, mencionaremos solo doce de ellas:

1. Lesiones a las facultades de la persona humana: ofuscación de la inteligencia, debilitamiento de la voluntad, afectación de la inteligencia emocional y desecación de la dimensión espiritual.
2. Incoherencia entre lo que se cree, se piensa, se siente, se dice y se hace. Doblez, simulación, decir en cada lugar aquello que se espera escuchar y no los criterios propios. Adaptación pasiva a la vida en la mentira.
3. Despersonalización y masificación. No saber qué hacer con la libertad ni cómo desarrollar y exigir las libertades civiles, políticas, económicas, sociales y culturales. Irresponsabilidad persistente.
4. Relativismo moral. Por no tener una conciencia bien formada —recta, verdadera y coherente—, se genera una moral heterónoma, dependiente de las orientaciones del Estado y las manipulaciones de la propaganda.
5. Analfabetismo ético, cívico y político. Afectación al proceso de personalización-socialización. No se aprende a pensar con cabeza propia.
6. Falta de proyecto de vida. Fragilidad o debilidad interior. Destrucción de la autoestima. Fractura del fuero interno que obstaculiza la toma libre, consciente y responsable de la propia vida.
7. Adormecimiento de la conciencia crítica. Desintegración de los sistemas de valores. Incapacidad de diferenciar valor de antivalor, imparcialidad de neutralidad y divorcio entre la norma y la actuación.
8. Afectación o bloqueo de la vida política. Usurpación de la soberanía ciudadana. Surge el “hombre-pieza”, que es un individuo controlado, parcial o totalmente, por el régimen totalitario.

9. Miedo paralizante y con frecuencia indefinido o ignoto. Miedo a la soledad moral. Aislamiento. Terror.
10. Anomia social. Estado de desmovilización del ciudadano con respecto a los sistemas de funciones sociales. Abstencionismo. Indiferencia.
11. Indefensión jurídica del ciudadano, motivada por la ausencia de independencia de los poderes ejecutivo, legislativo y judicial.
12. Alienación y ansia irrefrenable de huir de esta realidad. Se manifiesta de dos formas: la emigración, escape o exilio hacia el exterior de la Isla, e “inxilio-fuga mundi” o huida hacia el ostracismo de una intimidad amurallada o invisibilizada.

Procesos de sanación del daño antropológico

Una vez definido el concepto de daño antropológico, así como sus causas y consecuencias en la situación concreta de Cuba, es necesario indagar sobre el remedio a tan persistente y abarcador daño infligido a la persona del cubano. Se trata de diseñar y aplicar procesos de sanación que eviten las causas que lo provocan y que contribuyan a reparar las consecuencias derivadas de tal daño humano.

El aprendizaje operativo como sanación: la adaptación activa

Cazau y Pichon-Rivière (2010) adelantan cómo debe ser un proceso de sanación para poder superar o, por lo menos, asumir y controlar una lesión concerniente a la psicología social cuando describen que:

El concepto de adaptación activa que proponemos es un concepto dialéctico en el sentido de que, en tanto el sujeto se transforma, modifica al medio, y al modificar el medio se modifica a sí mismo. Entonces, se configura una espiral permanente, por la cual un enfermo que está en tratamiento y mejora opera simultáneamente en todo el círculo familiar, modificando estructuras en ese medio (produciendo una desalienación progresiva del intra y del extragrupo).

Cazau (2010) coincide en la importancia que tiene la familia como el grupo primario donde comienza este proceso: “la tarea del grupo familiar es la socialización del sujeto, proveyen-

dole de un marco y basamento adecuados para lograr una adaptación activa a la realidad en la que se modifica él y modifica al medio...”

La sanación del daño antropológico: gradualidad, discernimiento crítico, creatividad constructiva y capacidad de amar

Si se tiene en cuenta que, entre las características del talante de los cubanos, están el apresuramiento y las soluciones mágicas venidas de fuera, de arriba y súbitas, entonces resultan de suma importancia para un proceso de sanación del daño antropológico cuatro factores interrelacionados sinérgicamente. Ellos son:

1. La gradualidad del proceso de sanación;
2. La formación de la conciencia crítica para poder discernir en nuestro interior, así como el impacto en nosotros y en los demás, de la realidad en que vivimos;
3. La ejercitación y liberación de la creatividad constructiva personal y grupal; y
4. El desarrollo de la capacidad de amar.

El criterio de salud o superación del daño antropológico debería sostenerse en que una persona mentalmente sana, según Cazau (2010):

Es aquella capaz de hacer frente a la realidad de una manera constructiva, de sacar provecho de la lucha y convertir a ésta en una experiencia útil, encontrar mayor satisfacción en el dar que en el recibir y estar libre de tensiones y ansiedades, orientando sus relaciones con los demás para obtener la mutua satisfacción y ayuda [...] y desarrollar una buena “capacidad de amar”.

Desde el punto de vista de la psicología social, se puede deducir que la sanación del daño antropológico debe tener en cuenta, y observar en cada caso, grupo social y sociedad en su conjunto, los cinco elementos fundamentales referenciados antes, entre otros:

- Partir de una epistemología convergente centrada en la persona humana en situación y en relación.
- Tener en cuenta la policausalidad que lo origina.
- Describir la pluralidad fenoménica con la que se manifiesta.

- Evaluar sus consecuencias en las diferentes estructuras de la persona y de la sociedad.
- Seguir los pasos de una posible sanación. Esos pasos son:
 - diagnóstico, gradación, pronóstico;
 - adaptación activa, creativa y constructiva, no pasiva ni acomodaticia;
 - superación del miedo al cambio, a la pérdida del equilibrio y al ataque;
 - interacción proactiva y resiliente persona-sociedad en espiral, transformación personal y social;
 - índices de calidad del vínculo, la conducta y los comportamientos sociales sanos;
 - aceptación, control, ajuste y manejo de los daños irreparables; y
 - evaluación cíclica y medidas de reparación y mantenimiento.

Es indispensable y urgente comenzar a trabajar en la sanación del daño antropológico, incluso antes, y luego conjuntamente, con los primeros pasos para la transformación democrática. Proponemos algunas sugerencias:

1. El estudio realizado identificó que la primera gran solución es la educación. Con esto se quiere decir que se debe ir diseñando, entre todos, un nuevo sistema educativo, integral, plural, liberador, que tenga como centro, sujeto y fin a la persona humana.
2. Instituir un sistema educativo incluyente que desarrolle todas las dimensiones del ciudadano: la cognitiva, la emocional, la volitiva, la ética, la social —para tejer una convivencia fraterna— y todas estas dimensiones animadas, informadas y cimentadas en el desarrollo pleno y fecundo de la dimensión espiritual. En este proyecto educativo se debe incluir la educación de la conciencia moral en los valores y las tradiciones patrias recuperadas, para pasar de una moral formulada a una moral vivida. Esto facilitaría la transición del hombre enfermo al hombre viviente, la conversión, protagonizada por la misma persona, del “Homo saucius” al “Homo vivens”, según lo dicho por san Ireneo de Lyon (*Adversus haereses*, 180 d.C.). Es decir, el ciudadano consciente, con un proyecto de vida, capaz de escoger sus propias opciones y caminar libremente con su propia responsabilidad.
3. Otra dimensión de la solución es que el sistema educativo debe contar con un fuerte programa de formación ética, cívica y política (cf. Centro de Estudios Convivencia, 2014). En muchos países se plantea que la formación cívica debe ser una alternativa a la formación religiosa. O una o la otra. Nosotros no lo concebimos así: no se trata solo de una alternativa, consideramos que son, entre sí, un complemento fundamental, una fuente de inspiración mutua y un formidable sentido para la vida.
4. Concebir, entre todos, un proyecto de reconstrucción del tejido social. La reconstrucción de la sociedad civil es un nuevo nombre para la democracia.

5. Realizar un trabajo sistemático y plural de prospección estratégica para presentar alternativas de proyecto de país donde haya grupos consensuados entre cubanos de la isla y de la diáspora que desarrollen proyectos económicos, sociales y modelos políticos, y que se conviertan en la primera propuesta, incluso antes del acceso a la democracia, para entusiasmar a los ciudadanos con una propuesta futura y forjar una opinión crítica del modelo que están viviendo actualmente. Esto ayudaría a superar la anomia social que produce el daño antropológico.

Conclusiones

Las sociedades contemporáneas que han vivido bajo regímenes totalitarios o estructuralmente autoritarios comprueban que, además del deterioro de su economía y de la alienación de la participación democrática, en la base de todos los fenómenos de empobrecimiento socioeconómico y político, sufren como peor consecuencia lo que hemos llamado el daño antropológico.

El impacto que este daño antropológico causa en la etapa de las transformaciones hacia una sociedad democrática y, aún más, en las etapas de la transición estructural y de la consolidación de una democracia de calidad, se ha comprobado de tal magnitud y durabilidad que merece ser identificado, estudiado, tomado en conciencia por su gravedad, y abordar la búsqueda de posibles procesos de sanación a nivel educacional, psicológico, emocional y ético.

En este artículo se han esbozado las causas que provocan el daño antropológico y sus consecuencias, así como algunas sugerencias para su sanación, la cual debe ser protagonizada principalmente por la propia persona humana, acompañada por equipos de especialistas y educadores que no vuelvan a manipular las conciencias y subjetividades, sino que faciliten las herramientas y recursos necesarios para reconstruir su persona hacia un desarrollo humano integral.

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ARTICLE

Between the Cross and the Cartel: Assessing the Effectiveness of an Advocacy Strategy on Religious Violence in Mexico

Entre la cruz y el cártel: Evaluación de la eficacia de una estrategia de sensibilización sobre la violencia religiosa en México

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Abstract

Priests in Mexico face significant risks of violence from organized crime due to their prominent roles within local communities. This study evaluates the effectiveness of advocacy strategies designed to improve the safety and conditions of priests subjected to such violence. Key actors identified include the Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM), the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America (OLIRE), Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), and Dennis Petri in his capacity with various organizations. The research employed desk analysis, media review, and semi-structured interviews with representatives from these organizations. Findings indicate that, to date, the advocacy strategy has had limited impact, with no substantial improvements in the security or well-being of priests. While the strategy has contributed to increased awareness among advocacy targets and the general public, the extent of this awareness remains unclear. The limited effectiveness of the advocacy efforts is attributed to incomplete or inaccurate documentation of incidents, a lack of political will among Mexican authorities, and insufficient understanding of religious freedom among policymakers. These constraints highlight the need for more robust documentation, greater

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governmental engagement, and enhanced advocacy approaches to address the ongoing risks faced by priests in Mexico.

Keywords:

Priests, organized crime, advocacy strategy, Mexico, religious freedom

Resumen

Los sacerdotes en México enfrentan riesgos significativos de violencia por parte del crimen organizado debido a su papel destacado dentro de las comunidades locales. Este estudio evalúa la eficacia de las estrategias de incidencia diseñadas para mejorar la seguridad y las condiciones de los sacerdotes sometidos a dicha violencia. Los actores clave identificados incluyen el Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM), el Observatorio de Libertad Religiosa en América Latina (OLIRE), Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) y Dennis Petri en su calidad de representante de diversas organizaciones. La investigación empleó análisis documental, revisión de medios y entrevistas semiestructuradas con representantes de estas organizaciones. Los hallazgos indican que, hasta la fecha, la estrategia de incidencia ha tenido un impacto limitado, sin mejoras sustanciales en la seguridad o el bienestar de los sacerdotes. Si bien la estrategia ha contribuido a aumentar la concienciación entre los destinatarios de la incidencia y el público en general, el alcance de esta concienciación sigue siendo incierto. La efectividad limitada de los esfuerzos de incidencia se atribuye a la documentación incompleta o inexacta de los incidentes, la falta de voluntad política de las autoridades mexicanas y la insuficiente comprensión de la libertad religiosa entre los responsables políticos. Estas limitaciones resaltan la necesidad de una documentación más sólida, una mayor implicación gubernamental y enfoques de incidencia mejorados para abordar los riesgos continuos que enfrentan los sacerdotes en México.

Palabras clave:

Sacerdotes, crimen organizado, estrategia de incidencia, México, libertad religiosa

Introduction

The Catholic Church in Mexico has been profoundly affected by criminal brutality. While organized crime and its associated violence have impacted Mexican society as a whole, research indicates that priests are particularly vulnerable to such violence. Indeed, Mexico is considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a priest (Petri, 2020). Between 2012 and 2018, twenty-six priests were killed as a result of violence perpetrated by criminal organizations (Sotelo Aguilar & Gazanini Espinoza, 2018). Other clergy have experienced various forms of intimidation, including kidnapping, extortion, theft, and physical harassment.

These acts of violence are not necessarily driven by religious intolerance or hatred toward the faith, but rather by the priests' religious and social behavior. Priests may become targets when their actions conflict with the interests of criminal groups. This can occur when they engage in evangelistic efforts, attempt to convert cartel members, or participate in social activities that undermine the power or influence of these organizations. When priests assume the role of human rights defenders and publicly denounce injustices committed by criminal groups, they are also at increased risk of violence (Petri, 2020). In this context, priests are often perceived as promoters of social stability. The assassination of a priest can contribute to social destabilization, instilling fear, perpetuating impunity, and fueling further violence within communities (Sotelo Aguilar & Gazanini Espinoza, 2018).

In recent years, various efforts have been undertaken to raise awareness about this issue, both nationally and internationally. Father Sergio Omar Sotelo Aguilar, director of the Catholic Multimedia Center (CCM), authored the book *Tragedy and Crucible of the Priesthood in Mexico* (2017), which documents the widespread impunity in cases involving murdered priests. Based on this book, a documentary was produced to further increase visibility of the problem (Sotelo Aguilar, 2017). The documentary premiered at the Mexican Chamber of Deputies (The Mazatlán Post, 2019). Several NGOs, including the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America (OLIRE) and Aid to the Church in Need, have also advocated for greater awareness and the inclusion of this issue on the public agenda. In December 2019, CCM and OLIRE jointly requested a thematic hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the protection of the fundamental rights of religious leaders operating in violent and/or conflict-affected areas in Mexico (OLIRE / CCM, 2019).

This study investigates the issue of priests in Mexico who are harassed or assassinated by organized crime groups. It focuses on the advocacy strategy implemented between 2016 and 2020, which was initiated by the Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM) and supported by the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America (OLIRE), along with several other non-governmental organizations. The primary aim of this strategy was to bring these human rights violations to the attention of both national and international stakeholders.

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy by identifying both its successful elements and areas that require improvement. These insights will help clarify what worked, what didn't, and how future efforts could be strengthened. To achieve this, the following research question will be addressed:

Main research question: To what extent has the advocacy strategy implemented by the CCM between 2016 and 2020 been effective in improving the protection of priests harassed or assassinated by organized crime in Mexico?

Sub-questions:

- Who are the actors involved in the advocacy strategy?
- What was the goal of the advocacy strategy that was initiated by the CCM?
- How has the advocacy strategy been carried out?
- What have been the outcomes of the advocacy strategy?
- What could be improved to make future policy advocacy strategies more effective?

The objective of this research is to analyze the advocacy strategy aimed at improving the situation of priests in Mexico who are harassed by organized crime groups. The analysis will focus on relevant events and developments that occurred within the timeframe of 2016 to 2020. The goal is to map the strategy and identify which actors were involved and what actions were undertaken. In doing so, this study will critically assess the outcomes of the advocacy strategy at both the national and international levels, as well as within the Mexican Catholic Church. By taking these dimensions into account, the research will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness. The findings of this study will inform a policy brief that offers recommendations, where applicable, for strengthening and improving future advocacy efforts.

Theoretical Framework

To successfully conduct this research, it is first necessary to examine the key concepts that will be employed throughout the study. This section discusses relevant theories and analytical frameworks related to the concepts of effectiveness and advocacy strategy evaluation within the field of human rights.

Advocacy

Morariu and Brennan (2009, p. 100) define advocacy as “a wide range of activities conducted to influence decision makers at various levels.” They argue that this broad definition is deliberately inclusive, capturing the diversity of strategies and actions that contribute to effective and successful advocacy campaigns—beyond policy change alone.

Building on this definition, Arensman et al. (2015, p. 42), in the MFS II Joint Evaluation of International Lobbying and Advocacy, refine the concept further by situating it more explicitly within the field of human rights and global development. They define advocacy as “a wide range of activities conducted to influence decision makers at different levels toward the overall aim of development interventions to combat the structural causes of poverty and injustice.” While narrowing the scope to the development and human rights context, they maintain that advocacy encompasses a broad array of strategies that go beyond mere policy influence. These include awareness raising, litigation, public education, capacity building, relationship development, and network formation.

Moreover, Arensman et al. (2015, p. 42) identify two primary methods of influencing decision makers: (1) persuasion and cooperation (lobbying), and (2) pressure and confrontation (e.g., naming and shaming). They define lobbying as “the influencing of policymakers by building relations, creating awareness, and finding connections to build enthusiasm among policymakers for the chosen aim.” Within this framework, awareness raising and the dissemination of information are seen as key strategies to reach decision makers.

For the purposes of this research, the definition proposed by Arensman et al. (2015) will be adopted, as it offers the most comprehensive and contextually relevant conceptualization of advocacy in the field of human rights.

In addition to defining advocacy, scholars such as Gormley and Cymrot (2006) and Mosley (2011) distinguish between two broad types of advocacy strategies: insider and outsider strategies. Arensman (2018), in her doctoral dissertation *Negotiating Effectiveness: The Politics of Results in Advocacy for Development and its Evaluation*, further elaborates on this distinction. According to her:

“Insider strategies are about being included and creating space for inclusiveness in decision-making and policy processes. These strategies include lobbying, playing an internal advisory role in official policy making spaces, and cooperating with targeted individuals, governments, organisations and corporations (...). Outsider strategies, in contrast, focus on putting pressure on advocacy targets (i.e., communities, publics, policymakers, decision makers, corporations or private sector stakeholders, civil society). Pressure is applied through confrontation, such as media campaigns or naming and shaming.” (Arensman, 2018)

This insider–outsider framework will be used in the present study to categorize and assess the strategies employed during the advocacy campaign. Applying this structure will help clarify how the advocacy strategy was carried out and will contribute to a more systematic and comprehensive evaluation. Figure 1, presented below, provides a visual overview of this framework.

Figure 1. What is advocacy



Note. Retrieved from *Negotiating effectiveness: The politics of results in advocacy for development and its evaluation*, by B. Arensman, 2018, p. 25.

Effectiveness

In order to determine whether an advocacy strategy has been effective, it is first necessary to define what is meant by effectiveness. While numerous studies have explored the effectiveness of advocacy strategies, few offer a concrete definition of what effectiveness precisely entails. Arensman (2018, pp. 15–19) notes that effectiveness is often understood as the extent to which predefined goals are achieved. As a result, the effectiveness of advocacy is frequently assessed based on whether policy or social change has occurred, since these are commonly the primary objectives of advocacy efforts.

However, policy and social change typically result from a combination of strategies and actions carried out by multiple actors and coalitions. This makes it difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between the advocacy activities of a single organization and broader policy or social outcomes (Miertoiu, 2018).

Moreover, this outcome-focused approach tends to view effectiveness solely in terms of end results. Brown, Ebrahim, and Batliwala (2012) offer a more nuanced perspective by proposing that advocacy effectiveness should be assessed across multiple dimensions. These include policy influence, organizational capacity building, the strengthening of coalitions and networks, and the broadening of public awareness. By considering these additional variables, a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of advocacy effectiveness can be achieved—one that goes beyond a narrow focus on final impact outcomes such as policy change.

This research adopts the multidimensional framework proposed by Brown, Ebrahim, and Batliwala (2012) and will evaluate effectiveness across these various dimensions. Nevertheless, traditional impact outcomes, such as policy or social change, will also be considered, as they may still provide valuable insight into the overall effectiveness of the advocacy strategy.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the effectiveness of an advocacy strategy is a complex process due to the wide variety of factors involved. Brennan and Morariu (2009, p. 101) identify the following six challenges to advocacy evaluation:

1. **Complexity:** Advocates are trying to advance their goals in an ever-changing environment, and the path to success is complex and iterative. Often, linear models are not very helpful for trying to understand the nonlinear nature of these systems.
2. **Role of external forces:** There are forces beyond advocates' control affecting the environment surrounding the campaign and advocates' ability to make progress. Timing can be crucial to success, and many organizations make great strides when a "window of opportunity" presents itself.
3. **Time frame:** It may take 20 years to reach an ultimate advocacy "big win," making it difficult to sustain organizational capacity, funding, issue area support, and to communicate success over the long term.
4. **Shifting strategies and milestones:** Advocates must adjust to the changing environment, which may result in modified strategies and altered ideas of campaign milestones.
5. **Attribution:** Successful campaigns are often composed of multiple players operating complementary campaigns. When a campaign is successful, there can be pressure for advocates to "own" the win. Contribution, on the other hand, acknowledges the complex, interrelated forces at work and does not alienate friendly partners and collaborators.
6. **Sustainability:** Advocacy organizations need to maintain strength throughout the life of an issue. While funding is a component of sustainability, it is not the only issue: staffing and other resources are also critical.
7. **Interim progress:** Since advocacy's long-term goals are far into the future, advocates need interim measures of success to show work is on track. Interim measures keep advocates informed about their own progress and help them share success stories on the way to the "big win."

Arensman (2018, pp. 26–27) further argues that some forms of change are neither explicit nor visible, as they occur behind closed doors or through personal interactions, making them difficult to trace. This is particularly true for interim changes, which often remain invisible. Such outcomes may include "relationships built, trust gained, space created for civil society voices, and the achievement of raised awareness."

A widely used tool for evaluating advocacy strategies is the Theory of Change (ToC). According to Arensman et al. (2015, p. 48), ToC "aims to define all of the building blocks required to bring about a given long-term goal and to describe the types of interventions that will bring about the outcomes depicted in a schematic illustrating the pathway of change. Each expected outcome in the pathway of change is tied to an intervention or intervention strategy, revealing the often complex web of activity that is required to bring about change." ToC

is often referred to as a “road map” or “blueprint” for getting from “here to there” (Stein & Valters, 2012).

Despite its widespread application, critics argue that ToC predominantly functions as an outcome-based approach that relies on linear cause-effect reasoning (i.e., if we do this, then that will occur). This leads organizations to focus primarily on achieving intended outcomes while overlooking unintended or emergent effects (Arensman, van Waegeningh, & van Wessel, 2018). In this form, ToC does not adequately address the evaluation challenges outlined by Brennan and Morariu (2009, p. 101), such as complexity, attribution, and the dynamic nature of change.

To address these limitations, Arensman, van Waegeningh, and van Wessel (2018, pp. 5-12) propose an alternative approach: strategy as practice. This perspective emphasizes observing strategy as it unfolds in real time. They argue, “By looking at the processes as they happen in practice, we see strategy as something actors do while adapting to changing circumstances (...). To understand practice, we listened to and analysed verbal and reported narratives. We learned that the challenge with advocacy is understanding outcomes as occurring in practice, rather than approaching outcomes through a ToC that starts from pre-planned results and their assessment through pre-set indicators (...). To understand advocacy outcomes as they are, rather than seeking to assess outcomes against a predefined theoretical framework, evaluators must examine how strategy develops in practice.”

This approach will form the foundation of the present research. In line with this framework, Arensman, van Waegeningh, and van Wessel (2018) emphasize that advocates involved in the strategy should be placed at the center of the analysis. Rather than seeking linear cause-effect relationships, evaluators should explore how advocates act strategically by making practical judgments, navigating evolving circumstances, and interacting with organizational, environmental, and theoretical contexts. These practices must be understood and reflected upon in terms of their strategic nature, recursiveness, and relational dynamics. Only then can the broader scope of a program’s achievements be meaningfully assessed.

The authors further stress that evaluators should adopt an open, qualitative approach to data collection. They should listen attentively and without preconceived judgment, critically questioning and investigating strategic practices. Narratives that emerge around strategy as dynamic practice become essential to understanding how change processes are shaped and developed, what forms of human interaction prove meaningful, and how these relate to diverse roles, perspectives, theoretical assumptions, and outcomes.

Conceptualization and Operationalization

To evaluate the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy in a structured and transparent manner, this section provides a conceptual framework that defines and operationalizes the study's central concepts. The indicators presented in the following tables are derived from leading literature on advocacy evaluation, including the works of Arensman et al. (2015), Brown, Ebrahim, and Batliwala (2012), and Brennan and Morariu (2009). These sources were selected for their analytical relevance to the field of human rights advocacy, particularly in contexts where linear models of change and direct attribution are insufficient.

The framework distinguishes between advocacy strategies, categorized as either insider or outsider approaches, and the various dimensions of advocacy effectiveness, divided into impact and intermediate outcomes. This multidimensional approach aligns with the exploratory and qualitative nature of this study, enabling a nuanced understanding of how advocacy activities translate into observable effects. The selection of indicators was guided by their prominence in academic literature and their suitability for assessing advocacy in complex, dynamic environments such as the Mexican context described in this research.

Concept	Dimension	Sub dimension	Indicators
Advocacy	Insider strategies	Advising	Developing and sharing advise papers Developing recommendation paper with implementation plan
		Evidence based messaging	Research reports Annual reports Documenting incidents
		Lobbying	Taking part in discussions with policymakers
	Outsider strategies	Awareness raising	Issuing media campaign(s)
		Blaming and shaming	Publishing press releases that blame certain actors

Concept	Dimension	Sub dimension	Indicator
Evaluating advocacy effectiveness	Impact outcomes	Policy change	Creation or implementation of new or existing mechanisms New policies established (bills, regulations, administrative policies)
		Social change	Decrease in the amount of harassed or assassinated priests Increased amount of communities speaking out on the issue
	Intermediate outcomes	Policy influence	Change in position of policymakers Advocacy efforts are covered in political documents (e.g. speeches, reports)
		Coalition building	New or strengthened partnerships with organisations or individuals Joint initiatives or collaborative actions Collaborative actions (e.g. aligning of messages, joint policy agenda)
		Public awareness	Number of times the issue is mentioned in (international) media Advocacy efforts are covered in (international) reports
		Organisational capacity building	Increased ability to get and use data Increased knowledge about advocacy, mobilizing, or organizing tactics Improved media skills and contacts

Research Scope

This research is dedicated to analyzing the advocacy strategy carried out between 2016 and 2020, initiated by the Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM), which aimed to improve the situation of Catholic priests in Mexico who are harassed by organized crime groups. The study will identify the key actors involved in the strategy and assess their respective contributions. This will allow for a critical examination of the outcomes achieved at the national and international levels, as well as within the Mexican Catholic Church.

Importantly, this research does not seek to assess the current or historical state of violence faced by priests in Mexico. Instead, the focus is placed solely on the advocacy process itself—specifically, the strategies and actions aimed at improving the priests' situation.

The scope of this study is further defined by its focus on the advocates themselves. It will not analyze how the advocacy strategy was received, interpreted, or acted upon by policy-makers or other target audiences. Rather, the advocates will be positioned at the center of this study, and their experiences and narratives will serve as the primary lens through which the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy is analyzed. Additionally, this research will include only those actors and advocates who have been deeply engaged in the strategy. While it is acknowledged that other entities have contributed to the broader advocacy efforts, their roles are considered relatively minor and are unlikely to provide new or additional insights beyond those offered by the primary actors involved.

Research Approach

To successfully evaluate the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy implemented between 2016 and 2020, the main research question and its sub-questions must be addressed. To achieve this, the study will employ two primary methods: desk research (secondary research) and qualitative research, supplemented by a media tracking analysis.

Desk research will provide an overview of all public documents and audiovisual materials used by the actors involved in the advocacy strategy to place the issue on the public agenda. In addition, it will offer insights into the outcomes of the strategy—such as news coverage, legal documents, and other public records—which will contribute to evaluating its effectiveness. Based on these sources, desk research will help answer questions related to which actors were involved, how the strategy was implemented, and what outcomes it produced.

To complement the desk research and allow for a more in-depth analysis, the study will incorporate qualitative research techniques. Specifically, it will include semi-structured interviews with the designers and implementers of the advocacy strategy. Semi-structured interviews are chosen for their flexibility, which is essential given the limited public information available about the strategy's internal content and rationale. While the outputs of the strategy—such as books, documentaries, reports, press releases, and journal articles—are publicly accessible, they do not reveal the underlying goals, assumptions, or strategic decisions. The interviews will offer critical insights into the intentions behind the strategy, the manner in which it was executed, and the outcomes it generated.

To further support the findings from both desk research and interviews, a media tracking analysis will be conducted. This analysis will provide additional insights that may not emerge from the other two methods. By examining how media coverage of the issue evolved over time, the study will assess the extent to which the advocacy strategy succeeded in raising public awareness—an important indicator of effectiveness.

As outlined in the theoretical framework, evaluating advocacy effectiveness solely based on anticipated outcomes results in a narrow and potentially incomplete understanding. Such an approach risks overlooking unintended or emergent effects. Therefore, this research adopts the strategy-as-practice approach proposed by Arensman, van Waegeningh, and van Wessel (2018). In line with this perspective, the strategy is viewed as something advocates actively shape through practical judgment, adaptation to changing circumstances, and interaction with both context and theory. Accordingly, the advocates behind the strategy will be placed at the center of this research, and their experiences will form the basis for evaluating the advocacy strategy's effectiveness.

It is important to emphasize that the study is exploratory in nature and is not designed to produce generalizable findings or to test statistical correlations between indicators. The aim is to provide insight into lived experiences and advocacy practices within a bounded case.

Limitations of Research

This research is subject to several limitations, primarily due to the inherently complex nature of advocacy, which unfolds within dynamic and constantly evolving environments. It is often difficult to attribute specific changes to a single advocacy strategy, as multiple actors typically contribute to shaping outcomes. Moreover, a wide range of external factors—beyond the control of the advocates or the strategy itself—can significantly influence whether change occurs. These contextual variables may limit the extent to which this study can definitively assess the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy in question.

Additionally, this research is limited by its exclusive focus on the perspective of the advocates. In terms of data collection, the advocates will serve as the primary source of input. How the advocacy strategy has been received or acted upon by policymakers and other target audiences will not be directly assessed and will only be considered insofar as it is described by the advocates themselves. This approach introduces a potential bias, as advocates

may interpret activities and outcomes through the lens of their personal involvement. They may also be less likely to critically evaluate their own contributions and more inclined to attribute perceived ineffectiveness to external factors beyond their control.

Furthermore, this research focuses solely on a specific case: the advocacy strategy implemented between 2016 and 2020 concerning the protection of Catholic priests in Mexico. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to other geographic regions, religious groups, or advocacy contexts. The case-specific nature of the research limits its external validity.

The retrospective design of the study presents another limitation. Since the events under investigation occurred between 2016 and 2020, the research relies on participants' recollections. This raises the possibility of recall bias, selective memory, or reinterpretation of past events with the benefit of hindsight.

Access to key informants may also shape the scope of the findings. While the study will focus on actors who were deeply involved in the strategy, it may exclude peripheral stakeholders or dissenting voices whose insights could offer valuable alternative perspectives. Similarly, the desk research is limited to publicly available documents, reports, and media outputs. These sources may not fully reflect internal deliberations or undocumented outcomes.

Another limitation relates to the timeframe of the study. Advocacy processes often produce results over extended periods. By limiting the analysis to the years 2016–2020, the research may overlook delayed or long-term outcomes that only become visible after the advocacy strategy has concluded.

Finally, if data are collected or analyzed in a language other than English (e.g., Spanish), issues of translation and interpretation may arise. Subtle nuances or culturally embedded meanings may be lost, potentially affecting the depth and accuracy of the findings.

Implications of Research

Evaluations of human rights advocacy strategies outside large, well-resourced human rights organizations remain limited. This is primarily due to the fact that smaller organizations often lack the necessary resources—both in terms of staffing and financial capacity—to carry out such evaluations. Many are understaffed and operate with constrained budgets, which hinders their ability to systematically assess the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts.

This research seeks to contribute to the field of human rights advocacy in several important ways. First, by evaluating the strategy employed to improve the situation of Catholic priests in Mexico, this study will provide the advocates involved with valuable insights into what aspects of the strategy were effective and which areas may require improvement. These findings can directly inform ongoing advocacy efforts and support the refinement of current strategies.

Moreover, the insights gained from this evaluation will be relevant not only to the Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM), but also to the other actors engaged in this advocacy initiative. It will offer them new perspectives and practical knowledge that can assist in designing more effective and efficient human rights advocacy strategies in the future.

Beyond the immediate context, the results of this study may also be of interest to other NGOs operating in Mexico. While the findings are not directly generalizable to other organizations or settings, they can nonetheless offer a broader understanding of advocacy effectiveness and illuminate common challenges faced when working in complex and often volatile environments like Mexico. The study may further inform broader discussions on how to protect religious actors and civil society leaders from violence and impunity.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the academic field by applying and operationalizing the strategy-as-practice framework (Arensman et al., 2018) within the context of human rights advocacy. By doing so, it offers an example of how advocacy can be studied as a dynamic and socially constructed process, rather than a linear input-output mechanism.

In addition, the study contributes to the discourse on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of advocacy by highlighting the feasibility of qualitative, narrative-based approaches for smaller organizations, which often lack the capacity for indicator-heavy, donor-driven evaluation frameworks.

Finally, this research aims to demonstrate that meaningful advocacy evaluations are indeed possible, even with limited resources. By presenting an example of a comprehensive evaluation conducted with modest means, this study seeks to encourage and empower smaller human rights organizations to undertake similar assessments of their own strategies.

Defining the Overall Advocacy Strategy

The interviews conducted for this research indicate that the advocating organizations and individuals involved did not operate on the basis of a predetermined plan or a formal Theory of Change (ToC) to address the issue. As a result, the advocates themselves embodied the advocacy strategy, in line with the strategy-as-practice approach, which views advocacy as something actors do while making practical judgments, adapting to changing circumstances, and interacting with both context and theory (Arensman, van Waegeningh, & van Wessel, 2018). Due to the absence of an explicit or coordinated ToC, this research can only assess the advocacy strategy by observing the actions and decisions of the advocates involved.

The use of the term “overall advocacy strategy” may imply a unified, coordinated effort among the various actors. However, this does not reflect the reality of the advocacy process. Although the advocates have maintained communication and share similar concerns, each organization and individual independently decided how to address the issue. Their choice of advocacy activities was shaped by a range of factors, including institutional capacity, available resources, and strategic priorities. Moreover, their approaches were tailored to the specific target audiences they had access to or could effectively engage.

Insider and Outsider Strategies

The overall advocacy strategy can best be described as a hybrid strategy, incorporating elements of both insider and outsider approaches. Insider strategies aim to create inclusion and access to decision-making and policy processes. Typical activities include advising policymakers, delivering evidence-based messaging, and lobbying. Outsider strategies, by contrast, focus on applying pressure to advocacy targets through tactics such as media campaigns and naming and shaming (Arensman, 2018).

It can be observed that actors such as the Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM), Dennis Petri (in collaboration with various organizations), and, to a lesser extent, OLIRE, primarily engage in insider strategies. These actors systematically document incidents, which are presented in annual and research reports. Such documentation serves as the basis for evidence-based messaging. From these findings, they develop policy recommendations and advisory papers, which are shared with policymakers and institutional stakeholders at various levels. Their activities frequently involve direct meetings with policymakers, a hallmark of insider strate-

gies. Through these forms of communication, they aim to raise awareness within different advocacy arenas.

OLIRE has contributed to insider strategies, such as international policy engagement and the joint request for a thematic hearing, but their involvement in direct national-level lobbying and advisory roles appears less pronounced compared to CCM and Dennis Petri. Their efforts focus more strongly on international visibility and framing through documentation and media.

Furthermore, the documentation and research findings produced by the CCM and Dennis Petri have served as essential input for the advocacy efforts of other actors, including OLIRE, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), and Artículo 18. While most of their actions can be categorized under insider strategies, this does not mean their efforts lacked pressure-building elements.

For instance, the CCM has actively used its media platforms to raise awareness among the general public and religious communities, as they are those most directly affected by the violence. By publicizing the issue through media channels, they also exert indirect pressure on Mexican authorities, a characteristic of outsider strategies.

Similarly, OLIRE and Dennis Petri have addressed the issue through advocacy at international institutions, aiming to generate international political pressure on the Mexican government. Although these actions fall within the scope of insider strategies, the strategic use of international platforms to influence national policy aligns with outsider goals. As stated in OLIRE's interview:

With our advocacy efforts, we target international institutions and platforms because we believe that international political pressure might have some impact on the Mexican government. By addressing it there, we hope it gets on their national agenda. (Interview OLIRE, 2021)

CSW also employs a dual approach. While the issue of violence against priests is only one component of their broader religious freedom agenda in Mexico—which includes indigenous community cases—they have actively used outsider strategies to place pressure on the Mexican government. According to their interview:

For each of the countries we work in, we look at how they react to different types of pressure. We have found that for particularly Mexico, their image is very important. So awareness raising is an essential part of our strategy because the issues that we raise are affecting their image. (Interview CSW, 2021)

This form of pressure-building is a core characteristic of outsider strategies. CSW has included the issue in multiple press releases and reports to hold Mexican authorities accountable for their lack of effective action (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2021). However, CSW does not rely solely on outsider strategies. They have also attempted insider approaches, such as engaging with policymakers at the state level. Nevertheless, according to their interview, these meetings have not resulted in substantive change. CSW appears to be most active in international policy arenas such as the European Union and the United Nations, where they advise institutional actors, an activity aligned with insider strategies.

It should be noted that the distinction between insider and outsider strategies is not always clear-cut in practice. While this study categorizes activities along this spectrum for analytical purposes, most advocacy actors, including CCM, OLIRE, and CSW, combine elements of both approaches depending on the audience, context, and available resources. Therefore, the classification provided here is indicative rather than absolute.

In conclusion, the overall strategy is best characterized as a hybrid approach that addresses the issue through a broad range of activities aimed at a variety of targets. Although the lack of a formal plan or Theory of Change has blurred the distinction between insider and outsider strategies, both approaches are clearly present. While many of the observed advocacy activities exhibit the characteristics of insider strategies, they are often driven by goals traditionally associated with outsider strategies—namely, raising awareness and applying pressure on the Mexican authorities.

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Advocacy Strategy

This section evaluates the effectiveness of the overall advocacy strategy. In line with the theoretical framework and operationalization, the assessment goes beyond examining only impact outcomes. It also considers intermediate outcomes, as defined in academic literature (Brennan & Morariu, 2009; Arensman et al., 2015; Arensman, 2018).

Intermediate Outcomes

Public Awareness

The first intermediate outcome relevant to evaluating effectiveness is the extent to which the advocacy strategy succeeded in raising public awareness. Raising awareness was a central component of the overall strategy. As the primary source of documentation and reporting on assassinated priests, the Centro Católico Multimedial (CCM) played a crucial role in shaping media narratives. Media outlets frequently referenced the CCM's work when covering the issue.

To assess the effectiveness of these awareness-raising efforts over time, this research included a media tracking analysis. Using the LexisNexis database, the analysis recorded the number of instances in which the issue appeared in Mexican and international media in connection with CCM's documentation. The results of this analysis are presented below:

Times covered in English written international media (LexisNexis, 2021)

Year	Times covered
2016	32
2017	12
2018	26
2019	4
Total	74

Times covered in Spanish written international media (Mexico excluded) (LexisNexis, 2021)

Year	Times covered
2016	48
2017	32
2018	44
2019	3
Total	127

Times covered in Mexican media (LexisNexis, 2021)

Year	Times covered
2016	18
2017	26
2018	66
2019	7
Total	117

Number of assassinated priests 2016-2020 (Sotelo Aguilar & Gazanini Espinoza, 2018) (Centro Católico Multimedial, 2019)

Year	Number of assassinated priests
2016	3
2017	4
2018	7
2019	1

The media tracking analysis indicates that the issue has received coverage in both national and international media. However, the data does not suggest a consistent increase in media coverage over time. In the case of Mexico, the findings appear to point to a possible correlation between the number of assassinated priests and the extent to which the CCM is referenced in media reports concerning their documentation and research.

With regard to international media—both English and Spanish language sources—it is more difficult to establish any clear pattern. For example, in 2019, when the number of assassinated priests was relatively low, coverage of the issue was also limited. However, this trend does not hold consistently across other years, making it difficult to interpret the data conclusively.

Moreover, the media tracking data does not provide information on how many people actually read the articles or how the content was received by the audience. As a result, the analysis is limited in its ability to determine whether the advocacy strategy has been effective in creating widespread public awareness. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that the advocacy strategy has generated media coverage, which is a necessary condition for raising awareness.

All interview participants indicated that they perceive an increase in public awareness of the issue as a result of advocacy efforts in recent years. However, this perception cannot be substantiated with empirical evidence. Therefore, the extent to which public awareness has actually increased remains unclear, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy in this regard.

I think the issue and the topic are more visible today than it used to be, which is a major step forward. The problem is known in Mexican society and politics, so that's a positive development. How visible exactly, is very difficult to measure. There are 120 million Mexicans, it's not like everyone is talking about it all the time, but there is certainly more awareness. (Interview Dennis Petri, 2021)

Policy Influence

Another dimension in which intermediate outcomes of the advocacy strategy can be identified is policy influence among advocacy targets. Policy influence can be observed through changes in the actions or behaviour of these targets.

One of the primary targets of this advocacy strategy was the Mexican Catholic Church. According to the CCM, their advocacy efforts have led to increased awareness of the issue within this community. Prior to their involvement, the Church regarded the issue of assassinated priests as either irrelevant or taboo. When the CCM began documenting such cases, Father Sotelo Aguilar initially faced significant resistance. At the time, there was reluctance within the Church to publicly address or acknowledge the problem. However, during the interview with the CCM, it was noted that the mentality within dioceses and archdioceses is gradually shifting. There is now greater openness to engaging with the issue. It has become more widely understood that the problem is not limited to religious persecution but concerns the broader destabilization of peace and order in communities, where priests serve as key stabilizing figures.

As part of their advocacy efforts, the CCM has also provided the Catholic Church with a set of recommendations aimed at improving the security and support systems for priests. Nevertheless, according to the interviews, these recommendations have not yet been fully implemented.

Policy influence can also be observed at the international level. The U.S. Department of State has begun to include the issue in its annual Report on International Religious Freedom (U.S. Department of State, 2019). The fact that the State Department is now independently monitoring the situation indicates a behavioural shift. Although its mandate traditionally focuses on state violations of religious freedom, CSW reported that its engagement with the Department has contributed to a broader understanding that non-state actors can also pose significant threats.

Another example of limited but tangible policy influence can be found within the United Nations system. During Mexico's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), CSW participated in a pre-session and recommended that religious leaders be recognized as human rights defenders. They advised that references to this issue be included in recommendations to address impunity in Mexico. This advice was subsequently integrated into the official recommendations submitted by Canada and Poland, which is an indication of modest but meaningful policy influence.

In conclusion, the advocacy strategy has resulted in some degree of policy influence. Within the Mexican Catholic Church, this influence has led to a gradual shift in discourse and limited changes in practice. On the international stage, there is emerging engagement from institutions such as the U.S. State Department and the United Nations, though the extent of influence remains limited. Still, the growing involvement of international actors suggests that the strategy may continue to generate broader policy impact over time. Given the role that documentation has played in these developments, it may be worthwhile for other churches or religious institutions to consider adopting similar approaches, as structured documentation can contribute to a more informed and consistent advocacy response.

Coalition Building

The effectiveness of an advocacy strategy can also be measured by the extent to which it has succeeded in fostering new coalitions and partnerships. Collaborative activities such as the alignment of policy agendas, coordinated public messaging, or joint initiatives can serve as indicators of strategic cooperation.

Based on the interviews conducted for this research, the organizations and individuals involved indicated that no formal coalitions have been established to address the issue. While

there is some level of contact between the advocates, this interaction is primarily limited to the exchange of information. Nevertheless, there are indications of early efforts toward coalition building. One example is the joint initiative by the CCM and OLIRE to request a thematic hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (OLIRE / CCM, 2019).

Some new partnerships have emerged in support of the issue. At the level of internationally operating NGOs, several organizations have started to dedicate attention to the topic. Aid to the Church in Need is one such organization, having included the issue in its annual reports. Front Line Defenders have also become increasingly involved. Although its primary focus is on supporting human rights defenders, it has taken an interest in this issue, since priests often act as human rights defenders in their local communities (Petri, 2020). While other international NGOs have expressed concern as well, they tend to address the issue independently within their own institutional frameworks, without establishing joint initiatives. According to interview data, there is little evidence of collaboration or coordinated action between these actors.

At the local civil society level in Mexico, coalition building also appears to be limited. Aside from the CCM and, to a lesser extent, Artículo 18, few organizations are actively engaged in this advocacy strategy. Artículo 18 mainly supports the efforts of the CCM by disseminating information through its own channels. This represents one example of cooperation at the national level, but no other collaborative efforts were identified. Moreover, partnerships between Mexican NGOs and international organizations remain rare. Most international actors collaborate with the CCM and, to a lesser extent, with Artículo 18, but these relationships rarely extend further. The advocacy strategy has not resulted in new partnerships or sustained collaboration with other local Mexican NGOs.

This lack of engagement was noted in the interview with OLIRE:

In Mexico, we didn't have any success by engaging with NGOs other than the CCM and Artículo 18. Other organisations simply acknowledge the situation. Sometimes they say, yes, this is something we should be worried about, but they don't respond in a proactive way about that with us. (Interview OLIRE, 2021)

In conclusion, the advocacy strategy has been largely ineffective in creating coalitions to address the issue. While there are a small number of partnerships at both the local and international levels, joint initiatives are infrequent. New organizations that have begun to ad-

dress the issue tend to do so independently, without engaging in meaningful collaboration. Although there is communication between advocates, it is mostly limited to the exchange of information.

All interview participants emphasized that their organizations, and therefore their advocacy efforts, face significant limitations in terms of resources and capacity. This suggests that the strategy would likely have benefited from more deliberate efforts to build coalitions.

Capacity Building

Capacity building represents another dimension of intermediate outcomes within an advocacy strategy. It refers to the extent to which an organization has developed or enhanced its abilities as a result of the advocacy process. This may include improvements in the capacity to gather and utilize data, increased knowledge of advocacy tactics, enhanced skills or networks, or other organizational and individual competencies gained through experience.

Given that all individuals and organizations interviewed for this research have a long-standing history of advocacy work in Latin America, it was initially expected that there would be little to no evidence of capacity building. Nevertheless, the research did reveal some degree of learning and development among the participating actors.

Among internationally operating NGOs, many of which have a religious background, the issue was initially framed primarily as one of religious freedom. However, in interviews with OLIRE and Dennis Petri, it became evident that this framing had limited effectiveness. The interviewees noted a widespread lack of understanding of what constitutes a religious freedom violation, a gap they encountered among multiple advocacy targets at various institutional levels. As a result, both OLIRE and Dennis Petri concluded that the issue should instead be framed as one of human security and organized crime, which is more broadly understood and better received by policymakers and other stakeholders. This shift in framing reflects a key lesson learned during the advocacy process and thus constitutes a form of capacity building.

Another area where capacity building was observed is in the documentation of incidents. Advocates involved in tracking cases of assassinated priests initially encountered problems with incomplete, inaccurate, or entirely absent documentation. As a result of this advocacy

strategy, several organizations—namely the CCM, OLIRE (initiated by Dennis Petri), and CSW—invested in improving both the quantity and the quality of their documentation practices. Interviews indicated that these efforts have led to more systematic and reliable documentation. This improvement in data collection and incident reporting represents a concrete example of organizational capacity building, as these actors have developed new or strengthened existing mechanisms for documenting religiously motivated violence in Mexico.

Impact Outcomes

The effectiveness of an advocacy strategy is often evaluated based on the extent to which it has resulted in tangible impact, specifically in the form of meaningful change that directly addresses the issue at hand. As previously stated, this research aims to move beyond impact outcomes as the sole indicator of advocacy effectiveness. Nonetheless, impact outcomes remain a critical component in assessing overall effectiveness.

This section will therefore evaluate the degree to which the advocacy strategy has led to measurable impact. In accordance with the theoretical framework and the operationalization outlined earlier, the discussion will focus on two key dimensions of impact outcomes: policy change and social change.

Policy Change

One of the main goals of the overall advocacy strategy was to encourage the Mexican authorities to address the issue and improve the situation faced by priests. According to Dennis Petri and CSW, the problem does not stem from the absence of relevant laws, but rather from the lack of implementation of existing legal frameworks. As part of the strategy, several advocates engaged in lobbying activities with Mexican authorities. However, all interviewees reported that these efforts have not led to any concrete changes in the implementation of policies or the introduction of effective mechanisms to address the problem.

The same conclusion applies to international policymakers. Advocates stated that although they lobbied with various international actors to raise awareness of the issue, these efforts have not resulted in actual policy change. Some countries, such as Canada and Poland, expressed interest in the matter by including related recommendations in international forums.

However, these actions fall under the category of policy influence rather than policy change, as they have not resulted in binding measures or reforms.

Nevertheless, the advocacy strategy has not been entirely ineffective in bringing about policy change. According to the CCM, OLIRE, and Dennis Petri, the Episcopal Conference of Mexico, which serves as the leading body within the Mexican Catholic Church, has issued security protocols aimed at protecting churches from threats posed by organized crime groups. These protocols include practical recommendations such as closing churches at specific times, installing security cameras, hiring private security, and providing guidance on what to do in the event of abduction. Although these measures were not enacted by state authorities, they can still be considered a form of policy change within the institutional framework of the Catholic Church. As the Episcopal Conference holds decision-making authority over internal church policy, the formal adoption of such protocols represents an organizational response that mirrors the characteristics of policy development, including norm-setting, implementation guidance, and institutional commitment.

This research was not able to determine the extent to which these protocols have been implemented across dioceses. However, the mere issuance of these guidelines can be considered a form of policy change. While it is not possible to establish a direct causal link between this development and the advocacy strategy, it is likely that the advocacy efforts contributed to this outcome. This assumption is supported by the fact that Father Sotelo Aguilar, a key advocate within the CCM, is a former member of the Episcopal Conference and has explicitly advocated for the introduction of such protocols.

While the issuance of security protocols by the Episcopal Conference of Mexico represents a notable institutional response to violence against priests, no direct causal relationship between the advocacy strategy and this development can be confirmed based on the available data. Although these protocols may reflect an internal policy change within the Catholic Church, it remains unclear to what extent advocacy efforts influenced their adoption. The measures identified, such as the introduction of security guidelines, could be regarded as potential indicators for future research to explore possible links between advocacy and institutional policy responses, rather than as conclusive evidence of impact within the scope of this study.

Social Change

The second dimension through which impact outcomes can be assessed is social change. Measuring social change is inherently challenging, as it involves shifts in human behaviour that are not easily linked to specific causes or interventions. For this reason, this section focuses exclusively on changes reported by interviewed advocates that may be related to the advocacy strategy.

According to the CCM, the number of assassinated priests has declined in recent years, while the number of robberies, threats, and attacks on churches and places of worship has increased. CSW reported a similar trend. They found this development noteworthy, as the overall level of violence has remained constant or even increased, yet the specific number of murdered priests has declined. They suggested that the advocacy strategy has drawn attention to the actions of organized crime groups and, in some cases, made it possible to trace incidents back to specific perpetrators. CSW also noted that such exposure is often unwelcome by these groups and may prompt them to alter their tactics.

Although this is an interesting observation, it is not possible to assert that the advocacy strategy directly caused this shift. Numerous other factors could contribute to a reduction in the number of assassinated priests. Nevertheless, it remains a development worth acknowledging.

Beyond this trend, the research did not identify any other forms of social change that could be directly linked to the advocacy strategy. This does not necessarily imply that no social change has occurred. It is possible that changes have taken place outside the scope of this research or in ways that are not visibly connected to the strategy. Based on the available data, no causal relationship between the advocacy strategy and measurable social change can be confirmed. The trends observed, such as the decline in assassinated priests, may serve as potential indicators for future research, but should not be interpreted as evidence of impact within the scope of this study.

Factors that Affect the Effectiveness of the Advocacy Strategy

In the previous sections, this research paper has examined the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy in terms of both impact outcomes and intermediate outcomes. To fully understand

these outcomes within their broader context, it is essential to explore the challenges faced by the advocates throughout the implementation of the strategy. These challenges represent key factors that have limited the overall effectiveness of the advocacy efforts. This section will categorize the main challenges identified by the advocates during the interviews and analyze the extent to which these obstacles have influenced the strategy's ability to achieve its goals.

Lack of Proper Documentation

A common challenge highlighted by the advocates is the lack of proper documentation of incidents. Because many incidents go unreported, it becomes difficult to convey the full scale of the problem to advocacy targets. While cases involving the assassination of priests are generally reported due to their severity and visibility, CSW noted that they have only been able to document cases of extortion and threats to a very limited extent. The ability to document these lesser-known forms of violence would provide a more comprehensive picture of the issue. Although improved documentation may not directly lead to more successful advocacy outcomes, it does enhance the credibility of the claims made during advocacy efforts.

According to the interviewed advocates, the primary reason for this lack of documentation is the high level of fear within the affected communities. Individuals who report such incidents risk becoming targets of organized crime themselves. In addition, CSW noted that Mexico's long history of violence has contributed to a culture of normalization, which also hinders documentation:

It is something we also see in other countries. These communities have been experiencing violence for many generations. Because of this long history, violence has become normalised. And so to be extorted is just something that happens, to be threatened is just something that happens. So besides the fear, people also don't recognise it as serious violations. (Interview CSW, 2021)

Furthermore, Dennis Petri pointed out that the documentation of such incidents is a complex task for victims and witnesses. Most individuals who experience this type of violence are not trained in data collection or reporting, and therefore lack the necessary knowledge and skills to document incidents effectively.

Lack of Political Will

In addition to the issue of insufficient documentation, a significant barrier to the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy at the national level is the lack of political will to address the problem. Advocates reported that policymakers in Mexico frequently fail to acknowledge the existence and seriousness of the issue. When cases involving assassinated priests are reported, authorities often attempt to portray the victims as being involved in criminal activity. In cases where this narrative could not be supported by evidence, officials instead framed the incidents as isolated cases with no broader implications.

According to CSW, this denial is closely linked to concerns about national image. The Mexican government is reportedly reluctant to draw attention to the issue out of fear that it may harm the country's international reputation. Policymakers aim to present Mexico as a democratic and functioning nation that is safe for tourism and foreign investment. This resistance to publicly acknowledging the problem severely limits the effectiveness of advocacy efforts.

Ultimately, the Mexican authorities are responsible for ensuring law and order. When they fail to recognize the existence of a systemic problem, meaningful solutions become unattainable. The absence of political will is, according to multiple advocates, the main reason why the advocacy strategy has not resulted in effective policy change within Mexico.

Lack of Understanding of Religious Freedom

At the international level, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the legal body of the Organization of American States (OAS), is one of the institutions responsible for addressing issues related to religious freedom. Both Dennis Petri and OLIRE have made sustained efforts to place the issue on the IACHR's agenda, but without success. Multiple requests for thematic hearings were submitted, all of which were ultimately denied.

Dennis Petri reflected on these rejections during his interview:

It seemed that the OAS had other priorities. They don't seem to look at cases that involve religion. I guess they were also more interested in other subjects. I mean, the hearings that did get accepted really are on other subjects. They are

on indigenous rights, they are on sexual minorities and environmental issues. Those are the priorities. But religious issues aren't really considered. You can also see that in the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. They don't really look at cases that are related to religion. I would say they lack the literacy to fully understand what religious freedom is and all of its dimensions. Because religious freedom is very quickly just understood as freedom of worship. But there's so much more to it in all those dimensions. (Interview Dennis Petri, 2021)

A related experience was shared by Teresa Flores, director of OLIRE, in her engagement with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Nations:

It's very difficult to make people understand the relationship between criminal groups and hostilities against religious freedom and why these priests form a vulnerable group. I think that has been the main challenge, to explain this relationship. Last year, we engaged with one person that worked as an advisor for the Foreign Office of the UN. So, the feedback that we received from her when we addressed this issue was: This is a criminal organization issue. This is not a religious freedom issue. So why are you focusing on this? We tried to explain to her more than once why it has a connection with religious freedom, but she didn't seem to understand. (Interview Teresa Flores, 2021)

Flores further noted in her interview that there is a general lack of literacy among policy-makers regarding the concept of religious freedom. She explained that many do not fully grasp the complexity and multidimensional nature of the right. This concern was echoed by CSW, who stated that it is often difficult to convince advocacy targets that religious freedom violations occur in Latin America. They pointed to the common misconception that, because Latin America is predominantly Roman Catholic, the right to religious freedom is not under threat in the region.

These interviews indicate that this lack of understanding significantly undermines the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy. The message that advocates aim to communicate is often not fully understood by advocacy targets, who may not recognize the nuanced dimensions of religious freedom or its intersection with issues such as organized crime.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the advocacy strategy initiated by the Centro Católico Multi-medial (CCM), which aimed to improve the situation of priests in Mexico who face harassment and violence from organized crime groups. The goal was to assess the effectiveness of this strategy over the period 2016–2020, using desk research, interviews with key advocates, and a media tracking analysis.

The primary actors identified in the strategy were the CCM, the Observatory of Religious Freedom in Latin America (OLIRE), Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), and Dennis Petri, who contributed through various organizations, including Open Doors International, OLIRE, and the International Institute for Religious Freedom. Other organizations, such as Artículo 18, Aid to the Church in Need, and Front Line Defenders, also engaged with the issue, but in more limited, supportive roles.

Although each actor formulated specific goals, the overall aim of the advocacy strategy can be described as researching, documenting, and raising awareness of the issue among a range of advocacy targets. These targets included the Mexican authorities, religious communities, international institutions such as the OAS, UN, and EU, Mexican civil society organizations, and internationally operating NGOs.

Contrary to what the term “strategy” might suggest, there was no formal or pre-established plan guiding the advocacy efforts. Rather, each actor operated independently, making strategic decisions based on their resources, capacities, and access to specific target audiences. The strategy thus evolved organically, shaped by the context in which advocates operated.

The approach can best be described as a hybrid strategy, combining insider and outsider tactics. Insider activities included the development of policy recommendations, research-based reporting, and direct lobbying at both national and international levels. Outsider strategies primarily involved public pressure through press releases and public messaging, holding the Mexican government accountable for inaction.

The outcomes of the strategy were limited, particularly in terms of impact. This research did not identify any examples of policy change at the national or international level, with the exception of the Episcopal Conference of Mexico, which issued security protocols for churches. This was the only policy change plausibly linked to the advocacy efforts. In terms

of social change, no developments could be conclusively attributed to the strategy, although some trends—such as a reduction in assassinations—were noted.

Despite the limited impact outcomes, the strategy has shown some effectiveness when assessed through intermediate outcomes. While public awareness is difficult to measure, media tracking showed that CCM's work received coverage both nationally and internationally. Interviewed advocates also reported a perceived increase in awareness, although this could not be substantiated with quantitative data. In terms of policy influence, some progress was observed within the Mexican Catholic Church and in international institutions where the issue has gained limited attention. Coalition building, however, remained minimal. Although more organizations are engaging with the topic, joint initiatives and formal partnerships remain scarce. This is especially significant given that most advocates reported limited resources and capacity, suggesting that more robust coalitions could enhance effectiveness. In terms of capacity building, the strategy contributed to improved understanding of how to frame the issue and strengthened documentation practices among key actors.

Several challenges have hindered the strategy's effectiveness. One of the most significant is the lack of systematic documentation of incidents, which impairs the ability to present a comprehensive picture of the problem. While assassinations are usually reported, threats, extortion, and harassment often go undocumented due to fear and the normalization of violence within communities. Another key limitation is the lack of political will among Mexican authorities. Even when confronted with credible evidence, officials often deny or downplay the problem. This has been a major barrier to achieving policy change. A further issue is the lack of understanding among policymakers, both nationally and internationally, regarding the nature of religious freedom and its relevance to the violence faced by priests. Misconceptions about what constitutes a violation of religious freedom continue to undermine advocacy efforts.

In conclusion, the advocacy strategy initiated by the CCM has not yet been effective in achieving its ultimate goal of improving the situation for priests in Mexico. While little to no impact outcomes were identified, the strategy has produced some intermediate results, particularly in terms of awareness raising and limited policy influence. The effectiveness of the strategy is constrained by external factors beyond the control of the advocates, such as political resistance and conceptual misunderstandings. Nevertheless, these limitations also point to areas of opportunity. Enhancing documentation efforts, building stronger coalitions, and improving the framing of the issue may all contribute to a more effective advocacy approach in the future.

These opportunities will be explored further in the recommendations and advisory report that follows.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy aimed at addressing the situation of priests in Mexico who are harassed or assassinated by organized crime groups. These recommendations are directly linked to the challenges and limitations identified during the research process.

1. **Strengthen documentation through the empowerment of religious communities**
One of the main challenges affecting the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy is the lack of proper documentation of incidents. Many cases go unreported, making it difficult for advocates to demonstrate the full scale of the problem. While assassinations often receive attention, threats, extortion, and other forms of harassment are underreported. To address this, it is recommended to empower local religious communities by providing them with tools to document incidents themselves. This could be done through the creation of simple instructional videos explaining the documentation process and outlining what information is needed for a complete and reliable report. By doing so, religious communities can contribute more directly to the advocacy process, and the credibility of advocates' statements can be strengthened.
2. **Build stronger coalitions between international NGOs**
Although more international organizations are starting to address the issue, collaboration remains very limited. The organizations involved often work in isolation, and joint initiatives or shared strategies are rare. It is recommended to actively seek ways to bring relevant actors together. One approach is to organize a roundtable discussion focused specifically on this issue, where international NGOs can share knowledge, align messaging, and explore possibilities for joint action. Increased cooperation can lead to more effective advocacy activities, especially considering that most organizations are limited in resources and capacity. A stronger coalition could help reach more advocacy targets and increase overall impact.
3. **Improve understanding of religious freedom among policymakers**
Another factor limiting the effectiveness of the advocacy strategy is the lack of understanding among policymakers—both national and international—about what religious freedom entails. Many advocacy targets do not recognize the situation of priests in Mexico as a

violation of religious freedom, making it harder for advocates to get the issue on the agenda. To improve this, it is recommended to develop an online training program for policymakers. The goal should be to explain the different dimensions of religious freedom and provide examples of the types of incidents that can occur. This could help policymakers better understand the issue and recognize violations when they occur, even if committed by non-state actors. A better understanding of religious freedom could improve the response from advocacy targets and increase the overall effectiveness of the strategy.

4. Invest in long-term and sustained lobbying at the national level

Lobbying efforts directed at the Mexican government have so far not resulted in effective policy change. Policymakers often deny the problem or dismiss it as isolated or unrelated to organized crime, reflecting a lack of political will to acknowledge or prioritize the issue. To address this, it is recommended to invest in more sustained and long-term lobbying efforts within Mexico. Rather than relying on one-time meetings or reports, the advocacy strategy could benefit from building lasting relationships with key actors in government, civil society, and the Catholic Church. These efforts could be strengthened through collaboration with national partners who are better positioned to maintain continuous dialogue with policymakers. Where possible, public advocacy campaigns and international pressure could be used to support national-level lobbying, increasing visibility and urgency around the issue.

5. Establish regular evaluation and monitoring mechanisms

The absence of a predefined advocacy plan or Theory of Change has made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the strategy over time or to reflect on what works and what does not. Without structured evaluation, lessons from the advocacy process may be lost, and future efforts may repeat past mistakes. It is recommended to introduce a basic and manageable system for monitoring and evaluating the advocacy strategy. This could involve internal reflection sessions between involved organizations, the use of tracking tools to monitor media attention or institutional responses, and the collection of feedback from target audiences. Even small-scale evaluation practices can provide important insights and help advocates adapt their activities to changing contexts and new opportunities.

6. (Re)frame the issue using human rights and security language

Limited understanding among policymakers—particularly at the international level—of what constitutes a religious freedom violation has hampered advocacy efforts. Several advocates indicated that when they try to raise the issue with international institutions, the response is often that the problem relates to criminal activity rather than religious freedom. It is therefore recommended to reframe the issue not only as a violation of religious freedom,

but also as a matter of human rights and public security. By highlighting the role of priests as actors who promote social stability and, in many cases, function as human rights defenders, the problem becomes more relatable and easier to recognize within existing international frameworks. This reframing could help position the issue higher on institutional agendas and lead to more constructive engagement from international advocacy targets.

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ARTICLE

Peace Education in the Private Sector of Costa Rica

Educación para la paz en el sector privado de Costa Rica

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Abstract

This study explores the potential of peace education as a mechanism for aligning private sector efforts with broader peacebuilding and sustainability goals, focusing on the Costa Rican context. Based on fieldwork conducted through the SDG Observatory at ULACIT—including surveys with 67 companies and interviews with local experts—the research examines how peace education is understood, valued, and potentially integrated into business practices. Special attention is given to the challenges of promoting peace education in a non-conflict country and the tensions that can arise between commercial objectives and social responsibilities. The findings suggest that, while Costa Rica is often regarded as a peaceful nation, targeted educational interventions can still play a crucial role in preventing exclusion, building intercultural competence, and enhancing the private sector's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Keywords:

Sustainable Development Goals, peace education, peace, SDG 16.

Resumen

Este estudio explora el potencial de la educación para la paz como mecanismo para alinear

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los esfuerzos del sector privado con objetivos más amplios de consolidación de la paz y sostenibilidad, centrándose en el contexto costarricense. Basándose en el trabajo de campo realizado a través del Observatorio de los ODS en ULACIT -incluyendo encuestas a 67 empresas y entrevistas con expertos locales- la investigación examina cómo se entiende, valora y potencialmente se integra la educación para la paz en las prácticas empresariales. Se presta especial atención a los retos de promover la educación para la paz en un país no conflictivo y a las tensiones que pueden surgir entre los objetivos comerciales y las responsabilidades sociales. Los resultados sugieren que, si bien Costa Rica suele considerarse una nación pacífica, las intervenciones educativas específicas pueden desempeñar un papel crucial en la prevención de la exclusión, el fomento de la competencia intercultural y la mejora de la contribución del sector privado al Objetivo de Desarrollo Sostenible 16.

Palabras clave:

Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, educación para la paz, paz, ODS 16.

Introduction

The private sector plays a crucial role in contributing to economic stability by providing jobs and income. This role is particularly imperative in fragile regions and countries that have faced conflicts or violence. Providing sustainable economic stability is also beneficial to help fade out tensions caused by economic exclusion (Spicer & Bousquet, 2019).

The implementation of peace education in the private sector contributes to greater safety and security in the region. However, regional stability is also crucial for the economic growth of organizations. Spicer & Bousquet (2019) point out the fragility and complexity of the private sector's involvement in providing regional stability:

There can be regulatory and market uncertainty, weak sponsor capacity, and limited infrastructure and supplies. These projects thus require a much heavier lift in the areas of integrity due diligence, capacity building, regulatory reform, assistance with project development, and environmental advisory services (Spicer & Bousquet, 2019).

This makes it essential that, before involving the private sector extensively in providing or assisting in regional stability—in all forms that it may take—the employees and staff are educated on how to engage with local communities within the companies. Peace education in this research focuses on dismantling all forms of violence and creating a just and sustainable culture of peace. It covers subjects such as human rights, the environment, and conflict resolution (McKeown Jones, Orchard, & Paulson, 2017). In addition, considering the region, culture, and people is also important. Therefore, as part of peace education, teaching about the community structure and identifying potential fragile areas are included.

The implementation of peace education is aligned with SDG implementation. This alignment is specifically visible in Costa Rica, where the connections between SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions and peace education are extensive. A key element of SDG 16 is good governance. From previously conducted fieldwork, the author identified a high need for governmental assistance and collaboration in implementing SDG- and peace-related initiatives. Moreover, multiple Costa Rican private companies are currently involved in projects that contribute to regional stability with the collaboration of the government (Bruggeman, Valderrama, & Cucchia, 2020; Vernon, 2014).

This previously conducted fieldwork aligns with similar case studies on peace education implementation and helped to identify the government of Costa Rica as the key actor in assisting private companies in this implementation process. In this research, I further analyze what role the government can play to assist this process.

Literature Review

After extensive research on various scholars in different fields, I have gained knowledge for my research paper on various topics. This section lists the relevant topics to this research paper and the key findings. Research has shown a deep-seated connection between the private sector and peace in both positive and negative ways. Private organizations are not expected to be neutral; they can aggravate tensions and conflicts.

Research states that when private companies adopt a conflict-sensitive approach, this will lead to: “better risk management, lower operational costs, enhanced reputation, credibility, social goodwill and positive and constructive stakeholder engagement (Haider, 2014, p.4).”

Previously conducted research showed the importance of good governance in promoting peace and the correct implementation of SDG 16. From a survey conducted for the ULACIT SDG Observatory, I identified a strong correlation between the number of resources a company had and whether they received funds from the government, and the extent to which they implemented SDGs. This shows that support from the government increases the number of sustainable initiatives that a company implements (Bruggeman, Valderrama, & Cucchia, 2020).

The connection between education and conflict has been thoroughly analyzed over the last decade. Academics have concluded that education can have both a positive and negative contribution to building peace. A positive contribution of education is that, through concepts such as justice, peace, and equal opportunities, a culture of peace has been created. This positive contribution has directly contributed to a decrease in conflict scenarios within a society. However, education in developing countries can negatively contribute to building peace and create (bigger) social, psychological, and economic problems. This is because, in developing countries where (higher) education is mainly possible for the rich, bigger differences are created within the dimensions between the people of a society.

Research Statement

Central Research Question: How can peace education be implemented in the private sector in Costa Rica?

Sub-Questions:

- What is the connection between peace and the private sector?
- What is the current peace situation in Costa Rica, and how did this develop over time?
- Why should peace education be implemented in the private sector in Costa Rica?
- What actors are involved in the implementation of peace education in the private sector in Costa Rica?

This research covers various topics, all directly related to the main research topic: peace education implementation in the private sector in Costa Rica. This main research topic consists of four components: the peace process, peace education, the private sector, and other actors. These components are essential to my research, and by addressing and analyzing them, the author seeks to answer the main research question of this research fully.

The main research goals are to find out if implementing peace education in the private sector in Costa Rica is beneficial, how this can be achieved, and what the obstacles and challenges are in implementing this. Another research goal is to analyze how the private sector can contribute to the peace process and collaborate more extensively with the government and public sector.

The operationalization section converts the constructs from this research design into “measurement instruments,” meaning dimensions, sub-dimensions, and indicators (Verhoeven, 2016). In this research, the operationalization is built around the central construct of this paper, which is peace education. There are many definitions, but the most accurate one is that peace education focuses on dismantling all forms of violence and creating a just and sustainable culture of peace. It covers subjects such as human rights, the environment, and conflict resolution (McKeown Jones, Orchard, & Paulson, 2017).

Research Methods

The research method refers to the technique used to gather information and eventually come to a conclusion. For this research paper, the author will use information triangulation.

This means that this paper does not depend on one form of research instrument or one information outlet but has many different sources and instruments to gather information to improve the reliability of this research. Some of the conducted research has already been executed by me for an earlier research paper, which is why some of the information is based on other research papers that have not yet been published.

The tools that are used within the research method to gather the information are called the research instruments. In this research paper, I will apply a variety of different research instruments. I have conducted a survey with the rest of the ULACIT SDG Observatory team earlier this year, which mapped the sustainable profiles of Costa Rican companies in the private sector, where we received 67 respondents.

I also conducted five interviews with private companies regarding peace, justice, partnerships, and peace education. Additionally, I interviewed Ana Araujo, a peace mediator with extensive experience in conflicts between private companies and local communities in Costa Rica.

Desk research in this paper allows me to perform my fieldwork better. This means that before the fieldwork, I first conduct a lot of desk research to increase the depth and effectiveness of the interviews. The desk research is also crucial for identifying the correct theoretical framework to base my research on and to connect specific key topics and findings of my research.

Implications of Research

With this research paper, I seek to discover new findings and results that have never been discovered before. There are research papers on peace education, but not about Costa Rica or its private sector. There is no clear research paper on implementing peace education in private companies and the challenges and obstacles in implementing this. I realize that the research gap is, therefore, relatively sizeable. With this research, I seek as many answers as possible to fill this gap and accommodate my research; however, I do not expect to find all the answers and close this research gap completely. As various research supervisors told me, not every research paper has reached its conclusion and answered all its questions. A conclusion can also be that some things did not turn out as expected, so that other researchers can use my research and try to find the answers that I could not.

The worth of these findings is that this could lay the groundwork for the implementation of peace education in the private sector in Costa Rica. Implementing peace education in the private sector will further stabilize the regions, contributing to the peace process and the further growth of these private companies. Peace education is also aligned with the UN's SDGs and will therefore trigger further SDG implementation in the private sector in Costa Rica. Since there is no detailed research on the challenges and obstacles of implementing peace education in the private sector, this research is also valuable for other countries and companies interested in implementing peace education in the private sector to take it as an example.

Theoretical Framework

For this research, I have selected two different theoretical frameworks. One is research on SDG 16 and how this should be implemented in the private sector. The other is more of an idea, a mindset; it is about the concept of corporate social responsibility. SDG 16 is one of the 17 SDGs from the UN that stands for peace, justice, and strong institutions. The obvious interpretation of SDG 16 is that companies do not harm their employees and treat them fairly and equally. However, this research argues that this is only one part of it, and much more can be done to support this SDG. "SDG 16 asks the private sector to reframe the notion of self-interest in the private sector to magnify the importance of the long-term over the short-term, the societal over the local, the institutional over the personal, and the sustainable over the transiently profitable (SDG-Fund, 2017, p.12)."

This makes SDG 16 not about the companies themselves but about the mindset and involvement of the company regarding peace and justice. A company can, directly and indirectly, contribute to this SDG 16. An example of indirect involvement is supporting governments or NGOs working on peace and justice initiatives. Therefore, the questions in the interviews focused on their cooperation with NGOs on such initiatives and whether these companies were working on any projects that contribute to peace (SDG-Fund, 2017).

SDG 16 is an essential part of this research since the mindset paired with this SDG is aligned with peace education and will be the tool used to stimulate the further and better implementation of peace projects. I will use this research to build on further since it offers the ideal preliminary research to move towards peace education. The research paper does not focus on Costa Rican private companies, so it is important to include relevant parts and questions in my field research.

The study of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) argues the substantial influence that the private sector has on the community, more specifically on topics such as job opportunities, human rights, the environment, education, and training. The solution is to get companies more socially responsible, which can be done through: “integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer, and human rights concerns into their business strategy and operations (Corporate social responsibility & Responsible business conduct, 2020).”

The study also advocates for strong regulation and assistance by the public sector, which can be done through legislation when necessary. This connects well with the desk research I have conducted so far, which also pleads for more and closer connections between the public and private sector (Corporate social responsibility & Responsible business conduct, 2020).

The CSR theory argues the importance of human rights within CSR, especially for global supply chains. The government should always regulate and uphold human rights and indirectly make sure that the companies grant these human rights. This also overlaps with SDG 16, where human rights is one of the central themes (Corporate social responsibility & Responsible business conduct, 2020).

This study is valuable to my research since the mindset and concept nudge companies into more social involvement, increasing the need for peace education. Additionally, CSR concepts are vital to this research since it is essential to discover in what ways the private sector can be involved in society and peace processes.

The Connection between Peace and the Private Sector

In addition to the 17 SDG goals, the UN has identified international peace and international cooperation as central concepts for achieving a sustainable and inclusive future. The UN works through soft law, meaning it aims to achieve its goals through moral persuasion and public opinion, rather than through binding laws and restrictions. Central concepts of SDG 16 include peace, justice, governance, and security; however, SDG 16 is also highly connected to the other SDGs and is correlated with more than 150 of the UN’s sub-goals. When examining the demarcation of SDG 16, terminology such as “sustainable development” and “peaceful and inclusive societies” will differ significantly by state and society. The path toward achieving these goals will depend on the status and available resources of each region (Vernon, 2014).

In recent years, the private sector has become more involved in the peace processes of on-going conflicts. Private companies possess different resources than governments, allowing them to intervene and assist in unique ways. While traditional assistance in armed conflicts primarily came from the international community or states, current conflicts increasingly involve the private sector, especially where governments are considered fragile. This trend is known as the “privatization of peace” and is an essential part of this research.

The private sector also plays a crucial role in providing economic stability by delivering jobs and income. This role is especially important in fragile regions and countries affected by conflict or violence. Providing sustainable economic stability is also beneficial in reducing tensions caused by economic exclusion (Spicer & Bousquet, 2019).

Multi-track diplomacy recognizes that sustainable peace processes require engagement across multiple levels of society, beyond official state actors. Negotiations can be classified into distinct “tracks”: Track 1 involves formal, high-level dialogue between governments or official actors, while Tracks 2 and 3 encompass informal or community-based initiatives led by NGOs, private organizations, and civil society groups (Upeace, 2021). The United Nations promotes a bottom-up integration of these tracks, emphasizing grassroots participation as essential to long-term peacebuilding (Albani & Ade, 2021).

While Track 1 processes tend to be more visible and leverage formal power, Tracks 2 and 3 operate more discreetly, allowing actors to engage in dialogue with fewer political risks. These forms of “quiet diplomacy” create spaces of trust and are often more accessible for initial engagement. A critical feature of informal diplomacy is the confidentiality it requires; details are typically shared only when substantial progress has been achieved and endorsed by the parties involved (Albani & Ade, 2021).

The private sector participates in all tracks, though most frequently in informal ones. In Track 1, some private actors may directly influence negotiations, while in Tracks 2 and 3, businesses contribute through lobbying, hosting confidential meetings, disseminating information, or facilitating cross-sector dialogue (Tripathi & Gündüz, 2008). Their involvement can lend neutrality, credibility, and resources that are otherwise scarce in conflict-affected contexts. For instance, in South Africa’s transition from apartheid, business actors played a pivotal mediating role by bridging gaps between political factions (Tripathi & Gündüz, 2008).

An inclusive approach that integrates actors across all levels—particularly the private sector—can foster peace processes that are both participatory and resilient. Research suggests that peace shaped collectively by society is more likely to endure (Upeace, 2021). The essence of involving the private sector in the peace process also relates to the differences between the private and other sectors. As mentioned before, private companies can provide certain resources in stages of conflict where other actors cannot, and they can also create progress in stalemate scenarios. When two actors are stuck in mediation, private companies can help find a solution since they do not have a direct stake in the outcome. Moreover, the ability of companies to provide economic support and expertise, as well as non-biased political information, makes them useful—provided their reputation remains that they do not act out of self-interest (Tripathi & Gündüz, 2008).

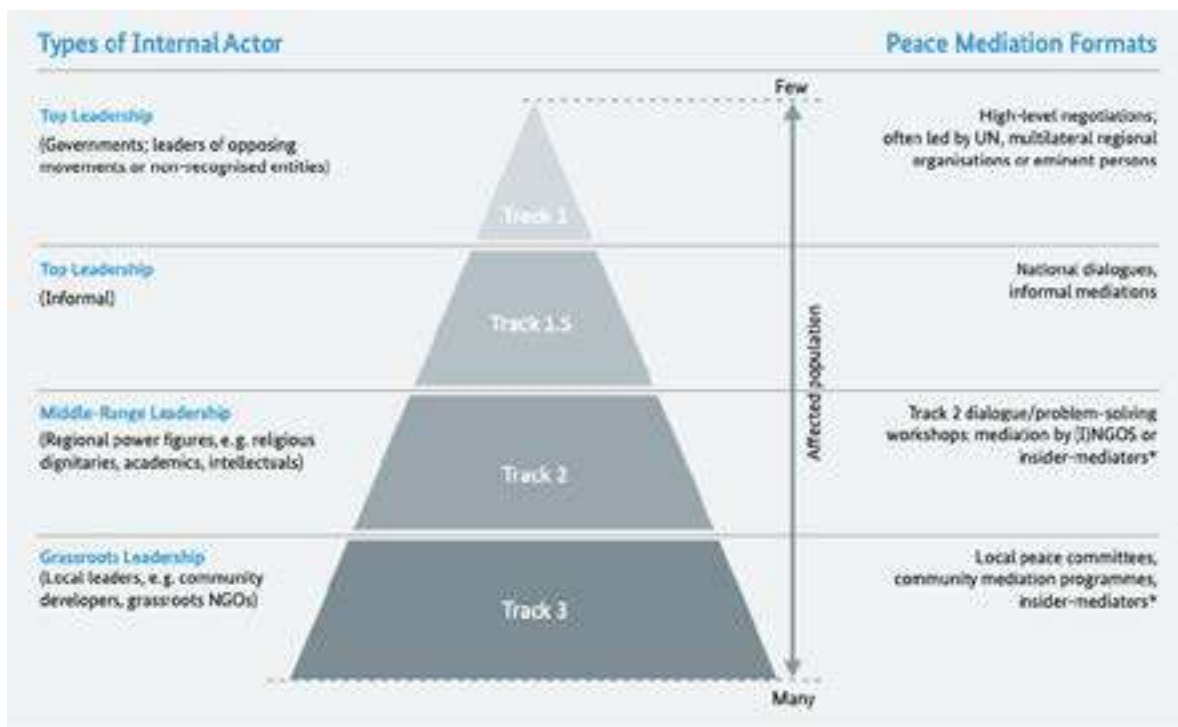
The involvement of the private sector in the peace process has many advantages; however, there are also hazards. Most private companies are focused on economic growth, which is their main incentive when conducting business. Therefore, there is a risk that private companies assist in peace processes driven by economic benefits rather than good intentions. This can occur by influencing a change in the current power structure that would create an economic model favorable to the organization (Tripathi & Gündüz, 2008).

This hazard of self-interest was also identified in Sri Lanka in the 1990s. Sri Lanka had experienced conflict for decades, but the private sector did not show support, as the conflict was regional and did not directly affect their economic situation. When the international airport was bombed in the Colombo region—where 40% of the major businesses in Sri Lanka were located—the private sector suddenly showed extensive support to the community and even created a peace movement. In this case, the incentive for ending the war was the economic costs rather than the violence and loss of life. This also influenced elections to focus on socio-economic benefits and a peace that was not made by the people but rather by the private companies (Tripathi & Gündüz, 2008).

Another point of tension between peacebuilding and the private sector is that peace processes can take years, sometimes even decades, while private companies often have a limited vision and may quickly become impatient. Additionally, most companies deal with various stakeholders who are interested in different agenda points. These stakeholders can come and go, so companies can provide little stability over a longer period. This is because the private sector is a non-monolithic entity that constantly changes (Tripathi & Gündüz, 2008).

An additional point of attention is the fragility and complexity of the private sector's involvement in providing regional stability: "There can be regulatory and market uncertainty, weak sponsor capacity, and limited infrastructure and supplies. These projects thus require a much heavier lift in the areas of integrity due diligence, capacity building, regulatory reform, assistance with project development, and environmental advisory service" (Spicer & Bousquet, 2019). This involvement also requires an extensive understanding of the conflict context and the parties involved, since incorrect approaches can have significant repercussions that affect far more than just the company itself.

Figure 1. Track Diplomacy



Based on Lederach, John Paul (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington D.C.: USIP, p. 38, adapted by IMSD.

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Variables for Sustainable Peace

Despite the many articles and studies on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, there are only a few studies on sustaining peace within a community. Based on this research gap, Columbia University launched the Sustainable Peace Project (SPP). This project aimed to identify the main variables that contribute to sustaining peace. In their research, they identified the following variables as relevant to sustaining peace:

- A shared identity that unites groups regardless of their issues.
- Interconnections between groups through sport, trade, or other relations.
- Interconnections between groups due to shared responsibility regarding environmental and economic matters, as well as similar security interests.
- A communal understanding of combating non-related conflict violence in homes, schools, and communities.
- Traditions and festivities that celebrate peace.
- The need to keep women safe (Coleman & Donahue, 2018).

The Current Peace Situation in Costa Rica and the Developments over Time

Peace Development in Costa Rica

To better understand the current situation in Costa Rica, it is imperative to get a clear picture of how peace was established and sustained over time. In 1948, José Figueres Ferrer, leader of the armed rebellion group Partido Liberación Nacional, led a coup and became president of Costa Rica. With his leadership and the demilitarization of the country, Costa Rica shifted from the threat of communism to a democratic system. Ferrer transformed Costa Rica into a progressive democracy, granting voting rights to Black people and women just 18 months after taking office (Coleman & Donahue, 2018).

The political changes in Costa Rica ensured fair elections from 1948 onward, with the Supreme Court recognizing peace as an official human right. Additionally, the absence of a standing army freed up resources for societal purposes, such as education and social welfare. Costa Rica became a regional example for demilitarization and the promotion of human rights, with President Óscar Arias even receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. Arias also helped found the University for Peace (Upeace), the only university established by the UN General Assembly. Since 1997, Costa Rica has included peace education in its school curriculum (Coleman & Donahue, 2018).

Costa Rica has also played a leading role in mediating negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Although this topic is often characterized by stalemates, the negotiations involving Costa Rica have been notably productive (Gomez, 2021). Central themes in Costa Rica include peace, justice, and gender equality, which are reflected both internally and externally through various declarations and conventions. The “Declaration of Perpetual, Active, and Unarmed Neutrality” of 1983 is an example of Costa Rica’s external commitment to international peace, preventing the country from interfering in other states’ conflicts (Coleman & Donahue, 2018).

Mediation and arbitration were officially introduced in Costa Rica in 1997 with the creation of the “Ley sobre Resolución Alternativa de Conflictos y Promoción de la Paz Social.” This law paved the way for further mediation agreements, which were previously not possible due to a lack of legal authority (Sistema Costarricense de Información Jurídica, n.d.).

The indigenous communities of Salitre and Diquís are currently struggling to preserve their identity and culture, as they face threats from non-indigenous groups. Salitre, one of the indigenous territories, has experienced ongoing challenges in maintaining its land, despite having both legal and ancestral rights to it. After successfully reclaiming 85% of their territory, the Salitre community endured a wave of violence from non-indigenous individuals, including arson, threats, and persecution (Samuda, 2015).

In response, the Salitre community has fought for recognition of their authority, reaffirmation of their identity, and protection of their culture and language through education. As a result of this resistance, Sergio Rojas Ortiz—a member of the National Coordination of the National Front of Indigenous Peoples (FRENAPI) and President of the Local Government of the Bribri de Salitre territory—was imprisoned for seven months (Samuda, 2015).

The Diquís, the largest of Costa Rica's eight indigenous groups, reside in a remote forested area in Térraba. Their representatives have voiced concerns about a proposed hydroelectric project, fearing it would lead to the destruction of their community (Marsden, 2021; Samuda, 2015).

The primary concern regarding this project is its significant environmental impact, particularly deforestation. The Diquís community's protest is grounded in Convention 169 of the Costa Rican constitution, which affirms the right of indigenous peoples to determine their development priorities, especially when these affect their lives, beliefs, institutions, spiritual well-being, and the lands they occupy or use (Samuda, 2015).

A key issue identified in this analysis is the lack of communication and understanding among the actors involved. Mediation by an external party, as previously discussed, is a critical factor for healthy dialogue; however, the private sector could make greater efforts to prevent future conflicts. Learning about the culture and lifestyle of local communities enables better engagement, and establishing open communication with these communities is essential to avoid misunderstandings.

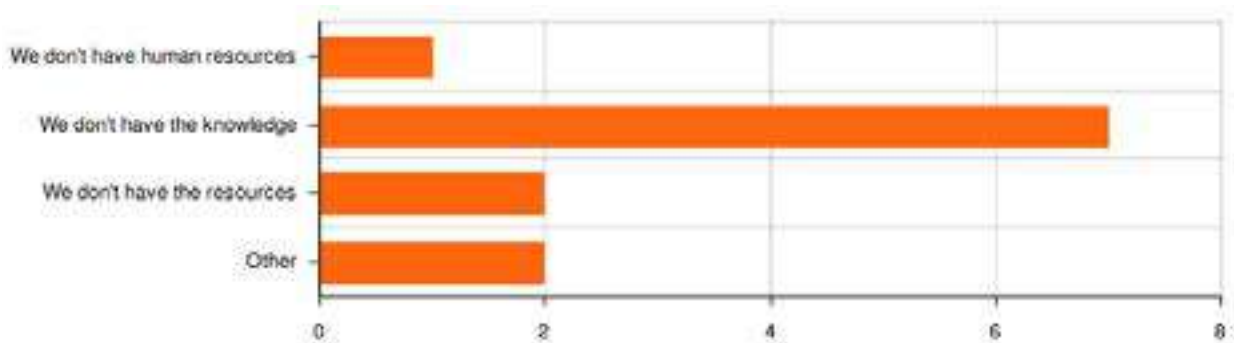
Current Involvement Private Sector in Costa Rica Regarding SDGs

This study examines the role of the private sector in peace-related initiatives in Costa Rica, with a specific focus on Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16). To understand the extent of private sector involvement, it is necessary to assess how companies implement

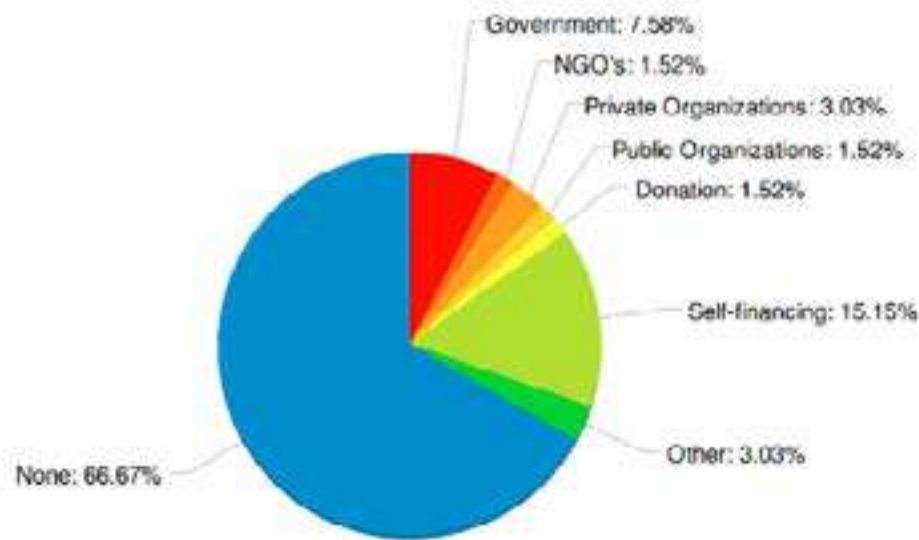
SDG-related projects, the actors involved, and the barriers they face. The research also offers insight into the broader context of Costa Rican corporate engagement in sustainable development and peacebuilding.

In 2020, a survey was conducted among 67 companies selected from the “Esencial Costa Rica” network, a national brand that certifies firms for their commitment to sustainability. The sample was found to fairly represent the private sector landscape. Results revealed that while only two-thirds of respondents were aware of the UN’s SDGs, 97% reported being involved in some form of sustainability initiative. As shown in Figure 3, lack of awareness was the leading reason cited for non-implementation of the SDGs, aligning with broader knowledge gaps (Bruggeman, Valderrama & Cucchia, 2020).

Figure 3: Reasons for not implementing SDGs. Source: Author



Despite Costa Rica’s strong governmental commitment to the SDGs, including pledges of financial and institutional support (UN, 2016), survey data indicated limited external funding for sustainability projects. As illustrated in Figure 4, most initiatives were either self-financed or unfunded (Bruggeman, Valderrama & Cucchia, 2020).

Figure 4: Funding of sustainable projects. Source: Author

Five primary obstacles to SDG implementation were identified:

1. Lack of funding:

This obstacle is especially prevalent among smaller companies that do not have the financial capacity to implement SDGs without external support.

2. Lack of human resources/time:

The current pandemic partially explains this category. Cutbacks have forced companies to operate with fewer staff, increasing workloads. There is a notable difference between companies with a dedicated sustainability division and those without.

3. Lack of training and knowledge:

As concluded earlier, a lack of knowledge is the main problem for companies that have not implemented SDGs. Larger companies that do not face resource or time constraints still struggle with implementation and would like to receive training.

4. Need for UN & Government guidance:

Several companies stated the need for guidance from either the government or the UN. This obstacle is closely related to the training and knowledge gap, as companies seek assurance that they are implementing the SDGs correctly. In some cases, government guidance is considered essential. For example, SDG 16 can only be implemented effectively with good governance (Vernon, 2014).

5. Need for consultancy:

The final obstacle identified was the need for consultancy from external experts to advise companies on which SDGs to implement and how. Most consultancy requests were related to environmental issues and pollution (Bruggeman, Valderrama & Cucchia, 2020).

Current Involvement Private Sector in Costa Rica Regarding SDG 16

To build on the survey findings, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with companies engaged in peace and human rights projects. The interviews focused on three dimensions of private sector contributions to SDG 16: partnerships, employee treatment, and support for peace initiatives. The private organizations I interviewed deemed it very important to verify their partners to ensure alignment with their sustainable values. Some organizations even mentioned a list of preconditions that partners must meet. All organizations reported having experienced at least one instance where they refused to collaborate with a company based on its (lack of) sustainable views. Ms. Araujo, an experienced mediator actively involved in conflicts between the private sector and local communities, added that even though Costa Rica has a sustainable brand, a significant number of organizations remain old-fashioned and focus solely on maximizing profit. However, not all organizations have the resources to verify all their partners, regardless of how important they consider it. These newer and smaller organizations often lack the financial means and human resources to do so (Araujo, 2021).

Good governance is essential for the correct implementation of SDG 16, which can include oversight and assistance from the government in verifying partners. The interviewed organizations had not experienced such support from the government but were all open to the idea. Companies that struggled with this phase even described governmental assistance as a need to help them verify their partners (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

Assessing employee treatment posed methodological challenges, as it is a subjective and sensitive topic that can elicit socially desirable responses. To mitigate this, indirect questions regarding the workplace environment and leisure-related activities were used to gather insights. The interviewed companies emphasized employee well-being, highlighting initiatives such as open communication channels, recreational activities, and access to outdoor spaces. These practices were intended to foster a positive work environment that promotes both individual satisfaction and broader social well-being, with the underlying belief that improved

employee morale contributes positively to familial and community dynamics (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

Interviewed companies reported limited engagement in supporting external peace initiatives. Instead, they predominantly focused on their own internal peace and sustainability efforts. This pattern is consistent with findings from the broader SDG implementation survey, in which 64.2% of participating companies reported concentrating exclusively on their own projects. Only 22.4% indicated that they actively supported other organizations' SDG or peace-related initiatives (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021). This suggests a tendency within the Costa Rican private sector to approach peacebuilding primarily through self-contained initiatives rather than collaborative or networked efforts.

Current Involvement Private Sector in Costa Rica Regarding the Peace Process

As previously analyzed, private sector involvement in the peace process has been a growing trend over the past decade. Private organizations have become essential actors in peacebuilding efforts. The private sector in Costa Rica participates in the peace process through various means.

By spreading awareness of peace, equality, and human rights, organizations can significantly impact local communities and the broader peace process. One interviewed organization specifically mentioned its contribution by promoting sustainability, preventing discrimination, and prohibiting child labor. They have been working on a project called the "Comisión Nacional de Valores," which aims to implement human rights, sustainability, anti-discrimination measures, and child labor prohibition across the entire private sector in Costa Rica (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

Within Costa Rica's private sector, companies occasionally use education to keep their employees aligned with the company's values and goals. Several interviewed companies conduct annual tests on sustainability and human rights for their employees. One company even provides education on human rights to ensure employees are equipped to participate in peace projects (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

The private sector is also involved in various peace initiatives aimed at supporting local communities. Interviews provided deeper insight into these initiatives. Many organizations

support local schools through logistical and financial assistance, emphasizing the importance of quality education for all. Some organizations have also established foundations that organize sports events, volunteer activities, and support shelters for children (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

Spicer and Bousquet (2015) highlighted the private sector's role in providing regional stability, notably through job creation. When companies provide employment to local community members, they contribute to financial stability and help alleviate regional tensions to some extent. One company, located in the most vulnerable area of the capital, San José, emphasized the importance of this role: 40% of their employees come from that vulnerable area. Employing many people from such a community strengthens the company's connection to the local population and enables more direct and impactful assistance (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

Why Peace Education Should be Implemented in the Private Sector in Costa Rica

Earlier was established that even though Costa Rica is an advanced stage in their peace process, communication between the private sector and local communities still must be improved to avoid more tension and conflicts. In this section, the author will analyze two theoretical frameworks that will be used in defining what peace education exactly entails in the case of the private sector in Costa Rica. Additionally, this section will analyze the needs, benefits, and obstacles for private organizations when implementing peace education.

Conflict Sensitivity

The core of conflict sensitivity is the integration of the “what” and the “how,” as illustrated in Table 1. The “what” refers to understanding precisely what conflict sensitivity entails in a given context, while the “how” involves knowing how to address and manage that situation appropriately.

Table 1: The core of conflict sensitivity (International Alert, 2004)

What to do?	How to do it?
Understanding the context in which you operate	Carry out a conflict analysis, and update it regularly
Understand the interaction between your intervention and the context	Link the conflict analysis with the programming cycle of your intervention
Use this understanding to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts	Plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate your intervention in a conflict-sensitive fashion (including redesign when necessary)

The theory teaches companies to understand the context of the region in which they operate and to adjust their projects and approaches accordingly. A clear example of a lack of such understanding occurred in Rwanda in 1994. Companies failed to grasp Rwanda's diverse cultures and societal groups, resulting in a poor allocation of food across refugee camps, which in turn triggered a wave of violence (International Alert, 2004).

Conflict sensitivity further examines the behaviors companies should adopt when entering a new context. Companies impact local communities through resources such as personnel, materials, and intellectual capital. As shown in Table 2, there is a distinction between behaviors that negatively affect the community and those that have a positive impact. Negative behaviors erode trust and can escalate tensions or even provoke conflict and violence between parties. In contrast, positive behaviors foster trust, increase acceptance of the company and its projects, and help create a calmer community environment, which in turn encourages greater engagement and potential partnerships. Within these behavioral patterns, four main types are identified: respect, accountability, fairness, and transparency, as outlined in Table 2 (Burke, 2017).

Table 2: Patterns of Behavior (Burke, 2017)

	Negative Patterns of Behavior	Positive Patterns of Behavior	
Respect	Belligerence/Anger	← → Calm	Transparency
	Competition	← → Collaboration	
	Suspicion	← → Trust	
	Indifference	← → Sensitivity to Local Concerns	
Accountability	Powerlessness	← → Action	
	Impunity	← → Responsibility/Accountability	
	Arms and Power	← → Rule of Law/Nonviolence	
Fairness	Different value for different lives	← → Recognition of value for all lives	

An example of negative patterns of behavior is the aforementioned Sri Lanka conflict in the 1990s. This conflict clearly illustrated that companies only acted when their own interests were directly affected by the conflict and did nothing in earlier stages to support the community. This demonstrated that private companies assigned different value to different lives, showing no sensitivity to local concerns.

Positive behavior patterns can be found in the multi-track diplomacy approach, as demonstrated in the previously discussed apartheid conflict in South Africa. This approach incorporated all the positive behavior patterns of respect in engaging with the local community, transforming them into actions that generated a win-win scenario (Tripathi & Gündüz, 2008).

Corporate Social Responsibility

Not too long ago, the only responsibilities of a company were to pursue maximum profit and abide by the law. However, in recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained significant recognition within the international community. CSR refers to the idea that private companies should be more socially aware, acknowledging the substantial impact the private sector has on communities through job opportunities, human rights, the environment, education, and training (Iturbide, 2018). Companies can become more socially responsible by “integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer, and human rights concerns into their business strategy and operations” (Corporate social responsibility & Responsible business conduct, 2020).

Alongside sustainable development, CSR establishes new goals for organizations, encouraging the creation of innovative, sustainable business models. These models aim first to identify

all economic, social, and environmental impacts that a company has on its stakeholders and to consider these impacts when making decisions that positively affect society and promote sustainable development (Iturbide, 2018). This approach can be compared to the doughnut theory, where human well-being—rather than maximum profit—becomes the central focus and ultimate goal of any organization (Raworth, 2017).

An increasing number of companies are adopting this ideology as they enhance their sustainable values, fostering what is known as a culture of peace. This culture of peace seeks to make education a standard tool for employees, to develop critical thinking, encourage reflection, and motivate active participation in the progress of society (Iturbide, 2018).

Meaning of Peace Education

Previously, conflict sensitivity was identified as an essential theory for the private sector to follow when engaging in peace projects. It is important to distinguish between the peace education applied in a country like Costa Rica—which is not currently experiencing conflict—and the conflict-focused education recommended by conflict sensitivity frameworks. However, this distinction does not diminish the value or focus of peace education. The ideology of conflict sensitivity—emphasizing understanding and adaptation before action—is closely aligned with the principles of peace education.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is also a well-established concept in Costa Rica, with most private organizations prioritizing more than just maximum profit. The private sector demonstrates social responsibility by developing a wide range of projects that support local communities and contribute to regional stability (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

These projects require extensive dialogue and engagement with local communities, making an appropriate approach essential. Furthermore, organizations involved in peace projects can cause significant repercussions if their efforts are mismanaged, with impacts extending far beyond their own operations (Spicer & Bousquet, 2019).

For these reasons, it is highly beneficial for employees of organizations involved in the peace process to possess the necessary knowledge and skills. This is where peace education becomes particularly relevant. Peace education is described as “dismantling all forms of violence and creating a just and sustainable culture of peace” (McKeown Jones, Orchard, &

Paulson, 2017). In anticipation of implementing this approach in the private sector in Costa Rica, peace education in this research is structured in several layers.

The increasing involvement of the private sector in the peace process has created new opportunities, as observed in Costa Rica. However, this involvement requires specialized knowledge on topics not typically included in standard employee training. Several organizations already conduct annual assessments of their employees' understanding of human rights, highlighting the recognized importance of this knowledge.

Further research into SDG 16 has also underscored the significance of peace, governance, justice, and security. These concepts are too important to be confined solely to SDG 16 and have become essential for the private sector's role in the peace process (Vernon, 2014).

Based on the research conducted, peace education in the private sector will cover the following subjects:

- Human Rights
- Peace and Conflict
- Gender Studies
- Intercultural Communication

As identified in conflict sensitivity theory, specific behavior patterns are required when engaging with communities of different cultures. This engagement consists of two key factors: creating healthy dialogue and sustaining it, which are further detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Factors for private companies to have a healthy dialogue with local communities. Source: Author

Factors for creating healthy dialogue → GOAL = Mutual trust	Factors for sustaining healthy dialogue → GOAL = A win-win solution
- Understanding the needs and goals of the community	- No dishonesty
- Creating a safe environment	- Absolute transparency
- Finding common ground	- Active listening
- Introducing how the community could benefit from the situation	- Working towards a mutually understood goal
	- Willingness to make compromises

Costa Rica is home to a significant indigenous population, distributed across 24 distinct regions protected by the 1977 Indigenous Law. It is crucial that, in addition to learning about conflict sensitivity and effective engagement with local communities, private organizations also familiarize themselves with the diverse cultural groups in Costa Rica and understand their unique values and needs. This cultural awareness is reflected in everyday politics, where individuals take care to avoid causing offense by thoroughly researching the other party, their needs, and the needs of their constituencies (Albani & Ade, 2021).

Research indicates a substantial need for peace education within the private sector, with several companies already expressing interest in such initiatives. When companies were specifically asked about their willingness to implement peace education, their responses were overwhelmingly positive. They believed that peace education would make a significant difference within their organizations and improve their relationships with local communities (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

Need for Implementing Peace Education

Peace education will enable the private sector to become more actively engaged in the peace process in Costa Rica. It will enhance engagement with, and understanding of, local communities, while also fostering stronger partnerships with NGOs, the public sector, and the government. Increased engagement will lead to a deeper understanding of the values and interests of other stakeholders, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflict.

Survey results identified five primary obstacles hindering private sector engagement in implementing the SDGs and launching peace-related projects. These challenges are mainly linked to gaps in institutional capacity, especially the need for training and technical support. Many companies reported lacking the knowledge required to design and implement sustainable and peace-oriented initiatives effectively. Introducing peace education within the private sector is proposed as a solution to this capacity gap. While not intended to replace governmental guidance, such education could equip organizations with the tools to operate more independently and competently in these areas. Interviews confirmed a broad openness among companies to adopting peace education as a means to overcome these implementation challenges (Bruggeman, Valderrama & Cucchia, 2020).

Furthermore, interviewee Ms. Araujo highlighted that international financial institutions are increasingly requiring the inclusion of conflict resolution mechanisms within national frameworks as a condition for funding. These requirements help ensure that investments in sustainable and peace-focused projects are protected and managed responsibly. As a result, private organizations seeking external funding must demonstrate compliance with conflict-sensitive standards, further underscoring the importance of peace education and conflict resolution capacity within the corporate sector (Araujo, 2021).

Benefits of Implementing Peace Educations

One benefit that is highly valued in Costa Rica is obtaining a sustainability certificate. Organizations such as Esencial Costa Rica and Procomer each have their own brand. Membership in these organizations allows companies to use their brand, which represents sustainability, innovation, and social progress. Companies pay an annual fee to use this brand, but it is considered essential, and they are willing to invest in it (Esencial Costa Rica, 2021; Procomer, 2021).

The concept of recognizing companies for implementing peace education can also be realized through a formal distinction. For example, the “Programa Bandera Azul Ecológica” awards companies with an ecological distinction based on specific efforts and volunteer work related to environmental protection (Bandera Azul Ecológica, 2017).

Building on this idea, the proposal is to grant companies a special brand once they have successfully implemented peace education. This brand would represent cultural sensitivity, awareness of human rights, environmental stewardship, conflict resolution skills, and a thorough understanding of the community structure in the region where the company operates. Such a distinction would assure other private companies, local communities, and the government that the organization’s employees are well-prepared and capable of effectively carrying out peace-related initiatives.

Peace Education as Conflict Prevention

Beyond its normative value, peace education can also serve as a pragmatic investment in conflict prevention. In Costa Rica, disputes between private companies and local communities are not uncommon and can result in significant financial and reputational costs. As noted

by Araujo (2021), international financial institutions increasingly require recipient states and companies to demonstrate conflict resolution mechanisms before disbursing funds for sustainable development projects.

A prominent example is the case of the Costa Rican Electricity Institute (Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad, ICE) and the community of Turrialba. In 2010, ICE initiated a hydroelectric project that required diverting water sources from local springs used by surrounding communities. Residents filed a lawsuit, arguing that the project jeopardized essential water access. The court ultimately ruled in favor of the community, framing the decision in terms of “global responsibility”—a principle that holds developers accountable not only for project planning and execution but also for minimizing harm to affected populations (Tenorio, 2017).

As a result, ICE faced the cancellation of the project, over ten years of delays, and more than \$100 million in losses. Had peacebuilding principles, including community engagement and conflict sensitivity, been embedded earlier in the project cycle—through peace education or external guidance—such outcomes might have been mitigated. This case illustrates that peace education is not merely a normative ideal but also a potential tool for reducing corporate risk and ensuring more sustainable development outcomes.

Obstacles for Implementing Peace Education

The Covid-19 pandemic has struck hard in the private sector in Costa Rica. The government has tried to assist the private sector; however, the bureaucratic nature of the country does not allow the quick assistance that is required. Given the critical financial situation many Costa Rican companies are experiencing currently, investing in something intangible such as peace education might not be desirable for all. Especially since the benefits will mainly become apparent in the long term, with little visible short-term benefits (The World Bank, 2021).

Actors Involved in the Implementation of Peace Education in the Private Sector

From the five main obstacles that private companies in Costa Rica experience when implementing SDGs, three are related to consultancy, assistance, or training. However, these private companies show the willingness to implement SDGs further and participate in peace

projects; however, they lack the knowledge and experience. While some companies specifically wanted help from the government or the UN, most companies just mentioned the need for consultancy or training. This creates a need for peace education in the private sector in Costa Rica. This section analyzes the current involvement between the private sector and relevant actors and the potential of these actors for future participation in the peace education implementation process.

Government

The government of Costa Rica is currently the most involved actor in assisting the private sector with the execution of sustainable and peace projects. While this assistance is mainly financial, private companies are seeking more extensive support from the government in the form of guidance and oversight. This aligns with the theory behind SDG 16, which emphasizes the importance of good governance in implementation (Vernon, 2014).

Interviewed companies highlighted the importance of ensuring that their partners share their values regarding sustainability, with some even maintaining a list of preconditions. However, most companies struggle with this screening process due to their size or limited human resources (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

Costa Rica is recognized as a progressive country focused on sustaining peace and sustainable development. Key milestones include the recognition of peace as a human right, former President Arias receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, and the establishment of Upeace, the only university founded by the UN (Coleman & Donahue, 2018).

In 2016, the Minister of National Planning and Economic Policy stated that the government is fundamentally obligated to pursue sustainable development and actively support other sectors. This obligation is enshrined in the constitution under Social Rights and Guarantees, Article 50, which affirms the right to a healthy environment and ecological balance. The government must guarantee, defend, and preserve this right. Additionally, the government signed the 'National Pact for the Sustainable Development Goals' in 2016, ensuring further SDG implementation and greater collaboration between the public and private sectors. Article 64 further states that the government will support companies by creating better conditions for employees' lives (Asamblea Legislativa, 2009; UN, 2016). There has also been a significant shift of power, with the government granting more legislative responsibilities to

the public and private sectors to foster a more inclusive and productive society (Coleman & Donahue, 2018).

Costa Rica's absence of a standing army allows for the allocation of additional public funds to social development and public services. However, the private sector still desires more support from the government for peace-related initiatives and SDG implementation. While peace education in the private sector can reduce the need for governmental assistance to some extent, the government remains a significant partner. The government can collaborate with companies that have implemented peace education and assist those that have not. This is only feasible if relevant government departments also receive peace education, enabling governmental employees to better support the private sector. Companies that have received peace education will be able to engage more effectively with the government on peace projects, fostering smoother and deeper partnerships. Moreover, the government will be better equipped to support other companies seeking to implement SDGs or participate in peace projects.

Additionally, the government serves as a role model; when it successfully assists and advises the private sector after receiving peace education, private companies are more likely to recognize the benefits and implement peace education themselves.

Esencial Costa Rica and Procomer

Interviews with private sector actors involved in SDG 16 implementation and peace-related initiatives revealed that organizations such as Esencial Costa Rica and Procomer play a critical role in promoting sustainability standards within the national context. Beyond their branding function, these institutions actively support companies in adopting sustainable practices and serve as strategic partners in relevant initiatives. Currently, most private companies engage with these organizations primarily for branding purposes. By paying an annual fee, businesses are permitted to display the Esencial Costa Rica or Procomer certification alongside their own branding—signaling a public commitment to sustainability and innovation.

These certifications are used across sectors and organizational sizes to communicate sustainable values to consumers and stakeholders. However, Esencial Costa Rica and Procomer offer far more than symbolic value: they possess substantial technical expertise and institutional

capacity to support deeper private sector engagement with the SDGs. In the context of expanding peace education within the private sector, these organizations could leverage their experience in two key ways:

- Field research revealed that many private companies already maintain partnerships with Esencial Costa Rica and Procomer for the implementation of sustainability-focused projects. These collaborations demonstrate existing trust and operational synergy between public and private actors. However, both organizations hold untapped potential to deepen their engagement, particularly in supporting companies that have adopted peace education frameworks. Strengthening these partnerships could enhance coordination, improve implementation quality, and expand the reach of peace-related initiatives across sectors (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).
- Given their technical expertise in sustainable development and established roles as intermediaries between the public and private sectors, Esencial Costa Rica and Procomer are well positioned to deliver peace education to private organizations. Their institutional knowledge, practical experience, and community-level engagement provide a solid foundation for training programs that combine theoretical understanding with applied relevance. As recognized national entities, they could serve as credible and effective facilitators of peace education within the corporate landscape.

Public Sector

Collaboration between the public and private sectors in Costa Rica is expanding and can be observed at multiple levels. When these sectors work together, a co-governance structure is often established, regulated by an entity focused on policy implementation. The board of executives typically includes representatives from both the public and private sectors. Since the private sector usually holds more seats on the board, it often wields significant decision-making power (Cornick, Jimenez, & Román, 2014).

Another example of this collaboration is the shared commitment to sustainable development. This partnership is reinforced by the government's dedication to SDG implementation and its constitutional obligation to support other sectors in this progress. The National Pact for the Sustainable Development Goals, signed in 2016, further advanced this collaboration.

A key outcome of this pact is the emphasis on SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals, which promotes more extensive cooperation between the private and public sectors in the ongoing implementation of SDGs (UN, 2016).

Local Community

When private companies interact with local communities, it is essential to initiate healthy dialogue. As previously mentioned, creating and sustaining such dialogue requires careful consideration of various factors. This is particularly important in Costa Rica, where eight different indigenous groups are spread across 24 territories. These communities often maintain traditional lifestyles, making them less connected to the rest of the country. Therefore, establishing healthy dialogue is especially important for private companies before starting any project in these territories. Analysis of indigenous groups and conflicts with private companies highlights the importance of acknowledging their culture, language, way of life, and their right to live undisturbed on their land.

Local communities play a critical role in enabling constructive engagement with the private sector. Grassroots diplomacy is foundational to sustainable peacebuilding and begins with open, inclusive dialogue at the community level. When local actors are willing to engage, the potential for conflict can often be mitigated or avoided entirely. Early, trust-based communication between communities and private organizations serves as a key preventive mechanism in addressing tensions before they escalate.

Once local communities observe that private companies are implementing peace education and investing time and effort to support them, their attitudes toward the private sector are likely to improve. This leads to greater willingness to engage in dialogue and consider the intentions of private companies, often resulting in mutually beneficial solutions.

Universities

Mediators are often regarded as authorized and qualified third parties that arbitrate negotiations. In Costa Rica, since the 1997 mediation law, mediation occurs in many forms, not always conducted by official mediators. Universities in Costa Rica have increasingly focused on peace education through lectures and seminars, and they also promote organizations that launch peace projects or act as mediators in conflicts with local communities.

For example, the mediation between the Diquis and Salitre communities was facilitated by the Universidad de Ciencias Sociales del TEC. The university provided a safe environment for indigenous representatives to share their stories and used its platform to raise awareness of these conflicts, giving a voice to local communities. This demonstrates the potential of universities to bridge gaps between the private sector and local communities. Additionally, universities are gaining expertise in peace education, making them well-suited to advise and teach private companies implementing peace projects (Samuda, 2015).

NGOs

NGOs have been actively promoting human rights, the right to water, and employment diversification for marginalized populations in Costa Rica, mainly through projects. One such project is the 'Red de Mujeres Rurales de Costa Rica,' which focuses on promoting the rights and interests of indigenous and rural women. This project exemplifies how NGOs engage in social initiatives and collaborate with other organizations and universities to raise awareness (Peace Insight, 2013).

Private Sector

To date, the private sector has not made extensive efforts to support sustainable and peace projects. Only 3% of projects from private organizations have been funded by other private organizations, and partnerships between private companies are rare in Costa Rica for these types of projects. This could change significantly with the implementation of peace education, as organizations would be better equipped to support and advise one another to a greater extent (Bruggeman, Valderrama & Cucchia, 2020).

Field research revealed that smaller private companies are more engaged with local communities. In contrast, larger companies, due to the scale of their projects and less frequent community engagement, often attract more attention from environmentalists. This can have significant repercussions, as Costa Rica is a country where many disputes are settled in court. Prolonged legal battles can result in substantial financial losses due to court fees and project delays (Bruggeman & Fallas, 2021).

The UN

The UN is actively involved in Costa Rica, assisting local communities, the private sector, the government, and trade unions in achieving the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Costa Rica's reputation for peace, democracy, human rights, and sustainable development makes it a focal point for UN activities. The UN's objectives in Costa Rica include:

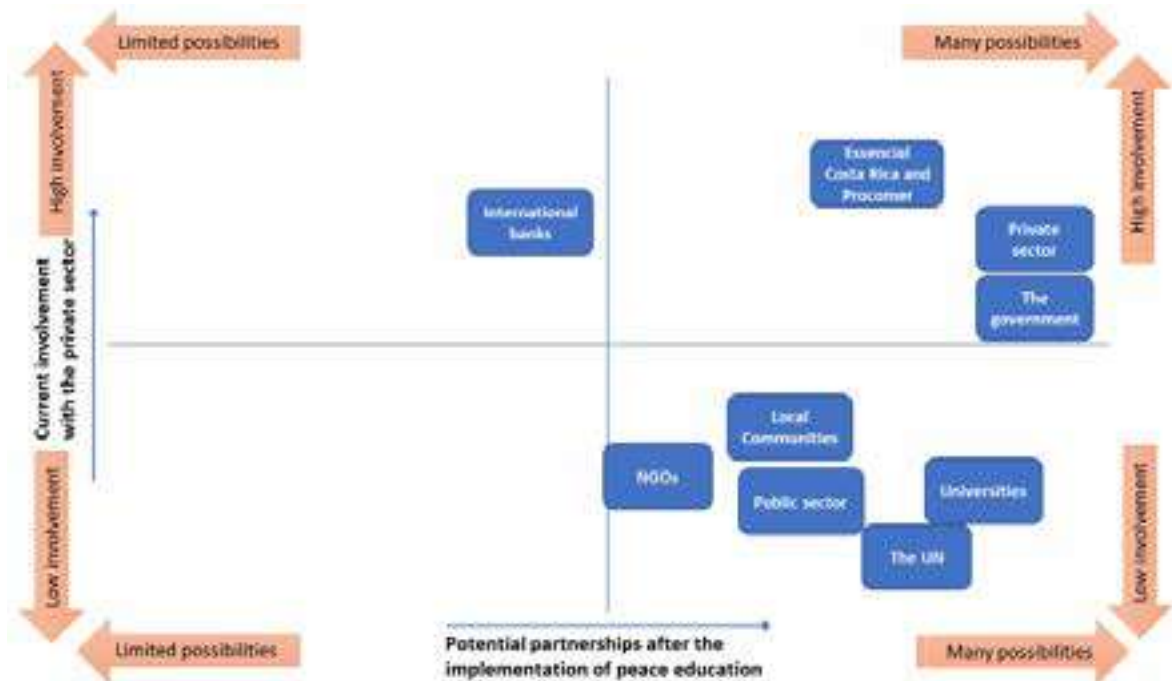
- Implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- Environmental development and a vision for a decarbonized economy
- Promotion of human rights
- Promotion of gender equality
- Support for migratory and humanitarian responses
- Resources for development
- Public infrastructure (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2021)

The UN has also established the SDG fund to support organizations implementing SDGs or engaging in peace projects. However, this fund has not been very successful in Costa Rica, as private organizations report receiving little to no financial support from the UN. Many private companies have also expressed a desire for more advice and support from the UN when implementing sustainable and peace projects (Bruggeman, Valderrama & Cucchia, 2020).

International Banks

International banks are crucial for funding sustainable and peace projects in Costa Rica's private sector. Since Covid-19, the private sector has become even more dependent on international banks, increasing the banks' leverage. This leverage is often exercised through conflict resolution clauses, which serve as insurance that private organizations will use funds for projects that benefit the community and are properly executed (The World Bank, 2021).

The World Bank, in particular, has supported several projects in Costa Rica aimed at increasing productive inclusion and promoting environmental sustainability. Through the Country Partnership Framework (CPF), the World Bank has loaned more than one billion US dollars to the Costa Rican government in recent years, funding projects focused on improving and protecting universal healthcare, developing sustainable and resilient landscapes, generating sustainable energy, and more (The World Bank, 2021).

Figure 5: Actor analysis.²

Source: Author

Conclusion

Key Research Findings

This study examined the feasibility, relevance, and implementation strategies for introducing peaceeducation in the private sector in Costa Rica. The research explored not only the potential benefits but also the practical challenges of implementation. Drawing on fieldwork—including surveys and interviews with private sector representatives—it became evident that there is strong interestamong Costa Rican companies in engaging with peace-related initiatives, despite notable gaps in technical knowledge and institutional support.

Over the last 10–15 years, there has been a trend of private organizations involving themselves in the peace process. Since this trend is also visible in Costa Rica, the author sought

² This figure offers a conceptual understanding of actor involvement, based on the conducted field and desk research. It does, however, not present an exact measurement based on precise numbers.

to understand how private companies can participate in the peace process and the potential drawbacks of their involvement. The private sector was identified as playing roles across all diplomacy tracks, meaning it has fulfilled various functions in the peace process. Table 4 illustrates the benefits and hazards of involving the private sector in peacebuilding.

Table 4: Private sector involvement in the peace process.

Benefits to private sector involvement	Hazards of private sector involvement
Provide certain resources	Driven by economic benefits
Easier to approach for local communities	Lose interest due to their short term vision
Helping to create a multi-layer dialogue	Ignoring conflict sensitivity
Often no direct stake in the outcome	

Source: Author

Costa Rica has a long history with peace, beginning in 1948 when the country was demilitarized after a military coup. Other key milestones include the Indigenous Law of 1977, the first mediation law of 1997, and the government's further commitment to SDG implementation in 2016. Costa Rica has actively promoted national and international projects focused on gender equality, peace, and human rights. These efforts have contributed to the country's reputation as the most peaceful nation in Central America. The private sector has received increasing support in SDG implementation and peace projects, but many organizations still seek more assistance, as they lack the resources or knowledge to execute all planned initiatives.

Costa Rica is home to eight different indigenous groups, spread over 24 territories protected by the Indigenous Law of 1977. Despite these protections, organizations have attempted to launch projects in these regions that have led to conflicts and costly lawsuits. Other actors have tried to ease these tensions through peace projects and mediation, but dialogue between the private sector and indigenous groups remains limited.

Field interviews revealed that many private companies are already undertaking initiatives to support local communities, particularly in areas affected by conflict or social vulnerability. These efforts generally fall into four categories: raising awareness, providing education, implementing peace-related projects, and generating employment opportunities. While these

initiatives demonstrate a strong foundation for private sector involvement in peacebuilding, they often lack strategic coordination and conflict-sensitive design—gaps that peace education could effectively address.

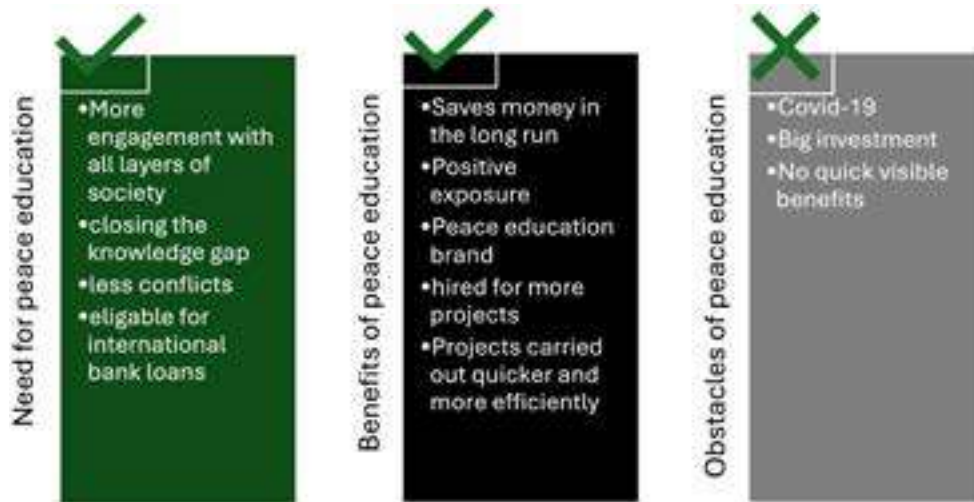
The theory of conflict sensitivity emphasizes the importance of how organizations engage and maintain dialogue when operating in or near conflict-affected settings. While traditionally applied to contexts of armed conflict, its core principles remain relevant in Costa Rica, where tensions persist between private sector actors and local communities, particularly within indigenous territories. These dynamics, though not constituting armed conflict, still involve significant risks of social harm and disruption.

When combined with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theory—which promotes peace through sustainable development and human rights protection—conflict sensitivity provides a conceptual foundation for peace education. In this research paper, peace education is defined as “dismantling all forms of violence and creating a just and sustainable culture of peace” (McKeown Jones, Orchard, & Paulson, 2017). Peace education in the private sector in Costa Rica is structured around three main constructs:

- Peace concepts
- Conflict sensitivity
- Culture studies

The survey revealed that private organizations require assistance, guidance, and other types of support when implementing sustainable and peace projects. The implementation of peace education aims to fill this gap. Figure 6 compares the needs, benefits, and obstacles for the private sector in Costa Rica when implementing peace education.

Figure 6: Implementation of peace education - Needs vs Benefits vs Obstacles.



Source: Author

In anticipation of implementing peace education, it is imperative to analyze all the involved actors. The three most prominent actors in this process are the public sector, the government, and the private sector. However, these actors have thus far not supported private organizations to their satisfaction in sustainable and peace projects, so there is much progress to be made. To achieve this, the government must implement peace education to better assist the private sector.

Peace Education Implementation Role

Short-Term Involvement 1-5 Years

Qualified peace educators for the Costa Rican private sector must possess extensive knowledge in human rights, peacebuilding, justice, and sustainability, as well as a deep understanding of local cultures to engage communities sensitively and effectively. Organizations such as Esencial Costa Rica and Procomer align closely with the principles of peace education and have proven experience implementing sustainable and peace initiatives. These organizations, alongside experienced NGOs with conflict-sensitive expertise, are well-positioned to deliver peace education programs. Furthermore, Costa Rican universities, increasingly involved in peacebuilding through curriculum integration and mediation efforts, represent another crucial actor capable of facilitating peace education within the private sector.

The UN has numerous significant milestones it aims to achieve in Costa Rica; however, these are all based on the long term. In the short term, the UN would be an essential actor to implement peace education in the private sector. With their expertise, UN employees would make effective peace educators. The UN should focus on educating smaller organizations that are looking to implement peace projects and lack the necessary knowledge. Survey research found that smaller companies, in particular, are missing the financial resources to make significant investments, such as implementing peace education.

Local communities can teach about their culture and needs, which will increase organizations' cultural sensitivity and inclusive approaches and promote the need for peace education. Local communities could collaborate with the UN, which aims to engage more with local communities to promote matters such as gender equality and human rights.

International banks are already demanding peace-related preconditions for providing loans and supporting sustainable development in Costa Rica. Their financial support is essential for the private sector, so they can make peace education a precondition for private companies to receive loans. This benefits international banks by ensuring projects are carried out correctly and help the local community, while also stimulating the overall implementation of peace education.

Long-Term Involvement 5-10 Years

In the longer term, government leadership in adopting and institutionalizing peace education is essential. By embedding peace education within public sector policies and training programs, the government can extend support to private sector actors, particularly smaller organizations lacking financial and technical resources. This institutionalization will facilitate a broader and more sustainable uptake of peace education across sectors.

Once peace education has been implemented by various public and private organizations and the government, it will receive greater acknowledgment. Involvement in peace projects will simultaneously contribute to the promotion of peace education. Collaboration with other companies will also highlight the advantages gained from peace education, encouraging further adoption.

The implementation of peace education equips organizations and the government with the knowledge needed to participate in and create sustainable and peace projects. It also ensures that partners are more likely to share similar views on project execution, fostering further collaboration between the government and the private sector in Costa Rica.

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El peso y contrapeso de la vacancia presidencial por permanente incapacidad moral

The weight and counterbalance of the presidential vacancy due to permanent moral incapacity

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Resumen

El presente artículo aborda la problemática de la vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral en el Perú, analizando su contexto histórico y los desafíos normativos asociados. Este mecanismo, que ha sido aplicado en varios casos recientes, carece de una definición clara, lo que genera incertidumbre y subjetividad en su aplicación. El objetivo principal es proponer una reforma constitucional que establezca criterios objetivos y garantice un debido proceso en la implementación de esta figura. La metodología incluye un análisis documental y comparativo, considerando experiencias internacionales como el impeachment en Estados Uni-

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dos y modelos parlamentarios europeos. Los resultados revelan la necesidad de incorporar lineamientos normativos específicos, como la inclusión de principios de ética, integridad e idoneidad, así como la creación de mecanismos de verificación independientes. Se concluye que estas reformas son esenciales para fortalecer la institucionalidad democrática, garantizar la estabilidad política y fomentar una gobernanza ética en el ejercicio del poder.

Palabras clave:

Vacancia presidencial, incapacidad, reforma constitucional, ética.

Abstract

This article addresses the issue of the presidential vacancy due to moral incapacity in Peru, analyzing its historical context and the associated regulatory challenges. This mechanism, which has been applied in several recent cases, lacks a clear definition, which generates uncertainty and subjectivity in its application. The main objective is to propose a constitutional reform that establishes objective criteria and guarantees due process in the implementation of this mechanism. The methodology includes a documentary and comparative analysis, considering international experiences such as impeachment in the United States and European parliamentary models. The results reveal the need to incorporate specific regulatory guidelines, such as the inclusion of principles of ethics, integrity, and suitability, as well as the creation of independent verification mechanisms. It is concluded that these reforms are essential to strengthen democratic institutions, guarantee political stability, and promote ethical governance in the exercise of power.

Keywords:

Presidential vacancy, incapacity, constitutional reform, ethics.

Introducción

El concepto de vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral ha sido objeto de controversia en el Perú debido a su falta de definición específica y a su aplicación subjetiva en diversos contextos históricos. Este mecanismo, previsto en el artículo 113° inciso 2 de la Constitución Política del Perú, ha sido utilizado como un instrumento político de control parlamentario, particularmente en situaciones de crisis institucional. Casos emblemáticos como los de Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (2018) y Martín Vizcarra (2020) ejemplifican cómo dicha figura ha servido no solo para evaluar la idoneidad del Presidente, sino también para canalizar disputas entre el Ejecutivo y el Congreso, muchas veces sin un fundamento jurídico claro ni un proceso reglado.

Esta realidad ha derivado en una preocupante inestabilidad política y ha profundizado la desconfianza ciudadana en las instituciones democráticas. Por ello, este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la figura de la vacancia por incapacidad moral desde sus antecedentes históricos y teóricos, y proponer una reforma constitucional que establezca criterios claros y objetivos para su aplicación, basados en principios de ética pública, idoneidad e integridad, a fin de garantizar un ejercicio responsable del poder de control parlamentario y la preservación del equilibrio democrático.

Marco teórico

El estudio se fundamenta en teorías sobre el presidencialismo latinoamericano, la ética pública y la gobernanza democrática, campos que permiten comprender los límites y posibilidades del control político frente a la figura presidencial. En contextos como el peruano, donde el diseño institucional concentra poder en la figura del presidente sin los contrapesos formales de los regímenes parlamentarios, el mal uso de herramientas como la vacancia puede poner en riesgo la estabilidad constitucional.

Desde una perspectiva histórica, Gallo (1897) definía la “incapacidad moral” como la ausencia de conducta virtuosa o rectitud ética en el ejercicio de funciones públicas. No obstante, esta visión decimonónica requiere ser complementada por enfoques más contemporáneos. En ese sentido, constitucionalistas latinoamericanos como Roberto Gargarella, Pedro Sagüés y Luigi Ferrajolihan coincidieron en que las democracias constitucionales deben restringir el poder punitivo del Parlamento, asegurando que cualquier mecanismo de remoción de auto-

ridades esté sustentado en principios jurídicos verificables, debido proceso y límites funcionales al poder legislativo.

Asimismo, la teoría de la gobernanza democrática señala que la legitimidad de los gobernantes no solo deriva del voto popular, sino también de su sujeción a estándares éticos y principios de responsabilidad pública. En ese marco, la vacancia presidencial debería entenderse como un mecanismo excepcional, orientado a preservar la moralidad pública, pero no como un sustituto del juicio penal o del control electoral.

Desde un enfoque comparado, el impeachment en Estados Unidos y la moción de censura constructiva en sistemas parlamentarios europeos como Alemania y España permiten identificar elementos normativos relevantes: causales objetivas, procedimientos garantistas y una lógica de responsabilidad política que no puede depender de interpretaciones abiertas o motivaciones coyunturales. La carencia de estos elementos en la regulación peruana actual agrava el riesgo de un uso abusivo del mecanismo.

La vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral tiene antecedentes que se remontan al siglo XIX, pero su formulación ha sido ambigua y su desarrollo insuficiente. En las primeras constituciones peruanas, la incapacidad presidencial era entendida principalmente como una condición física o mental, sin que se mencionara la moralidad como elemento jurídico relevante. Es recién con la Constitución de 1860 que aparece la noción de “incapacidad moral”, aunque sin definición legal o desarrollo reglamentario.

Esta formulación se mantuvo en las constituciones de 1920, 1933 y especialmente en la de 1979, que incorporó la incapacidad moral como causal de vacancia. Dicha redacción fue replicada en la actual Constitución de 1993, que en su artículo 113° inciso 2 establece que la Presidencia de la República vaca por “su permanente incapacidad moral o física, declarada por el Congreso”. Sin embargo, ni la Constitución ni una ley de desarrollo constitucional han definido los criterios para declarar dicha incapacidad moral, lo cual ha generado un vacío normativo peligroso, que ha permitido su interpretación discrecional.

Por tanto, el desarrollo histórico demuestra que la vacancia por incapacidad moral ha permanecido anclada en la ambigüedad constitucional, lo cual contradice los principios de certeza jurídica, seguridad constitucional y equilibrio de poderes, pilares fundamentales del Estado de derecho.

Metodología

La presente investigación adoptó un enfoque cualitativo, dado que el objeto de estudio —la figura de la vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral— requiere un análisis interpretativo más que cuantitativo. Se empleó como técnica principal la revisión documental de fuentes jurídicas, normativas y doctrinarias, lo que permitió una comprensión profunda del fenómeno constitucional en estudio. En primer lugar, se analizó el texto constitucional peruano, en especial el artículo 113° inciso 2 de la Constitución de 1993, así como sus antecedentes en constituciones anteriores desde el siglo XIX. Esta revisión se complementó con el examen de jurisprudencia relevante del Tribunal Constitucional, informes del Congreso y debates parlamentarios vinculados a procesos de vacancia ocurridos en los últimos años.

En segundo lugar, se revisó literatura especializada nacional e internacional en materia de derecho constitucional, ética pública y control del poder político, incorporando tanto autores clásicos como contemporáneos. Este enfoque permitió contrastar interpretaciones tradicionales del concepto de incapacidad moral con visiones actuales centradas en la ética institucional, el principio de legalidad y el debido proceso parlamentario.

Asimismo, se utilizó el método de análisis comparado, contrastando el modelo peruano con experiencias internacionales, como el impeachment en los Estados Unidos y la moción de censura constructiva en sistemas parlamentarios europeos. Esta comparación permitió identificar buenas prácticas normativas y procedimentales, útiles como referencia para fortalecer el marco constitucional peruano.

El uso combinado de estas técnicas metodológicas permitió identificar los vacíos normativos existentes, así como proponer modificaciones concretas y técnicamente justificadas al texto constitucional vigente, con el fin de asegurar una regulación clara, objetiva y garantista del mecanismo de vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral.

Resultados y discusiones

La Constitución Política del Perú vigente configura un sistema de contrapesos entre el Poder Ejecutivo y el Congreso de la República. Este último ejerce amplias competencias, entre ellas: interpelar y censurar ministros, negar la confianza al gabinete ministerial, investigar y fiscalizar actos del Ejecutivo, aprobar por insistencia normas observadas, así como solicitar la

vacancia presidencial por permanente incapacidad moral, además de sustanciar acusaciones constitucionales contra altos funcionarios.

A su vez, el Presidente de la República dispone de herramientas constitucionales significativas, como la facultad de disolver el Congreso en caso de que se le niegue la confianza a dos Consejos de Ministros, dictar decretos de urgencia, emitir decretos legislativos con autorización congresal y nombrar o remover ministros de Estado. Estas prerrogativas están enmarcadas principalmente en el artículo 118 de la Constitución y son sujetas a control judicial y constitucional.

Con la entrada en vigor de la Ley N.º 31988, que restablece la bicameralidad para el periodo parlamentario 2026-2031, se configura un nuevo contrapeso institucional: el Senado (60 miembros) y la Cámara de Diputados (130 miembros) asumirán funciones complementarias, entre las que destacan: declarar la vacancia presidencial, formular acusaciones constitucionales, imponer sanciones como suspensión, inhabilitación o destitución del presidente y demás altos funcionarios. Este rediseño legislativo fortalece la distribución del poder, pero también exige una revisión crítica del alcance de ciertas figuras, como la vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral.

Una de las mayores ambigüedades institucionales en el Perú ha sido la utilización de la vacancia presidencial por “permanente incapacidad moral” —figura prevista en el artículo 113.2 de la Constitución— sin un desarrollo normativo o jurisprudencial uniforme que defina claramente sus alcances. Esta situación ha generado inestabilidad política recurrente y ha convertido a dicha figura en una herramienta de presión política más que en una medida de excepción objetiva.

Frente a ello, se propone una reforma constitucional orientada a modificar el artículo 117 de la Constitución, para incluir expresamente la posibilidad de acusar al presidente de la República por violación a los principios de ética, integridad e idoneidad en el ejercicio de la función pública. Esta modificación contribuiría a delimitar los parámetros del juicio político, evitando su uso discrecional.

Constitución artículo 117

Actual: El presidente de la República sólo puede ser acusado, durante su período, por traición a la Patria; por impedir las elecciones presidenciales, parlamentarias, regionales o municipales; por disolver la Cámara de Diputados, salvo en los casos previstos en el ar-

título 134 de la Constitución, y por impedir la reunión o funcionamiento de cualquiera de las cámaras del Congreso, o los del Jurado Nacional de Elecciones y otros organismos del sistema electoral.

Propuesta:

El presidente de la República sólo puede ser acusado, durante su período, por traición a la Patria; por impedir las elecciones presidenciales, parlamentarias, regionales o municipales; por disolver la Cámara de Diputados, salvo en los casos previstos en el artículo 134 de la Constitución, por incapacidad moral a la vulneración de los principios y normas de la ética, integridad e idoneidad en la función pública y por impedir la reunión o funcionamiento de cualquiera de las cámaras del Congreso, o los del Jurado Nacional de Elecciones y otros organismos del sistema electoral.

Como se ha evidenciado, la vacancia presidencial es un importante mecanismo de control político del Congreso sobre los actos de gobierno del Presidente de la República, el cual debe guardar las garantías previstas en la Constitución Política del Perú, los Tratados Internacionales sobre Derechos Humanos y demás documentos internacionales suscritos por el Perú.

La vacancia presidencial por permanente incapacidad moral y el juicio político tienen una pluralidad de consecuencias jurídicas, entre las que destacan las sanciones como el reproche social, la expulsión de la administración pública, el deshonor, así como sanciones penales, civiles y funcionales.

Sanciones de la Vacancia Presidencial por Permanente Incapacidad Moral y el Juicio Político

La vacancia presidencial por permanente incapacidad moral, prevista en el artículo 113 inciso 2 de la Constitución Política del Perú, ha sido uno de los mecanismos más controversiales dentro del sistema constitucional peruano. Su falta de definición legal ha permitido que el Congreso de la República la interprete de manera discrecional, utilizándola como una herramienta de control político que no requiere la existencia de un procedimiento penal ni administrativo previo. Esta ambigüedad ha originado una distorsión del sistema de pesos y contrapesos, debilitando la estabilidad democrática del país.

Desde el punto de vista jurídico, la vacancia por incapacidad moral no constituye una sanción penal, pero sus efectos son institucionalmente graves: implica el cese inmediato y definitivo del presidente de la República. Este mecanismo produce la terminación anticipada del mandato presidencial y activa la sucesión constitucional, otorgando el cargo, en primer lugar, al Primer Vicepresidente, luego al Segundo Vicepresidente, y, en caso de ausencia de ambos, al Presidente del Congreso. Sin embargo, esta decisión se adopta mediante una votación del Congreso sin necesidad de sentencia judicial, sin imputación penal concreta ni garantías procesales plenas.

Por otro lado, el juicio político —también llamado acusación constitucional— está previsto en los artículos 99 y 100 de la Constitución y representa un procedimiento más garantista para determinar responsabilidades políticas o constitucionales de altos funcionarios, incluido el Presidente. A través de este mecanismo, el Congreso puede acusar por infracción a la Constitución o por delitos cometidos en el ejercicio del cargo, imponiendo sanciones como la destitución, suspensión o inhabilitación hasta por diez años para ejercer función pública. La acusación se presenta ante la Comisión Permanente y es resuelta en el Pleno del Congreso, siguiendo un procedimiento formal con mayores garantías para el acusado.

No obstante, existe una limitación constitucional en el artículo 117, que impide acusar al Presidente durante su mandato salvo por casos excepcionales como traición a la patria, impedir elecciones, disolver el Congreso indebidamente o impedir el funcionamiento de los organismos electorales. Esta limitación ha provocado que el Congreso recurra a la figura de la vacancia por incapacidad moral como vía alternativa, eludiendo el juicio político y sus exigencias procesales. Como resultado, se produce una superposición y desequilibrio institucional, en el que se usa la vacancia como atajo para el reemplazo presidencial sin los estándares del debido proceso.

En ese sentido, es necesario diferenciar claramente la vacancia de la inhabilitación política. Mientras que la vacancia es un acto político de remoción inmediata por una causal indeterminada, la inhabilitación es una sanción constitucional derivada de un juicio político formal. La vacancia no exige imputaciones tipificadas ni pruebas contundentes; la inhabilitación sí. Esto genera una desigualdad en términos de garantías procesales y alimenta un uso estratégico de la vacancia con fines partidarios.

Frente a estos riesgos, diversos sectores proponen reformar el texto constitucional para eliminar o redefinir la causal de vacancia por incapacidad moral. Una opción es suprimirla

totalmente del artículo 113.2, trasladando los casos de conducta presidencial reprochable al procedimiento de juicio político. Otra alternativa es mantener la figura, pero delimitarla mediante parámetros objetivos, vinculándola a estándares éticos y normativos claros como la vulneración de principios de integridad, probidad y legalidad en la función pública. Esta última opción exige reformar el artículo 117, ampliando las causales de acusación al presidente durante su mandato por graves infracciones éticas verificadas conforme a ley.

La Necesaria Regulación de los Términos Ética, Moral, Integridad e Idoneidad en la Constitución

Otorgarle al legislador la libertad de llenar el contenido sobre lo que es moral dentro de un tiempo determinado conlleva a generar un clima de incertidumbre política, económica, social, militar, policial, entre otros aspectos, más aún cuando se trata de un control político tan importante como es la vacancia presidencial.

Dentro de los supuestos establecidos en el artículo 117 de la Constitución, resulta necesario incorporar la siguiente proposición normativa:

a) La causal de acusación constitucional de vacancia por incapacidad moral y vulneración de los principios y normas de ética, integridad e idoneidad en la función pública.

Y dentro de los supuestos establecidos en el artículo 99 de la Constitución, resulta necesario incorporar la siguiente proposición normativa:

a) El supuesto de acusación al Presidente de la República por todo delito flagrante o cuasi flagrante contra la administración pública que cometa en el ejercicio de sus funciones y hasta cinco años después de que haya cesado en éstas.

A su vez, resulta necesario mejorar la regulación de los principios básicos como: la moral, la ética, la idoneidad y la integridad a nivel constitucional, los cuales han sido utilizados en el texto constitucional de la siguiente forma:

- a. La palabra moral es utilizada ocho (8) veces en todo el cuerpo constitucional.
- b. La palabra ética solo se utiliza una (1) vez en el cuerpo constitucional, en el artículo 14, ubicada en el capítulo sobre educación.

- c. La palabra integridad solo se utiliza una (1) vez como integridad moral de la persona y cuatro (4) veces como integridad territorial.
- d. La palabra idoneidad se utiliza dos (2) veces, como requisito para magistrados del Poder Judicial y como requisito para miembro de la Junta Nacional de Justicia.

Términos morales, ética, integridad e idoneidad

Artículo 2.- Derechos fundamentales de la persona

Toda persona tiene derecho:

1. A la vida, a su identidad, a su *integridad moral, psíquica y física* y a su libre desarrollo y bienestar. *El concebido es sujeto de derecho en todo cuanto le favorece.*
3. A la libertad de conciencia y de religión, en forma individual o asociada. No hay persecución por razón de ideas o creencias. No hay delito de opinión. El ejercicio público de todas las confesiones es libre, siempre *que no ofenda la moral ni altere el orden público.*
24. A la libertad y a la seguridad personales. En consecuencia:
 - b. Nadie debe ser víctima de *violencia moral, psíquica o física, ni sometido a tortura o a tratos inhumanos o humillantes. Cualquiera puede pedir de inmediato el examen médico de la persona agraviada o de aquella imposibilitada de recurrir por sí misma a la autoridad. Carecen de valor las declaraciones obtenidas por la violencia. Quien la emplea incurre en responsabilidad.*

Moral

Artículo 14.- Educación para la vida y el trabajo. Los medios de comunicación social (...) Los medios de comunicación social deben colaborar con el Estado en la educación y en la formación moral y cultural.

Artículo 50.- Estado, Iglesia católica y otras confesiones

Dentro de un régimen de independencia y autonomía, el Estado reconoce a la Iglesia Católica como elemento importante en la formación histórica, cultural y moral del Perú, y le presta su colaboración.

Artículo 59.- Rol Económico del Estado

El Estado estimula la creación de riqueza y garantiza la libertad de trabajo y la libertad de empresa, comercio e industria. El ejercicio de estas libertades no debe ser lesivo a la moral, ni a la salud, ni a la seguridad públicas. El Estado brinda oportunidades de superación a los sectores que sufren cualquier desigualdad; en tal sentido, promueve las pequeñas empresas en todas sus modalidades.

Artículo 113.- Vacancia de la Presidencia de la República

La Presidencia de la República vaca por:

(...)

2. Su permanente **incapacidad moral o física, declarada por el Congreso.**

El Estado respeta otras confesiones y puede establecer formas de colaboración con ellas.

Artículo 156.- Requisitos para ser miembro de la Junta Nacional de Justicia

Para ser miembro de la Junta Nacional de Justicia se requiere:

4. Ser abogado:

e. Tener reconocida trayectoria profesional y solvencia e **idoneidad moral.**

Ética

Capítulo II - De los Derechos Sociales y Económicos

Artículo 14. *La educación promueve el conocimiento, el aprendizaje y la práctica de las humanidades, la ciencia, la técnica, las artes, la educación física y el 5 Párrafo incorporado mediante la Ley 28389, publicada el 17 de noviembre de 2004. 22 Edición del Congreso de la República deporte. Prepara para la vida y el trabajo y fomenta la solidaridad. Es deber del Estado promover el desarrollo científico y tecnológico del país. La formación ética y cívica y la enseñanza de la Constitución y de los derechos humanos son obligatorias en todo el proceso educativo civil o militar. La educación religiosa se imparte con respeto a la libertad de las conciencias. La enseñanza se imparte, en todos sus niveles, con sujeción a los principios constitucionales y a los fines de la correspondiente institución educativa. Los medios de comunicación social deben colaborar con el Estado en la educación y en la formación moral y cultural.*

Integridad Moral

“Artículo 2. *Toda persona tiene derecho: 1. A la vida, a su identidad, a su integridad moral, psíquica y física y a su libre desarrollo y bienestar. El concebido es sujeto de derecho en todo cuanto le favorece.”*

Integridad territorial

“Artículo 56. *Los tratados deben ser aprobados por el Congreso antes de su ratificación por el Presidente de la República, siempre que versen sobre las siguientes materias: 1. Derechos Humanos. 2. Soberanía, dominio o integridad del Estado.”*

“Artículo 118. Corresponde al Presidente de la República:

15. Adoptar las medidas necesarias para la defensa de la República, de la integridad del territorio y de la soberanía del Estado.”

“Artículo 165. Las Fuerzas Armadas están constituidas por el Ejército, la Marina de Guerra y la Fuerza Aérea. Tienen como finalidad primordial garantizar la independencia, la soberanía y la integridad territorial de la República. Asumen el control del orden interno de conformidad con el artículo 137 de la Constitución.”

“Artículo 189. El territorio de la República está integrado por regiones, departamentos, provincias y distritos, en cuyas circunscripciones se constituye y organiza el gobierno a nivel nacional, regional y local, en los términos que establece la Constitución y la ley, preservando la unidad e integridad del Estado y de la Nación. El ámbito del nivel regional de gobierno son las regiones y departamentos. El ámbito del nivel local de gobierno son las provincias, distritos y los centros poblados.”

Idoneidad

Artículo 146.- Exclusividad de la Función Jurisdiccional

(..)

El Estado garantiza a los magistrados judiciales:

- 1. Su independencia. Sólo están sometidos a la Constitución y la ley.*
- 2. La inamovilidad en sus cargos. No pueden ser trasladados sin su consentimiento.*
- 3. Su permanencia en el servicio, mientras observen conducta e idoneidad propias de su función. Y*
- 4. Una remuneración que les asegure un nivel de vida digno de su misión y jerarquía.*

Artículo 156.- Requisitos para ser miembro de la Junta Nacional de Justicia

Para ser miembro de la Junta Nacional de Justicia se requiere:

- 1. Ser peruano de nacimiento.*
- 2. Ser ciudadano en ejercicio.*
- 3. Ser mayor de cuarenta y cinco (45) años, y menor de setenta y cinco (75) años.*
- 4. Ser abogado:*
 - a. Con experiencia profesional no menor de veinticinco (25) años; o,*
 - b. Haber ejercido la cátedra universitaria por no menos de veinticinco (25) años; o,*
 - c. Haber ejercido la labor de investigador en materia jurídica por lo menos durante quince (15) años.*
 - d. No tener sentencia condenatoria firme por delito doloso.*
 - e. Tener reconocida trayectoria profesional y solvencia e idoneidad moral. (...)*

Con el fin de incorporar los términos de ética, integridad, moral e idoneidad en la función pública se presenta una propuesta de modificación constitucional a los artículos 1, 34-A, 39 - A, 44, 99, 117 y 118 de nuestra Constitución Política, quedando como nuevos presupuestos normativos constitucionales de la siguiente manera:

Propuesta de modificación de los artículos 1, 34-A, 39 - A, 44, 99, 117 y 118

Constitución Política Actual

Artículo 1.- La defensa de la persona humana y el respeto de su dignidad son el fin supremo de la sociedad y del Estado.

Artículo 34-A. Están impedidas de postular a cargos de elección popular, las personas sobre quienes recaiga una sentencia condenatoria emitida en primera instancia, en calidad de autoras o cómplices, por la comisión de delito doloso

Artículo 39-A. Están impedidas de ejercer la función pública, mediante designación en cargos de confianza, las personas sobre quienes recaiga una sentencia condenatoria emitida en primera instancia, en calidad de autoras o cómplices, por la comisión de delito doloso.

Artículo modificado por la Ley N° 31988, publicada el 20 de marzo de 2024.

Artículo 44.- Deberes del Estado

Son deberes primordiales del Estado: defender la soberanía nacional; garantizar la plena vigencia de los derechos humanos; proteger a la población de las amenazas contra su seguridad; y promover el bienestar general que se fundamenta en la justicia y en el desarrollo integral y equilibrado de la Nación.

Asimismo, es deber del Estado establecer y ejecutar la política de fronteras y promover la integración, particularmente latinoamericana, así como el desarrollo y la cohesión de las zonas fronterizas, en concordancia con la política exterior.

Artículo 99.- Corresponde a la Cámara de Diputados, de acuerdo con su reglamento, acusar ante el Senado: al presidente de la República; a los senadores; a los diputados; a los ministros de Estado; a los magistrados del Tribunal Constitucional; a los miembros de la Junta Nacional de Justicia; a los jueces de la Corte Suprema; a los fiscales supremos; al defensor del pueblo y al contralor general por infracción de la Constitución y por todo delito que cometan en el ejercicio de sus funciones y hasta cinco años después de que hayan cesado en éstas.

Artículo 117. El presidente de la República sólo puede ser acusado, durante su período, por traición a la Patria; por impedir las elecciones presidenciales, parlamentarias, regionales o municipales; por disolver la Cámara de Diputados, salvo en los casos previstos

en el artículo 134 de la Constitución, y por impedir la reunión o funcionamiento de cualquiera de las cámaras del Congreso, o los del Jurado Nacional de Elecciones y otros organismos del sistema electoral.

Artículo 118 inc.1. Corresponde al Presidente de la República cumplir y hacer cumplir la Constitución y los Tratados, leyes y demás disposiciones legales.

Propuesta de Reforma Constitucional

Artículo 1.- La defensa moral de la persona humana y el respeto de su dignidad e integridad son el fin supremo de la sociedad y del Estado.

Artículo 34-A. Están impedidas de postular a cargos de elección popular, las personas sobre quienes recaiga una sentencia condenatoria emitida en primera instancia, en calidad de autoras o cómplices, por la comisión de delito doloso y quienes además no cumplan con los requisitos mínimos de formación superior y 5 años de experiencia en gestión pública o privada.

Artículo 39-A. Están impedidas de ejercer la función pública, mediante designación en cargos de confianza, las personas sobre quienes recaiga una sentencia condenatoria emitida en primera instancia, en calidad de autoras o cómplices, por la comisión de delito doloso y quienes además no cumplan con los requisitos mínimos para ocupar el cargo de funcionario o directivo.

Artículo 44.- Deberes del Estado

Son deberes primordiales del Estado: defender la soberanía nacional; garantizar la plena vigencia de los derechos humanos; proteger a la población de las amenazas contra su seguridad; promover el bienestar general que se fundamenta en la justicia y en el desarrollo integral y equilibrado de la Nación y garantizar la idoneidad en el acceso al ejercicio de la función pública de autoridades, funcionarios y directivos. (...)

Artículo 99. Corresponde a la Cámara de Diputados, de acuerdo con su reglamento, acusar ante el Senado: al presidente de la República; a los senadores; a los diputados; a los ministros de Estado; a los magistrados del Tribunal Constitucional; a los miembros de la Junta Nacional de Justicia; a los jueces de la Corte Suprema; a los fiscales supremos; al defensor del pueblo y al contralor general por infracción de la Constitución, y por la comisión de todo delito flagrante o cuasiflagrante contra la administración pública y que sus propios actos atenten contra las normas vigentes de integridad, hasta cinco años después de que hayan cesado en éstas.

Artículo 117. El presidente de la República sólo puede ser acusado, durante su período, por traición a la Patria; por impedir las elecciones presidenciales, parlamentarias, regio-

nales o municipales; por disolver la Cámara de Diputados, salvo en los casos previstos en el artículo 134 de la Constitución, por permanente incapacidad moral a la vulneración de todos los principios y normas sobre ética, integridad e idoneidad en la función pública y por impedir la reunión o funcionamiento de cualquiera de las cámaras del Congreso, o los del Jurado Nacional de Elecciones y otros organismos del sistema electoral.

Artículo 118 inc.1. Corresponde al Presidente de la República cumplir y hacer cumplir la Constitución y los Tratados, leyes y demás disposiciones legales sobre ética, integridad e idoneidad en la función pública.

La propuesta de reforma constitucional que busca redefinir y delimitar la figura de la vacancia presidencial por permanente incapacidad moral no puede entenderse de forma aislada. Debe ser acompañada por una serie de medidas integrales, institucionales y culturales que fortalezcan el Estado de derecho, promuevan la ética pública y prevengan la corrupción estructural en el aparato estatal.

En primer lugar, es fundamental apostar por una educación en valores cívicos y éticos desde la formación escolar, que contribuya a la consolidación de una ciudadanía crítica, informada y comprometida con la legalidad y la integridad. La formación temprana en ética pública permitirá forjar generaciones de funcionarios con mayor conciencia de su responsabilidad frente al interés general.

Asimismo, deben impulsarse mejoras en la implementación y fiscalización de la Ley N.º 31419, que establece disposiciones orientadas a garantizar la idoneidad en el acceso y ejercicio de la función pública. Esta ley debe adquirir rango constitucional o, al menos, ser reforzada por una ley de desarrollo constitucional que precise criterios técnicos, transparentes y meritocráticos para la designación de funcionarios de alto nivel, evitando así la captura política o el clientelismo institucional.

Otro eje clave de acompañamiento es el fortalecimiento del empoderamiento ciudadano como mecanismo de control democrático. La sociedad debe contar con canales efectivos para supervisar, auditar y participar en la evaluación de los actos del gobierno. Esto se articula con la necesidad de promover el acceso a la información pública, la rendición de cuentas y el uso de plataformas digitales para ejercer control social. En esa línea, también es esencial mejorar la educación ciudadana en el uso de herramientas tecnológicas, inteligencia artificial, presupuestos participativos y consulta previa, a fin de que la participación no solo sea simbólica, sino también efectiva y vinculante.

De igual modo, se deben articular medidas más rigurosas en la persecución penal de los delitos contra la administración pública. En este sentido, la Ley N.º 30650, que declara la imprescriptibilidad de los delitos graves de corrupción, debe mantenerse como un instrumento esencial, pero requiere ser complementada por medidas eficaces de prevención y recuperación de activos, así como por mecanismos más ágiles para el juzgamiento de funcionarios en funciones.

Otro componente estratégico es el impulso de medidas anticorrupción estructurales. Entre ellas, destaca la necesidad de crear unidades orgánicas especializadas en integridad y lucha contra la corrupción dentro de las entidades públicas, así como asegurar la independencia funcional, administrativa y presupuestal de actores clave como los procuradores públicos, los órganos de control institucional, los secretarios técnicos del procedimiento administrativo sancionador y los funcionarios encargados de la entrega de información pública. Sin una base operativa sólida y autónoma, las buenas intenciones de lucha contra la corrupción quedan neutralizadas.

En el presente trabajo de investigación se ha demostrado que la figura de la vacancia presidencial por permanente incapacidad moral ha estado, en la práctica, estrechamente vinculada a escándalos de corrupción, convirtiéndose en un mecanismo de salida ante crisis políticas profundas. La experiencia peruana desde 1990 hasta la actualidad evidencia que la debilidad institucional y la falta de controles preventivos eficaces han contribuido a una alta rotación presidencial. Por ello, la reforma constitucional propuesta debe estar acompañada de todas estas medidas de fortalecimiento institucional y cultural, que permitan no solo cerrar los caminos a la corrupción, sino también construir una democracia sólida, transparente y legítima.

Cuadro 1. Presidentes del Perú desde 1990 hasta la actualidad – Motivo de término de mandato – Votación / Aceptación

Presidente	Periodo	Motivo de término de mandato	Votación / Aceptación y observaciones
Alberto Fujimori Fujimori	28.07.1990 - 21.11.2000	Vacancia por incapacidad moral	Una moción de vacancia por incapacidad moral en 1991 (Javier Alva Orlandini). El Congreso denegó la renuncia enviada por fax desde Japón y declaró la vacancia por incapacidad moral.
Valentín Paniagua Corazao	22.11.2000 - 28.07.2001	Término del mandato	8 meses y 5 días en el cargo.
Alejandro Toledo Manrique	28.07.2001 - 28.07.2006	Término del mandato	1 moción de vacancia (caso firmas falsas para inscripción de su partido Perú Posible; investigado por falsedad genérica y falsificación de documentos).
Alan García Pérez	28.07.2006 - 28.07.2011	Término del mandato	Una moción de vacancia presentada por el caso Petroaudios (escándalo de corrupción).
Ollanta Humala Tasso	28.07.2011 - 28.07.2016	Término del mandato	Una moción de vacancia presentada por el despido de ministros por parte de la primera dama Nadine Heredia.
Pedro Pablo Kuczynski	28.07.2016 - 23.03.2018	Renuncia	Aceptación de la renuncia. Se presentaron dos mociones de vacancia: primera por el caso Odebrecht; segunda por negociación con el legislador Moisés Mamani.
Martín Vizcarra Cornejo	23.03.2018 - 09.11.2020	Vacancia por incapacidad moral permanente	Con 105 votos a favor en el segundo intento de vacancia fue removido del cargo.
Manuel Merino de Lama	10.11.2020 - 15.11.2020	Renuncia	6 días en el cargo. Aceptación de la renuncia.
Francisco Sagasti Hochhausler	17.11.2020 - 28.07.2021	Término del mandato	8 meses y 10 días en el cargo.
Pedro Castillo Terrones	28.07.2021 - 07.12.2022	Vacancia por incapacidad moral permanente	Con 102 votos a favor en una tercera moción de vacancia fue removido del cargo.
Dina Boluarte Zegarra	07.12.2022 - Actualidad	En funciones	Hasta la fecha se han presentado tres mociones de vacancia por incapacidad moral permanente, no admitidas.

En el sistema constitucional peruano, la posibilidad de someter a los más altos funcionarios del Estado a un juicio político se encuentra regulada en los artículos 99 y 100 de la Constitución Política del Perú, así como en el artículo 89 del Reglamento del Congreso. Estos dispositivos establecen que el Presidente de la República, los congresistas, senadores y diputados (según la reciente reforma que restablece la bicameralidad), los ministros de Estado, los magistrados del Tribunal Constitucional, los miembros de la Junta Nacional de Justicia, los jueces supremos, los fiscales supremos, el Defensor del Pueblo y el Contralor General, solo pueden ser sometidos a juicio político por tres motivos claramente definidos: mal desempeño en el ejercicio de sus funciones, comisión de delitos en el ejercicio del cargo y comisión de delitos comunes.

En ese marco, resulta pertinente sostener que la figura de la vacancia presidencial por permanente incapacidad moral —tal como está prevista actualmente en el artículo 113.2 de la Constitución— no cuenta con un soporte constitucional coherente ni con un procedimiento garantista, lo cual genera una distorsión institucional. En efecto, su utilización ha permitido ceses presidenciales sin las debidas garantías procesales ni la existencia de delitos tipificados o probados, dando lugar a una interpretación arbitraria y politizada del concepto de “incapacidad moral”.

De este modo, la figura de la “incapacidad moral” debe ser incorporada expresamente dentro del artículo 117 de la Constitución como un supuesto de acusación constitucional, redefiniéndola como una causal de juicio político sustentada en la vulneración de los principios de ética, integridad e idoneidad que rigen la función pública. Estos principios, si bien no siempre constituyen delitos penales, tienen reconocimiento normativo dentro del bloque de constitucionalidad, del derecho administrativo sancionador, así como en los pronunciamientos del Tribunal Constitucional, que ha delineado su contenido y proyección en la conducta de los servidores públicos.

Asimismo, se observa una omisión crítica en el artículo 117 de la Constitución, que limita excesivamente los supuestos por los cuales el presidente puede ser acusado durante su mandato, omitiendo situaciones de flagrancia o cuasi flagrancia. Esta restricción, en la práctica, impide una respuesta institucional oportuna frente a hechos graves cometidos por un Jefe de Estado, generando un vacío de control. Por tanto, resulta imprescindible incorporar dentro del artículo 117 la posibilidad de acusar constitucionalmente al presidente por delitos flagrantes o cuasi flagrantes, sin perjuicio de las garantías mínimas del debido proceso.

Propuesta de Reformas para la Inclusión de Delitos Flagrantes y Cuasi Flagrantes en la Constitución

Constitución Política- Artículo 99

Corresponde a la Cámara de Diputados, de acuerdo con su reglamento, acusar ante el Senado: al presidente de la República; a los senadores; a los diputados; a los ministros de Estado; a los magistrados del Tribunal Constitucional; a los miembros de la Junta Nacional de Justicia; a los jueces de la Corte Suprema; a los fiscales supremos; al defensor del pueblo y al contralor general por infracción de la Constitución y por todo delito que cometan en el ejercicio de sus funciones y hasta cinco años después de que hayan cesado en estas.

Propuesta Artículo 99

Corresponde a la Cámara de Diputados, de acuerdo con su reglamento, acusar ante el Senado: al presidente de la República; a los senadores; a los diputados; a los ministros de Estado; a los magistrados del Tribunal Constitucional; a los miembros de la Junta Nacional de Justicia; a los jueces de la Corte Suprema; a los fiscales supremos; al defensor del pueblo y al contralor general por infracción de la Constitución, por todo delito flagrante o cuasiflagrante contra la administración pública que cometan en el ejercicio de sus funciones y hasta cinco años después de que hayan cesado en estas.

La permanencia de esta cláusula en el artículo 113 resulta inadecuada, porque equipara un juicio político con una causal de vacancia inmediata, sin las garantías propias de un proceso deliberativo. Además, se aparta del diseño institucional general, que establece que los altos funcionarios del Estado, incluido el Presidente de la República, solo pueden ser procesados políticamente mediante los mecanismos regulados en los artículos 99 y 100 de la Constitución. Por tanto, la figura de la incapacidad moral debe ser removida del artículo 113 y trasladada al artículo 117, como un nuevo supuesto de acusación constitucional, dentro de un procedimiento de juicio político con reglas claras, motivación jurídica y control institucional.

Esta propuesta implica redefinir la incapacidad moral como una forma grave de infracción constitucional, vinculada a la vulneración de los principios de ética, integridad e idoneidad en el ejercicio de la función pública, conforme al bloque de constitucionalidad, la Ley N.º 31419, los tratados internacionales sobre lucha contra la corrupción y la jurisprudencia del Tribunal Constitucional sobre la función pública ética.

Además, para garantizar el control frente a hechos graves y evidentes de corrupción u otras infracciones, se propone también incorporar en el artículo 117 los supuestos de delitos fla-

grantes y cuasi flagrantes, que permitirían una acusación inmediata del Presidente durante su mandato, pero sin que ello vulnere el principio de presunción de inocencia ni el debido proceso, ya que se canalizaría a través de un procedimiento constitucional específico.

En ese sentido, la reforma constitucional sugerida tendría el efecto de ordenar y racionalizar el control político del Congreso, fortalecer las garantías del sistema democrático y prevenir abusos de poder que surgen cuando se aplican mecanismos sin parámetros jurídicos claros. La nueva redacción del artículo 117, con estos cambios, permitiría mantener el control político necesario sobre el Jefe de Estado, pero dentro de un marco legal coherente, legítimo y respetuoso del debido proceso.

Propuesta de Modificación del Artículo 113 y Adición al Artículo 117 sobre Acusación Constitucional

Constitución Política - Artículo 117

Artículo 117. El presidente de la República sólo puede ser acusado, durante su período, por traición a la Patria; por impedir las elecciones presidenciales, parlamentarias, regionales o municipales; por disolver la Cámara de Diputados, salvo en los casos previstos en el artículo 134 de la Constitución, y por impedir la reunión o funcionamiento de cualquiera de las cámaras del Congreso, o los del Jurado Nacional de Elecciones y otros organismos del sistema electoral.

Propuesta Artículo 117

El presidente de la República sólo puede ser acusado, durante su período, por traición a la Patria; por impedir las elecciones presidenciales, parlamentarias, regionales o municipales; por disolver la Cámara de Diputados, salvo en los casos previstos en el artículo 134 de la Constitución, por permanente incapacidad moral a la vulneración de todos los principios y normas de la ética, integridad e idoneidad en la función pública y por impedir la reunión o funcionamiento de cualquiera de las cámaras del Congreso, o los del Jurado Nacional de Elecciones y otros organismos del sistema electoral.

En esa línea, se establece que la existencia de una incapacidad física o mental del Presidente deberá ser acreditada por una junta médica independiente y especializada, conformada bajo parámetros legales que garanticen su imparcialidad, autonomía profesional y rigurosidad técnica. Solo una vez que la junta médica haya emitido un dictamen concluyente sobre la imposibilidad del Presidente para ejercer el cargo de forma permanente, el Congreso podrá

declarar la vacancia presidencial, mediante el procedimiento regular y con los votos calificados que exige la Constitución.

El reconocimiento expreso de la incapacidad mental, junto con la incapacidad física, permite actualizar el texto constitucional a los estándares modernos del derecho comparado, donde el impedimento para ejercer el cargo por causas médicas —ya sean físicas o psicológicas— está sujeto a verificación pericial previa, en resguardo de los principios de racionalidad y objetividad en la toma de decisiones legislativas.

En suma, con esta reforma, el artículo 113.2 quedaría limitado a un único supuesto objetivo: la incapacidad médica permanente del Presidente, ya sea física o mental, debidamente acreditada por una junta médica y formalmente declarada por el Congreso. De este modo, se refuerza el sistema de control presidencial con herramientas legítimas y técnicas, preservando al mismo tiempo la institucionalidad, la gobernabilidad y los principios fundamentales del Estado constitucional de derecho.

Propuesta de Modificación del Artículo 113 sobre Incapacidad Física y Mental para Vacancia Presidencial

Constitución Política – Artículo 113

Artículo 113.- Vacancia de la Presidencia de la República

La Presidencia de la República vaca por:

1. Muerte del Presidente de la República.
2. Su permanente incapacidad moral o física, declarada por el Congreso.
3. Aceptación de su renuncia por el Congreso.
4. Salir del territorio nacional sin permiso del Congreso o no regresar a él dentro del plazo fijado.
5. Destitución, tras haber sido sancionado por alguna de las infracciones mencionadas en el artículo 117 de la Constitución.

Propuesta Artículo 113

Artículo 113.- Vacancia de la Presidencia de la República

La Presidencia de la República vaca por:

1. Muerte del Presidente de la República.
2. Su incapacidad física o mental debidamente certificada por una junta médica y declarada por el Congreso.

3. Aceptación de su renuncia por el Congreso.
4. Salir del territorio nacional sin permiso del Congreso o no regresar a él dentro del plazo fijado.
5. Destitución, tras haber sido sancionado por alguna de las infracciones mencionadas en el artículo 117 de la Constitución.

Como se ha señalado en líneas anteriores, uno de los principales vacíos en el diseño normativo de la Constitución Política del Perú es la ausencia de una definición clara y expresa de los principios de integridad, ética e idoneidad en el ejercicio de la función pública. Aunque estos valores son fundamentales para el funcionamiento legítimo y eficiente del Estado, la Constitución solo los recoge de manera implícita, lo que impide su exigibilidad directa y dificulta su aplicación coherente en procedimientos de control político, evaluación funcional o sanción disciplinaria.

Esta omisión resulta especialmente grave si se tiene en cuenta que dichas nociones no son abstractas ni de reciente incorporación. Por el contrario, existen múltiples desarrollos legislativos y administrativos que sí reconocen, regulan y operativizan estos principios, dotándolos de contenido normativo concreto. Por tanto, se vuelve necesario plantear una reforma constitucional que incorpore explícitamente estos principios, siguiendo los desarrollos doctrinarios del derecho constitucional contemporáneo y los precedentes establecidos por el propio Tribunal Constitucional.

En efecto, si bien en el Expediente N.º 00002-2020-CC/TC, en el cual se resolvió el caso de la vacancia presidencial de Martín Vizcarra, el Tribunal Constitucional evitó pronunciarse con precisión sobre qué actos pueden ser considerados como “morales” o “inmorales”, esta omisión ha sido interpretada como una renuncia a establecer parámetros objetivos. Sin embargo, una lectura sistemática y extensiva del ordenamiento jurídico permite al legislador encontrar un marco normativo suficiente para delimitar con razonabilidad los comportamientos funcionales que contravienen los principios de ética, integridad e idoneidad.

Entre las principales normas que desarrollan estos valores destacan la Ley N.º 27815, Código de Ética de la Función Pública, que establece deberes fundamentales como la probidad, veracidad, eficiencia y lealtad al Estado. También la Ley N.º 28175, Ley Marco del Empleo Público, y la Ley N.º 30057, Ley del Servicio Civil, que refuerzan el principio de meritocracia y la adecuada asignación de recursos humanos en el sector público.

Asimismo, otras normas complementarias como la Ley N.º 32069, Ley de Contrataciones del Estado, establecen claramente impedimentos éticos y administrativos para contratar con el Estado, lo que tiene directa relación con el principio de integridad pública. Lo mismo ocurre con la Ley N.º 26771 y su modificatoria por Ley N.º 31299, que prohíben el nepotismo y la contratación de familiares en la administración pública, configurando así infracciones ético-funcionales vinculadas al abuso del poder discrecional en la gestión del recurso humano estatal.

A nivel de políticas públicas y medidas administrativas, destacan también el Decreto Supremo N.º 092-2017-PCM, que aprueba la Política Nacional de Integridad y Lucha contra la Corrupción, el Decreto Supremo N.º 042-2018-PCM, que establece medidas para fortalecer la integridad pública, y la Plataforma de Debida Diligencia del Sector Público, creada mediante el Decreto Supremo N.º 185-2021-PCM, la cual permite monitorear de manera preventiva los riesgos éticos en las designaciones de personal y contrataciones con el Estado.

A su vez, normas técnicas como la Resolución de Secretaría de Integridad Pública N.º 001-2024-PCM/SIP y la Resolución N.º 004-2023-PCM/SIP brindan lineamientos específicos para la incorporación de funciones de integridad en las entidades públicas, el registro de visitas y agendas oficiales, y la gestión transparente de intereses.

Todo este entramado normativo revela que existe una estructura jurídica sólida a nivel legal y reglamentario que define y promueve los principios de ética, integridad e idoneidad en el aparato estatal. No obstante, al no estar expresamente reconocidos en el texto constitucional, su jerarquía normativa se ve limitada, lo que obstaculiza su plena exigibilidad y dificulta su utilización como base legítima para procesos de control político y decisiones como la vacancia, la inhabilitación o la destitución funcional.

Conclusión

Las conductas que atentan contra nuestro bloque constitucional y legal, cuando provienen de la más alta autoridad del país —el Presidente de la República—, deben encontrar límites efectivos y canales institucionales para su corrección y sanción. La Constitución Política del Perú, en sus artículos 99, 100, 113 y 117, establece distintos mecanismos de control político y responsabilidad funcional, tales como la vacancia presidencial, la acusación constitucional y el juicio político (impeachment), instrumentos que, además, son desarrollados por el Reglamento del Congreso.

No obstante, la causal de vacancia por permanente incapacidad moral, prevista en el artículo 113.2, carece de definición legal o constitucional clara, permitiendo su aplicación discrecional por parte del Congreso. En la práctica, esta figura ha derivado en votaciones orientadas por criterios subjetivos —políticos, ideológicos, religiosos, empresariales o incluso personales— sin exigencia probatoria ni sustento jurídico objetivo. Esta situación no solo debilita el principio de legalidad, sino que también vulnera el debido proceso y genera una inestabilidad institucional que afecta gravemente la gobernabilidad democrática.

Si bien los legisladores están llamados a ejercer su función de control político con responsabilidad y conciencia democrática, no pueden ni deben convertirse en jueces morales absolutos, facultados para definir unilateralmente qué es y qué no es un “acto moral” en ausencia de criterios normativos definidos. La moral pública no puede ser una noción sujeta a convicciones individuales, sino una categoría jurídica basada en principios y normas previamente establecidas en el ordenamiento.

En ese contexto, la vacancia presidencial por incapacidad moral debe ser trasladada al artículo 117 de la Constitución como un nuevo supuesto de acusación constitucional, dentro de un procedimiento formal de juicio político, garantista, deliberativo y con parámetros legales definidos. Esta acusación debe estar asociada a la vulneración de los principios de ética, integridad e idoneidad en el ejercicio de la función pública, los cuales —aunque no reconocidos expresamente en la Constitución— sí se encuentran ampliamente desarrollados en nuestro ordenamiento legal: Ley N.º 27815 (Código de Ética de la Función Pública), Ley N.º 31419, Ley del Servicio Civil, normativa anticorrupción, decretos supremos sobre integridad pública y resoluciones de la Secretaría de Integridad Pública, entre otras.

Asimismo, los precedentes del Tribunal Constitucional, como en el caso del expediente N.º 00002-2020-CC/TC, han dejado en claro que el concepto de “incapacidad moral” carece de desarrollo normativo y de criterios de aplicación, limitándose el Tribunal a un análisis procedimental y no sustantivo. No obstante, en una interpretación sistemática y extensiva del bloque de legalidad, es posible —y necesario— que el legislador defina con precisión los actos de especial gravedad que atentan contra la ética pública, tomando como base las leyes mencionadas y los estándares internacionales en materia de integridad y lucha contra la corrupción.

Por otro lado, el artículo 118 de la Constitución establece que una de las funciones principales del presidente de la República es “cumplir y hacer cumplir la Constitución, los tratados

y las leyes”. Esto convierte al presidente no solo en el primer mandatario del país, sino en el primer obligado a respetar los principios que sustentan el Estado democrático de derecho. Su conducta debe estar alineada con los valores que exige a los demás funcionarios públicos, siendo, por tanto, el referente moral y ético de la nación. La ausencia de esa coherencia funcional puede y debe ser sancionada, pero a través de procedimientos constitucionales claros y no mediante figuras vagas que desnaturalizan la institucionalidad.

Finalmente, en el plano más estructural, se hace necesaria una reforma al artículo primero de nuestra Constitución, que actualmente reconoce la dignidad de la persona humana y el respeto de sus derechos como fin supremo del Estado, para incorporar en él los principios de moralidad y ética pública como fundamentos esenciales del ejercicio del poder político. Esto permitirá jerarquizar constitucionalmente estos valores, dotándolos de mayor fuerza normativa y viabilidad operativa en todos los niveles del Estado.

Esta reforma busca resolver una tensión institucional histórica entre el control político y la estabilidad democrática. No se trata de blindar al presidente, sino de establecer un marco constitucional claro, previsible y respetuoso de los principios del Estado de derecho. Solo así será posible contar con una figura de vacancia y acusación presidencial coherente, legítima y funcional, que actúe como freno a los abusos de poder, sin abrir las puertas a la arbitrariedad, la inestabilidad ni el oportunismo político.

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ARTÍCULO

Interpretación estratégica de los intereses geopolíticos de Turquía en el Mar Mediterráneo Oriental y su influencia en los conflictos regionales

Strategic interpretation of Turkey's geopolitical interests in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and its influence on regional conflicts

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Resumen

La participación de Turquía en los conflictos regionales del Mar Mediterráneo Oriental surge de su deseo de proteger sus intereses desde la perspectiva fronteriza y además de su situación económica. Al plantear todos los elementos para desarrollar su política y en su búsqueda de recursos energéticos ha quedado involucrado en disputas marítimas y territoriales. De esa manera, la presente investigación ha tenido como finalidad mencionar los aspectos fundamentales sobre los intereses del gobierno turco con respecto a la región del Mediterráneo Oriental, sus relaciones con otros actores, así como parte de su política exterior para hacer cumplir sus objetivos de hegemonía regional de manera pragmática.

Palabras clave:

Turquía, Mediterráneo Oriental, Erdoğan, política exterior, geopolítica

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Abstract

Turkey's involvement in regional conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea is driven by its desire to protect its borders and economic interests. As it seeks to develop its policy and secure energy resources, Turkey has become embroiled in maritime and territorial disputes. This research aims to highlight the key aspects of the Turkish government's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean region, its relationships with other actors, and its foreign policy objectives to assert regional hegemony in a pragmatic manner.

Keywords:

Turkey, Türkiye, Eastern Mediterranean, Erdoğan, foreign policy, geopolitics

Introducción

El Mediterráneo Oriental es una región geográfica que se encuentra entre el Sureste de Europa y el Suroeste de Asia, rodeada por países como Grecia, Turquía, Chipre, Israel, Líbano, Siria, el territorio palestino de Gaza, el mar de Libia y Egipto, según Tapia (2020)². De acuerdo con Ramírez (2020), acerca de la importancia de esta región:

El Mediterráneo es un espacio geopolítico vital para el mundo entero, y según se desenvuelva la dinámica de las relaciones internacionales en la región, se pueden presentar alianzas políticas donde convergen intereses comunes, creando nuevos balances en el equilibrio del poder y afectando al resto de actores (párr. 6).

Así, se puede señalar incluso que esta zona posee una ubicación estratégica determinante, una gran cantidad de recursos energéticos como reservas de petróleo y gas natural, y también es un área disputada por potencias tanto regionales como globales (Baltar, 2021). Esto señala el valor de carácter estratégico desde el control de las reservas naturales y también de posicionamiento, lo que lleva a que diferentes actores impulsen fuerzas armadas o realicen operaciones que configuran la seguridad y refuercen tanto sus zonas económicas exclusivas como sus áreas de defensa vitales.

De acuerdo con Soler i Lecha (2022), es importante destacar la situación de la seguridad internacional cuando se menciona la región del Mediterráneo Oriental, debido a la cantidad de conflictos que confieren a la región, algunos incluso con importantes seguimientos en distintos foros a nivel internacional:

En términos de seguridad, en el Mediterráneo Oriental convergen viejos conflictos como el árabe-israelí, la división de Chipre y las tensiones bilaterales entre Grecia y Turquía, con otros más recientes como las guerras en Siria y Libia. Es una región donde no solo han proliferado los conflictos, sino que, con muy pocas excepciones, han ido fracasando los procesos de paz y reconciliación (p.244).

2 Cabe destacar que en ocasiones la designación de Mediterráneo Oriental cambia dependiendo de otros factores, para efectos de esta investigación las regiones tomadas en cuenta para el análisis son las citadas.

Es una zona que experimenta diversas tensiones, en la mayoría de los casos debido a la cantidad de enfrentamientos que viven sus principales actores, o donde también se involucran agentes externos que incentivan aún más las luchas entre diferentes grupos. De esta manera, los países con cierto liderazgo o hegemonía pretenden garantizar la defensa de sus territorios y el respaldo a sus propios intereses.

Así pues, entre los actores claves de esta zona del planeta, se encuentra la República de Turquía, que ha llevado a cabo diversas acciones y políticas en el Mediterráneo Oriental, cuya importancia trasciende para entender la evolución de los conflictos. Durante años, varios actores estatales y no estatales han competido por el control de los recursos naturales, el territorio y la influencia política del Mar Mediterráneo Oriental, lo que la ha convertido en una región de alto valor en los últimos años.

Como resultado de los esfuerzos por afirmar su presencia y defender sus intereses como una nación costera importante, Turquía ha participado en una serie de confrontaciones con otros Estados y organizaciones internacionales (Venzalá, 2020). Este estudio tiene como objetivo general interpretar estratégicamente los intereses geopolíticos de Turquía en el Mar Mediterráneo Oriental y su impacto en los conflictos regionales. Se abordarán tres ejes analíticos principales para su estudio: la teoría de la securitización, la interdependencia compleja y las competencias geopolíticas frente a otros actores.

Así, los objetivos específicos de la investigación son los siguientes, conforme a los elementos de profundización respectivos: (1) explicar la política exterior turca a través de la teoría de la securitización; (2) analizar el papel de Turquía en el marco de la interdependencia compleja; y (3) describir sus competencias frente a otras potencias involucradas.

Para el abordaje de estos aspectos, se utiliza análisis documental, principalmente de fuentes primarias y secundarias que abordan la temática, incluyendo documentos oficiales, artículos académicos, noticias, declaraciones, entre otros, con la finalidad de determinar los intereses turcos en la región y sus acciones para impulsar medidas que favorezcan a sus intereses en diferentes niveles, a través de la metodología de la investigación documental.

Por último, al finalizar la presente investigación, se pretende dar respuesta a la siguiente interrogante científica: ¿Cuáles son los intereses geopolíticos estratégicos de la República de Turquía en el Mar Mediterráneo Oriental que han influenciado su participación en conflictos regionales?

Marco teórico

El análisis de los intereses geopolíticos de la República de Turquía en el Mediterráneo Oriental está sustentado, en el caso de esta investigación, en una perspectiva teórica que se puede considerar “tripartita”. Por un lado, se menciona la teoría de la securitización de la escuela de Copenhague, por otro, la interdependencia compleja asociada con Joseph Nye y, por último, una combinación de factores asociados a la política exterior de Turquía en la actualidad: la Patria Azul, el Neo-otomanismo y el Panturquismo.

Por un lado, la Escuela de Copenhague amplía el concepto de seguridad para incluir múltiples sectores, a saber: seguridad militar (centrada en las amenazas a la supervivencia del Estado), seguridad política (la estabilidad de los sistemas políticos y las estructuras de gobernanza), seguridad económica (amenazas al bienestar económico), seguridad social (amenazas a la identidad social) y seguridad ambiental (amenazas al entorno natural y la estabilidad ecológica), de acuerdo con Buzan (2019).

De esta manera, se puede decir que se amplía el concepto de seguridad mucho más allá del ámbito militar, incluyendo otras dimensiones importantes, planteando amenazas hacia la estabilidad y donde los actores políticos definen qué inconvenientes se deben tratar como emergencias. En este marco, se pueden analizar riesgos complejos, promover respuestas preventivas y aportar en la seguridad del siglo XXI a través de la multidisciplinariedad de los análisis.

Mientras que la interdependencia compleja de Joseph Nye (1977) destaca la existencia de diversos canales de interacción entre los actores internacionales, la diversificación temática más allá de la agenda militar y la disminución del uso del poder bélico como herramienta principal de política exterior. Esta teoría resulta útil para comprender cómo Turquía combina relaciones diplomáticas, comerciales y militares con distintos actores.

Como tercer elemento se encuentran las doctrinas turcas de política exterior: la Patria Azul, el Neo-otomanismo y el Panturquismo. Sobre esto, en primer lugar, se puede decir que la doctrina de la Patria Azul reivindica derechos expansivos en el Egeo y el Mediterráneo Oriental, ampliando su Zona Económica Exclusiva (ZEE) y priorizando el control de recursos energéticos submarinos como asunto de seguridad nacional, como lo menciona González (2020), generando tensiones con diferentes actores de la región por los alcances que tiene.

Por su parte, el Neo-otomanismo es una estrategia de política exterior que busca proyectar influencia turca en regiones otomanas históricas, como los Balcanes y Oriente Medio (Vidal, 2017), y es considerado una especie de expansionismo encubierto por parte del actual gobierno turco, generando desconfianza entre actores tales como Grecia, Chipre y otros países ubicados en las cercanías del Mediterráneo, principalmente en Oriente Medio.

Mientras que el Panturquismo promueve la solidaridad entre pueblos túrquicos, impulsando la cooperación con Azerbaiyán y Asia Central a través de la Organización de Estados Túrquicos (Balci, 2019). Esto genera algunos problemas con otras identidades nacionales que sienten que su legado o influencia se puede ver relegado por esta priorización en el imaginario histórico turco, desplazando los aportes que otros pueblos como el persa, el ruso o el chino han hecho en algunas regiones que estuvieron bajo la influencia turca en algún momento.

Las tres doctrinas turcas son compatibles en su intención de proyectarse como un actor de poder, pero generan contradicciones a nivel interno, ya que en cierta medida el liderazgo panislámico choca con la iniciativa secular del Panturquismo y el expansionismo marítimo socava alianzas claves para la diplomacia y la protección de la integridad turca moderna. Al conocer estas posiciones, se logra entender el rol estratégico de las doctrinas turcas para lograr sus objetivos de liderazgo regional.

Metodología

De acuerdo con lo anterior, la investigación se llevó a cabo mediante un enfoque cualitativo, basado en el análisis de fuentes primarias y secundarias, haciendo uso principalmente de informes y documentos oficiales, así como del análisis realizado por otros investigadores. En cuanto a la investigación cualitativa, de acuerdo con Wynn y Money (2009), esta representa un modo específico de análisis del mundo empírico, que busca la comprensión de los fenómenos sociales desde las experiencias y puntos de vista de los actores sociales, y el entendimiento de los significados que estos asignan a sus acciones, creencias y valores (p.138).

En otras palabras, la investigación cualitativa concibe la realidad como una construcción social multidimensional, que requiere de un marco ideológico, normativo y estratégico que moviliza a los actores. En este punto, el objeto del estudio es no solo las acciones de Turquía, sino también el discurso sobre el cual reacciona y ejecuta sus acciones.

Desde este enfoque, además, se permite articular una comprensión más detallada de las doctrinas geopolíticas de Turquía, a través de sus expresiones prácticas en escenarios de conflicto y cooperación. Así, se realiza una mirada interpretativa e interdisciplinaria hacia una lectura estratégica del comportamiento político y social del gobierno turco en el período analizado. En cuanto al tipo de investigación, se optó por la investigación documental, la cual, de acuerdo con Rojas (2011), permite obtener fuentes para la construcción de conocimientos y así poner orden en la interpretación de los elementos de análisis. De esa manera, el autor señala que:

En general, las fuentes de información utilizadas en la investigación se denominan, genéricamente, unidades conservatorias de información, y se trata de personas, instituciones, documentos, cosas, bibliografías, publicaciones, estados del arte, estados del conocimiento, tesis, bases de datos, fuentes electrónicas situadas en la Web, etcétera, cuya función es la de almacenar o contener información. (p.281)

La investigación documental permite dar un significado más profundo a las doctrinas que se han documentado y que enmarcan, en este caso, la política exterior de Turquía y su relación con algunas intervenciones del gobierno de Ankara en distintos escenarios, donde interactúa con otros actores del sistema internacional, principalmente en sus áreas de influencia.

En lo que se refiere a los instrumentos utilizados, se implementó el uso de matrices documentales; así, se logra diferenciar entre documentos primarios, como informes de gobierno, discursos estatales, declaraciones, etc., y las fuentes secundarias, como artículos académicos, informes de centros de opinión, notas periodísticas, entre otros. Esto es relevante porque la investigación se enfocó en la recolección, organización y análisis de información textual. Las matrices documentales —tanto bibliográficas como analíticas— permiten organizar, sintetizar y comparar la información extraída de diversas fuentes, facilitando la clasificación de datos relevantes conforme a categorías de análisis predefinidas y los objetivos de la investigación.

Finalmente, en los alcances y limitaciones de la investigación, se puede mencionar, en primer lugar, que se ofrece una interpretación estratégica de los intereses geopolíticos de la República de Turquía en el Mar Mediterráneo Oriental y su influencia en los conflictos regionales, a través de los discursos sobre la seguridad del Estado y los vínculos interestatales, mediante

la interdependencia compleja. El análisis describe no sólo los intereses turcos en la región, sino también interpreta las razones detrás de sus intervenciones diplomáticas y posiciones militares en el marco actual.

En cuanto a las limitaciones, el documento se centra en información documental; no se realizaron entrevistas ni testimonios directos de actores políticos o diplomáticos, lo que restringe la visión sobre reacciones internas que no han sido documentadas. El análisis se focaliza en las acciones de Turquía y dedica poco espacio a la comparación con otros Estados, puesto que el objetivo principal es entender las formas de actuar dentro del esquema turco, aunque esto podría ser un elemento complementario para futuras investigaciones.

Teoría de la securitización en la política exterior de Turquía

Para iniciar los elementos de análisis establecidos para este documento, se podría contemplar en primer lugar la teoría de la securitización como eje fundamental para determinar la trascendencia en la defensa y la lucha por el control de la región mediterránea. De acuerdo con Demurtas (2019), citando a David (2008):

La securitización actualiza retóricamente una ansiedad y una incertidumbre en relación con una cuestión de seguridad. Ésta es el arte de securitizar, garantizar y asegurar, o sea, de movilizar un conjunto de medios financieros y humanos para la seguridad de un actor. (p.169)

Por esto, en el caso de estudio relacionado con la República de Turquía, existen una serie de elementos que fomentan esta práctica del país en el Mediterráneo Oriental. En primer lugar, la disputa por recursos energéticos, principalmente gas natural, los cuales el gobierno turco reclama para su explotación debido a los derechos autoatribuidos en la República Turca del Norte de Chipre, que no está reconocida internacionalmente y genera tensiones con respecto a Grecia, con quien se menciona una violación a su soberanía e integridad territorial.

Asimismo, este proceso ha llevado al gobierno de Ankara a realizar intervenciones militares en otras zonas cercanas al Mediterráneo Oriental. Tales son los casos de Siria y Libia, donde los turcos apoyan a grupos de insurgentes contrarios a los gobiernos centrales por tener una ideología política y religiosa cercana a sus intereses, según señalan Peregil y Mourenza

(2019). En el caso sirio, por ejemplo, desde que el gobierno de Turquía decidió invadir zonas fronterizas en Siria, principalmente pobladas por kurdos, se ha dado un proceso de reemplazo de la población por árabes.

De ese modo, lo deja entrever el periodista sirio Asaad Al-Haj (2023), quien menciona que diferentes zonas kurdas se han convertido en el asentamiento de árabes desplazados en el conflicto sirio, indicando además que se han establecido al menos veintiocho asentamientos árabes en lugares como Sharran, Sheikh Hadid, Jindires, Bulbul y Rajo, muy cercanos a la ciudad kurda de Afrin, ocupada por los turcos y administrada por sirios del Ejército Nacional Sirio (ENS), lo que ha transformado el norte sirio en un protoestado no reconocido a nivel internacional (por cuanto no se declaran como tales), pero que han creado el marco institucional para funcionar como una especie de gobierno y obedecen a los intereses y apoyos que reciben desde Ankara (Fernández, 2016).

De igual manera, el soporte y apoyo que da el gobierno turco a la situación de crisis en Libia tiene objetivos de naturaleza diversa. De acuerdo con Sánchez (2020), estos objetivos pasan por la obtención de influencia en África, el acceso a recursos energéticos libios, la competencia regional con Egipto y la delimitación de los espacios de soberanía en el Mediterráneo Oriental.

En cuanto al punto de la soberanía sobre la zona, la intención es poder ampliar su Zona Económica Exclusiva (ZEE), sobre la que tendría no solamente influencia política y militar, sino además condiciones para explotar y administrar recursos conforme a los intereses del país; esto último en medio de las disputas que enfrenta con Grecia, con quien también existen cuestiones políticas sobre las ZEE.

Dentro de la figura 1 se puede observar la manera en la cual tanto turcos como griegos determinan la delimitación de su ZEE, lo que puede explicar por qué las tensiones se han hecho una constante en cuanto a la forma de ver la política exterior de ambos territorios.

Figura 1. Visiones turca y griega sobre la delimitación de las ZEE.

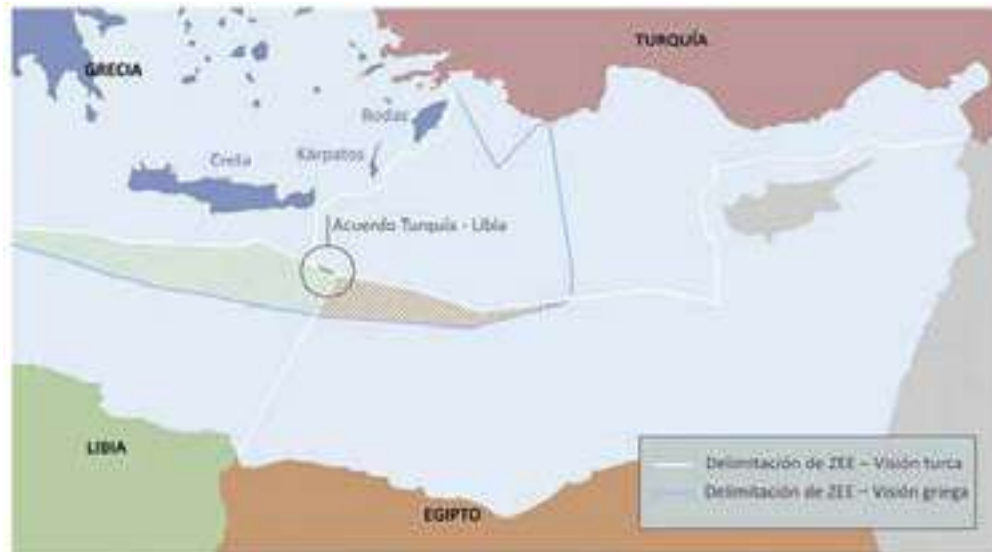


Figura 3. Visiones turca y griega sobre la delimitación de las ZEE.
Fuentes diversas. Elaboración propia.

Fuente: Sánchez (2020).

De acuerdo con Sánchez (2020), ha sido la explotación de recursos energéticos y la competencia económica que esto implica lo que ha llevado a los turcos a desarrollar su proyecto en las costas libias y a la firma de acuerdos. En los últimos años, se han encontrado importantes yacimientos de gas en las cercanías del Mediterráneo Oriental, donde gobiernos como Egipto, Israel, Jordania, la Autoridad Nacional Palestina, Chipre, Grecia e Italia han creado un foro de cooperación energética que busca la exportación de este recurso hacia Europa, dejando a los turcos fuera de la ecuación. Ante esta situación, Turquía ha buscado caminos alternativos para acceder a dichos recursos y obtener réditos económicos de ellos (El Periódico de la Energía, 2020).

Teoría de la interdependencia compleja y el rol de Turquía en el Mediterráneo Oriental

Para iniciar, es importante señalar en qué consiste la interdependencia compleja, concepto desarrollado por Robert Keohane y Joseph Nye (1977), que vincula tres elementos principales: la existencia de múltiples canales de comunicación e interacción entre los actores del sistema internacional, más allá de solo la idea de los Estados; la diversidad de temas y agendas

que conforman los intereses de los actores en todos los ámbitos; y, por último, la limitación del uso del poder militar como instrumento de política exterior, centrándolo solo en situaciones extremas o en zonas periféricas que funcionan como pivotes de influencia y poder. Cabe mencionar que, de acuerdo también con estos autores, los medios pueden ser formales o informales, públicos o privados, abarcando múltiples agendas, dependiendo de los intereses que el liderazgo requiera en el momento. De esta forma, lo menciona Ayala (2014) como complemento a Keohane y Nye.

De esa manera, se puede asociar la interdependencia compleja con la situación turca, utilizando los elementos mencionados anteriormente. Primero, los canales de comunicación e interacción de Turquía con los demás actores del sistema internacional incluyen no solo gobiernos, sino también organizaciones internacionales, empresas transnacionales, grupos de interés y la sociedad civil, cada uno con una cuota de poder (Ayala, 2014, p. 256).

Se puede ejemplificar la interacción del gobierno de Ankara en este aspecto. En primer lugar, destacan los acuerdos que ha desarrollado, tanto de forma bilateral como multilateral, con otros países de la zona; entre estos, destaca el acuerdo marítimo con el Gobierno del Acuerdo Nacional de Libia (GAN), ampliando su zona económica exclusiva (Sánchez, 2020, p. 359).

Esto ha generado tensiones con otros países en las cercanías del Mediterráneo, ya que acorta la zona también de los griegos y afecta los intereses de egipcios, israelíes, chipriotas, algunos de los cuales aluden al Convenio de las Naciones Unidas sobre el Derecho del Mar (CONVEMAR) para ejercer sus derechos sobre los océanos y mares del mundo (ONU, 2020). El inconveniente es que, si bien la convención es vinculante para quienes la han ratificado, en este caso Turquía y Libia no lo han hecho, por lo que su cumplimiento no será sencillo. Cabe señalar que la ZEE puede extenderse hasta 200 millas náuticas (aproximadamente 370 kilómetros), que es el límite del mar territorial. La aplicación del derecho marítimo internacional y la protección de los océanos dependen en gran medida de este acuerdo (Naciones Unidas, 2020). En este caso, puntualmente, el gobierno turco y el griego se acusan mutuamente de incumplir con las medidas. Sin embargo, en la zona mediterránea, cumplir con este aspecto es casi imposible, pues no hay anchura adecuada para realizarlo y depende totalmente de la negociación con los vecinos (Naciones Unidas, s.f.).

De acuerdo con la figura 2, se puede observar el crecimiento significativo de la Zona Económica Exclusiva planteada por el nuevo acuerdo entre libios y turcos, lo cual va en contra de los intereses de otros países afectados por la propuesta territorial planteada, como Grecia,

Chipre (con quienes mantiene tensiones históricas), Israel, Italia —por sus inversiones en infraestructura energética—, e incluso países como Francia, que ha respaldado política y militarmente a Grecia y Chipre en sus desacuerdos con el régimen de Ankara. De algún modo, todos estos actores ven la extensión de la ZEE como un intento de cambiar la situación actual de la región y obstaculizar proyectos donde Turquía no está incluida inicialmente.

Figura 2. Intervención militar de Turquía en Libia y la ampliación de su ZEE.



Fuente: Fundación de Estudios Estratégicos e Internacionales (2020).

También, relacionado con Libia, en el ámbito de la comunicación e interacción, se encuentra la operación militar mediante la cual Ankara decidió apoyar a Favez al-Serraj, dirigente del GAN, en contra del Ejército Nacional Libio (ENL), dirigido por Jalifa Hafter, quien a su vez es apoyado por otra coalición con la intención de controlar el país desde una perspectiva de recursos y posicionamiento estratégico, incluyendo, por supuesto, lo que se plantea respecto a la región mediterránea (Casani y Fernández, 2022).

De acuerdo con esto, según González (2020, p. 20), para poder superar los cercos que enfrenta Turquía en el Mediterráneo Oriental, se impulsó la doctrina de la “Patria Azul”, alterando así los principios de política exterior de estabilidad, cooperación y orientación continental, como una herramienta para defender la integridad geopolítica del país a lo largo de 462 mil kilómetros cuadrados, haciendo incluso fracasar los intentos de socavar la Convención de Montreux para el uso del estrecho del Bósforo y los pasos por las zonas de los Dardanelos y el Mar de Mármara (p. 23).

También, respecto a los canales de comunicación e interacción turcos, puede analizarse su participación en el conflicto sirio, donde han ocupado regiones habitadas por poblaciones kurdas sirias y también se ha mencionado la presencia de miembros del Estado Islámico. En este sentido, y debido a la crisis que vive Siria desde el año 2011, Ankara ha negociado diversos acuerdos para garantizar sus intereses en la zona y ha realizado operaciones mediante las cuales mantiene control militar (Calatrava y Durán, 2022).

De esta manera, citando a Fernández (2016), en 1998 turcos y sirios firmaron el Acuerdo de Adana para impedir que grupos paramilitares kurdos vinculados al Partido de los Trabajadores del Kurdistán (PKK), que Ankara considera terrorista, pudieran actuar en la frontera sirio-turca. También el gobierno turco fue parte del Acuerdo de Astana, realizado en Kazajistán en 2017 e impulsado por Rusia, Irán y Turquía, con el objetivo de crear zonas de desescalada para cesar la violencia.

El acuerdo deja por fuera de la ecuación a gobiernos occidentales, salvo por su aliado Erdoğan, que serviría de representante de los intereses debido a que pertenece al bloque de la Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte (OTAN), esto conforme lo explica Milosevich (2017). El acuerdo incluye el cese al fuego, zonas de distensión, intercambio de prisioneros, ayuda humanitaria, diálogo político y el combate a organizaciones terroristas. El autor señaló que, si bien existe la idea de los turcos como aliados de Occidente, lo cierto es que su modelo autoritario de Estado lo aleja como aliado clave en la estructura regional.

A esto se añade la idea de que Turquía se posiciona como protectora de los sunitas de la zona y que la posibilidad de un gobierno kurdo independiente representa para ellos una amenaza, lo que ha distanciado a Ankara de países como Estados Unidos y otros miembros de la OTAN. No obstante, esto también le ha permitido cierta flexibilidad a la hora de actuar y ejecutar acciones militares, como fue el caso de las operaciones militares de 2011 para respaldar la lucha contra el gobierno de Assad y apoyar a las fuerzas opositoras (y golpear posiciones kurdas), tal como menciona Ciordia (2016).

En el año 2016 se llevó a cabo la operación denominada “Escudo del Éufrates” y en 2018 se ejecutó “Rama de Olivo”, ocupando importantes zonas del Kurdistán sirio histórico bajo el nombre de “Cinturón de seguridad en el Norte de Siria”, lo cual se ilustra en la imagen a continuación, que muestra un mapa explicando la región en la que el gobierno turco ha penetrado en territorio sirio, en detrimento de la población kurda local y posicionando a grupos opositores al régimen de Bashar Al Assad.

Figura 3. Zona de contención turca en Siria.



Fuente: Stratfor (2021).

La presencia turca en estas regiones sirias no solamente ha cambiado la realidad para las poblaciones kurdas, sino que además las ha hecho ocupar de facto el territorio administrado por fuerzas del Ejército Sirio Libre (ESL), donde se incluyen fuerzas islamistas opositoras a Damasco, pero que se han logrado mezclar con el resto de los miembros del ESL, incluyendo a una rama siria de Al Qaeda conocida como Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. Las fuerzas kurdas, por otro lado, han sido desplazadas de las cercanías de la frontera turca y se han visto obligadas a replegarse hacia el noreste del país, en las proximidades del límite con Irak.

Como se apreció también en la Figura 1, los turcos han logrado ampliar su zona de influencia, despojando de control político al gobierno de Bashar Al Assad, lo que incluso les da una

importante salida mediterránea en dirección hacia las regiones chipriotas, lo que estratégicamente les brinda mayores réditos (Sökmen, Martínez, y de Pedro, 2018).

También, han existido contactos diplomáticos y políticos por parte del gobierno de Erdoğan con homólogos como Estados Unidos para la retirada de tropas de las zonas sirias y convertirse en los administradores de la región, dejando a su suerte a las Fuerzas Democráticas Sirias, encabezadas por los kurdos, considerados organizaciones terroristas por el gobierno turco y constantemente atacadas (Zander, 2019).

De igual manera, se han impulsado iniciativas con la Unión Europea para la gestión de la crisis migratoria proveniente de los territorios que estuvieron en algún momento en manos del Estado Islámico y que ocasionaron olas masivas de personas del Medio Oriente hacia otras regiones, quedando en algunos casos principalmente en territorio turco debido a la Declaración UE-Turquía (Consejo Europeo, 2016), donde se establecía que los ciudadanos que llegaran a las islas griegas provenientes del territorio turco serían devueltos a este y ahí se asentarían.

Esto ha dado al gobierno de Ankara una carta de negociación bastante importante con el bloque europeo, al convertirse en un socio clave para garantizar la seguridad fronteriza de estos países. Así, han logrado concesiones por parte de la UE, como acceso al mercado de manera irrestricta, soporte diplomático en algunas de sus acciones, y cooperación en materia militar, planteado de ese modo en la declaración UE-Turquía.

Igualmente, siguiendo esta perspectiva sobre los canales de comunicación e interacción, existe una serie de organizaciones internacionales o regionales en las que participa Turquía. Su rol en la OTAN es importante, pues tiene un papel fundamental en algunas situaciones de tensión actuales. También es miembro de la Organización para la Seguridad y Cooperación en Europa (OSCE) y posee un papel de liderazgo en la Organización de la Cooperación Islámica (OCI), donde se destaca su capacidad para capitalizar influencias en diferentes zonas.

El presidente turco es visto como un gran impulsor de la defensa del islam, así lo deja entrever el analista indio Arindam Mukherjee (2022), quien expone la visión positiva sobre este líder tanto en el Cáucaso como en el Medio Oriente y el Norte de África (MENA, por sus siglas en inglés), despertando simpatías entre los nacionalistas sunitas mientras ataca minorías.

Erdoğan manifiesta simpatía y cercanía ideológica con los Hermanos Musulmanes egipcios, con quienes mantuvo vínculos a través del gobierno de Mohammed Mursi en Egipto, y criticó el golpe de Estado gestado por los militares encabezados por Abdel Fatah El Sisi. También ha sido complaciente con el Hamas palestino, brindando incluso la ciudadanía a líderes de dicha agrupación islamista, lo que ha generado roces con Israel (Atalayar, 2020).

En un informe de Snell (2021) para Barómetro Árabe, se catalogó a Erdoğan como el líder más popular entre los países del MENA. Incluso en el mismo documento se señala que era más popular que rivales regionales como Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) de Arabia Saudita o que el líder supremo iraní Alí Jamenei, quien recibía una valoración más negativa.

Aun así, no todo esto es positivo en el informe, ya que, según Al Kayyali (2020), los partidarios del presidente turco pasan por alto sus tendencias autoritarias y su persecución contra minorías políticas y étnicas, además de sus prácticas de carácter colonial en países como Siria. Éste vive de una narrativa hegemónica y colonial, pues mantiene vigente su interés basado en un discurso de la herencia imperial otomana. Lo anterior se puede ver como parte de la política del país, tanto a nivel interno como externo. De acuerdo con la ONG “Open Doors”, Turquía se encuentra en el puesto 41 de 50 de los lugares donde más ataques reciben las poblaciones cristianas (CT, 2023).

Las políticas turcas impulsan la religión como pilar para atraer creyentes y empoderarlos en su gobierno. Es importante recordar que el partido AKP, que llevó a este líder a dirigir el país, era considerado “islamista moderado” y que, a lo largo de su historia, ha procurado influenciar para que se abandone la posición laica-nacionalista que relega la espiritualidad a un segundo plano, dándole más importancia y promoviendo una perspectiva islámica (sunita), nacionalista y principalmente turca, enfrentada a los grupos que no encajen en estas características (Ferez, s.f.).

En otras palabras, se promueve políticamente la marginación de kurdos, griegos y armenios por no ser turcos étnicos; se discrimina a los alevíes por considerarlos apóstatas, a los cristianos por su condición de no musulmanes y a los chiitas por la misma razón que a los alevíes (Sanchis, 2022).

De acuerdo con la socióloga turca Gülay Türkmen (s.f.), en teoría hay un elemento que podría acercar a los kurdos con el gobierno de Turquía: la práctica del islam sunita. Sin embargo, en sus estudios sobre los elementos de divergencia y convergencia, hay una importante

relación entre la identidad religiosa, étnica y nacional en los conflictos del país, afirmando que el islam sunita, en este caso, aunque es un elemento de coherencia, no es lo suficientemente fuerte para acabar con las diferencias, porque existen diferentes concepciones de las identidades religiosas y étnicas por parte de las élites de poder.

Por lo tanto, en cuanto a los intereses de este país en el Mediterráneo Oriental, se plantea en primer lugar cómo el nacionalismo religioso promovido reivindica el legado histórico y cultural del Imperio Otomano y del Califato Islámico; de hecho, hay quienes ven esto como una identidad neo-otomanista enfrentada a todos aquellos que no estén dentro de sus pautas de identidad nacional-religiosa.

Un segundo aspecto que impacta en la política exterior, basado en estos ejes identitarios promovidos por el actual gobierno turco, es el apoyo a movimientos islamistas con concepciones similares. Tal es el caso de los Hermanos Musulmanes, quienes en su perspectiva política y espiritual buscan impulsar el desarrollo de un Estado (o varios) islámico, extrapolarlo la modernidad con la aplicación rigurosa de la ley islámica (sharía) (Fernández, 2005).

Por esta razón, hay una fuerte afinidad e inclinación por parte de Turquía a apoyar gobiernos cuya perspectiva teológica esté cercana a la Hermandad Musulmana. El presidente turco ha hecho de su imagen como guardián de la religión y de la comunidad islámica una carta de presentación que le brinda el respaldo de algunas fuerzas políticas en su país y a nivel internacional, compitiendo incluso con aquellos que hoy son guardianes de los lugares santos islámicos; Arabia Saudita en La Meca y Medina, así como Jordania, que se encarga de la administración del Haram es-Sheriff en Jerusalén (Tobin, 2020).

De acuerdo con Insel (2021), esta labor la ha logrado el gobierno de Ankara a través de la promoción de un nacionalismo religioso impregnado en su partido político, transformándolo en una maquinaria personal con la cual puede combinar autoritarismo, populismo e islamismo. Logrando incluso hacer mezclas que, por su naturaleza, podrían ser contradictorias, como los casos del nacionalismo turco, el populismo y el islamismo como movimiento político y religioso.

El nacionalismo religioso mostrado por el gobierno del AKP en la actualidad se ha ido reforzando con otras ideas que respaldan su discurso e incluso su política exterior. Tal es el caso del acompañamiento de sus ideales con los principios de la organización nacionalista

denominada “Lobos Grises”.³ Ambos comparten la idea de restaurar el esplendor del antiguo Imperio Turco y expandir su influencia en la región y en el mundo, lo cual podría ser una estrategia para atraer movimientos ultranacionalistas a sus filas políticas e intereses (Acuña, 2021).

La política exterior de Turquía se ha nutrido del nacionalismo de los pueblos turcos, ya que entre sus objetivos está defender y garantizar los derechos e intereses de las poblaciones de herencia turca, cooperando de la mano con otros países como Azerbaiyán, Kazajistán, Kirguistán, Turkmenistán y Uzbekistán, con quienes comparte ese pasado común y con quienes ha desarrollado la Organización de Estados Turcos.⁴, fundada en 1992 por estos seis países, aunque también incluye comunidades que están presentes en territorios como Siria, Irak y Chipre, por lo que su constante conflicto con poblaciones kurdas añade el objetivo de defender a turcos históricos en todos los lugares donde se encuentren (Hammy, 2016).

De acuerdo con González (2013) sobre el Panturquismo: “Su objetivo principal fue generar una conciencia para impulsar alguna especie de unión –cultural o física– entre todos los pueblos de orígenes turcos dentro o fuera del Imperio Otomano” (p. 74). Incluso el autor diferencia las zonas túrquicas de las del Turán, que abarcan también pueblos como el húngaro, el finlandés y el estonio, tomado en cierto modo de los principios del nacionalismo eslavo.⁵

Por otra parte, el movimiento otomanista es visto como opuesto al movimiento nacionalista turco, pero en la dinámica del presidente actual es señalado como un objetivo de carácter territorial. Es decir, si bien la idea de dicho movimiento es expansionista, para los intereses del gobierno del AKP se trata de un objetivo relacionado con la influencia que desean ejercer, extendiéndose a los mismos territorios que estuvieron bajo el dominio del Imperio Otomano en el pasado (Vidal, 2017).

El desarrollo de estos principios en Turquía genera preocupación en algunas zonas como Oriente Medio, donde tiene actualmente puntos de mayor relevancia, y por lo tanto sus movimientos pueden despertar desconfianza ante la posibilidad de que este despertar político-ideológico del gobierno turco represente un riesgo. De este modo, se amplían las perspectivas sobre los conflictos en los cuales podría verse involucrado el gobierno turco dentro

3 Bozkurtlar: Los Lobos Grises son una corriente de extrema derecha de Turquía que aspira a un Imperio turco extenso que una a todos los pueblos turcomanos (Ferrero, 2020)

4 Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı

5 Paneslavismo.

de la dinámica de los países del Mediterráneo Oriental. Con ello, se puede destacar el rol que desempeña Ankara con respecto a estas circunstancias y su participación destacada en la región.

En primer lugar, se puede citar la situación del conflicto chipriota que, como menciona Blanco (2003:1), se remonta a los orígenes y la evolución histórica del conflicto desde que la República de Chipre dejó de funcionar en 1963, desencadenando una etapa de violencia que culminó con la intervención turca en 1974, en medio de tensiones con Grecia que llevaron a la división de la isla en dos territorios: uno griego y otro turco.

Desde entonces, se han producido enfrentamientos políticos y militares en torno a esta zona, lo que ha generado constantes diferencias entre los países involucrados y políticas que interfieren en los intereses planteados respecto a la región. Desde la década de 1990 se solicitó la incorporación de la República de Chipre a la Unión Europea, y desde el año 2004 es un Estado miembro de pleno derecho dentro del bloque, lo que ha incrementado las tensiones ante su respaldo a la República Turca del Norte de Chipre, reconocida únicamente por el gobierno de Ankara (Stavridis, 2004).

Ante el envío de buques de investigación y perforación sísmica en aguas reclamadas por la parte grecochipriota, la Unión Europea ha expresado su rechazo e impuesto sanciones. El bloque considera que estas acciones violan la soberanía chipriota y el derecho internacional. Por su parte, el gobierno turco ha rechazado dichas sanciones y se ha comprometido a mantener la presión hasta que se respeten tanto sus propios derechos como los de los turcochipriotas (María, 2022).

El acuerdo firmado entre Turquía y el Gobierno de Acuerdo Nacional de Libia, mediante el cual amplían sus zonas económicas exclusivas, ha generado rechazos por parte de varios países del Mediterráneo Oriental, como Grecia, Chipre, Egipto e Israel. En particular, el eje greco-chipriota se ha opuesto rotundamente al proyecto, al considerarlo una amenaza directa a su soberanía (Sanz, 2020).

A esta disputa se suma el histórico enfrentamiento territorial entre Turquía y Grecia en el Mar Egeo, que incluye diferencias sobre aguas territoriales, espacio y control aéreo, límites marítimos, el estatus de ciertas islas y la existencia de denominadas “zonas grises”, áreas cuya soberanía no está claramente definida. El gobierno turco ha buscado ampliar su influencia regional y global, aunque ello ocasione tensiones con países vecinos o aliados. Para ello, ha recurrido a argumentos de carácter militar, político e ideológico (Mansilla, 2022).

Otro escenario en el que se ha involucrado la política exterior y la estrategia de Ankara es el conflicto entre Israel y Líbano por una zona gasífera en la frontera marítima entre ambos. El área en disputa abarca poco más de 860 km² y alberga importantes reservas de gas. En octubre de 2022, tras dieciséis años de diferendos, se logró firmar un acuerdo con la mediación de Estados Unidos (Barra, 2022). En la figura a continuación, se señalan las zonas fronterizas correspondientes a esta disputa gasífera, resuelta con la intermediación estadounidense para poner fin a varios años de tensión.

Figura 4. Mapa de la frontera marítima entre Israel y Líbano acordada con la intermediación de Estados Unidos.



Fuente: AFP

Turquía ha intervenido y se ha opuesto a cualquier acuerdo en este aspecto, ya que argumenta que esto va en contraposición a su ZEE e incluso afecta su doctrina de la Patria Azul (Yapar, 2021), pues lo consideran una zona en disputa para sus propios intereses debido a la dependencia de recursos estratégicos en su economía, incluso conforme a los principios de interdependencia compleja.

El gobierno de Ankara considera que existen reclamos históricos en el área, por lo que está dispuesto a llevar el asunto hasta las últimas consecuencias con tal de garantizar los derechos que proclaman poseer. De ese modo, ha impulsado las capacidades navales y la presencia militar en el Mediterráneo Oriental para lograr preservar sus intereses hegemónicos, lo cual se ha mostrado en una exposición internacional en Estambul (Helou, 2023).

Turquía ha aprovechado las circunstancias para impulsar su agenda de autoridad, promoviendo sus metas desde el enfoque político, pero también ideológico-religioso, apoyando grupos que comparten su islamismo político sunita frente a los ideales del chiismo promovido principalmente por Irán, que se opone al control de Israel sobre la ciudad de Jerusalén desde 1967, así como reivindicar su compromiso con la comunidad de creyentes musulmanes, frente a lo cual incluso compite con otros actores islámicos de peso en el área, como es el caso saudita (Manrique, 2020).

También se ha involucrado de lleno en el complejo conflicto israelí-palestino a lo largo de los años, algo que antes era distinto. Durante la década de los 90, cuando se establecieron relaciones plenas entre israelíes y turcos, la cooperación entre ambos fue constante en temas de seguridad, intercambio comercial y en inversiones. A finales de esa década se firmaron acuerdos de lucha contra el terrorismo, el narcotráfico y el crimen organizado en general.

Entre 1993 y 1996 se firmaron cuatro acuerdos fundamentales para la cooperación y el intercambio en cuestiones militares: el “Acuerdo de Cooperación y Entrenamiento Militar” (Erdurmaz, 2012) de 1996; entre 1994 y 1995, el “Acuerdo de Seguridad y Confidencialidad” y el “Memorando para la Educación de los Pilotos”; y finalmente, en 1996, el “Acuerdo de Cooperación en Defensa Industrial”, de acuerdo con Valderrama (2014).

Sin embargo, con la llegada del nuevo siglo, algunas situaciones fueron cambiando. En 2002 llegó al poder el partido AKP, del cual Erdoğan es su principal figura, y a partir de esto se han introducido otros intereses, como el rol de liderazgo turco en el tema palestino. En 2008, se produjo un distanciamiento con Israel debido a la guerra israelí contra Hamas en la Franja de Gaza, lo que llevó a la crítica del entonces primer ministro de Turquía contra el presidente israelí Shimon Peres en el Foro de Davos en 2009 (Bennhold, 2009).

Un año después, una flotilla llamada “Mavi Marmara”, que salió de aguas turcas e intentó romper el bloqueo marítimo que Israel aplica sobre la Franja de Gaza, ocasionó una intervención militar de fuerzas israelíes, lo que cobró la vida de diez personas e hirió a otras cincuenta y

seis, generando una crítica internacional muy marcada, comenzando por el propio gobierno turco (Domínguez, 2022).

El reconocimiento por parte del gobierno estadounidense de Donald Trump a la ciudad de Jerusalén como capital de Israel enfrió mucho más las relaciones con los israelíes. En 2020, se dio un acercamiento importante entre el gobierno turco y la organización islamista Hamas, incluso brindando ciudadanía a miembros de la agrupación (Atalayar, 2020).

En ese mismo año, el gobierno de Erdoğan criticó el acercamiento que Israel impulsó con Emiratos Árabes Unidos y Bahrein en los denominados “Acuerdos de Abraham”, debido a lo que esto podía significar para los intereses palestinos. En mayo de 2021, hubo manifestaciones del gobierno para criticar las acciones israelíes sobre los territorios palestinos; sin embargo, a partir de julio de ese año comenzaron a mejorar paulatinamente las relaciones entre ambos países hasta que se “deshielan” los vínculos a partir de 2022 (INFOBAE, 2022).

Competencias para la política de Turquía con respecto a otras potencias con injerencia en el Mediterráneo Oriental.

Como último factor a desarrollar en cuanto a la política turca en la zona, destaca el papel de otros actores externos a la región y su relación con Turquía, entre los que sobresalen Emiratos Árabes Unidos, Estados Unidos, China, Rusia, Arabia Saudita, Irán e India como los principales, incluso como parte de la competencia en la política exterior del país y sus doctrinas de respaldo territorial (Rodríguez, 2021).

En el caso emiratí, estos países apoyan a actores como Egipto, Grecia, Israel y Chipre en sus pretensiones sobre el Mediterráneo Oriental; incluso han realizado ejercicios conjuntos (Blumenthal, 2021), lo cual ha sido catalogado de histórico por el alcance de estas operaciones, otorgando mayor seguridad a los intereses greco-chipriotas respecto a frenar el avance de la ZEE turca cerca de Libia y, con el respaldo de Israel, fortaleciendo aún más la alianza.

También, el gobierno de Abu Dabi ha promovido en algún momento el boicót económico contra Turquía, debido a los enfrentamientos entre los países del Golfo y Qatar, aunque en el último tiempo se han enmendado las relaciones tras la reelección de Erdoğan en las elecciones de 2023 (Nova, 2023).

En cuanto a los Estados Unidos, existe una alianza histórica: ambos pertenecen a la OTAN y, a lo largo del tiempo, han compartido intereses como la lucha contra organizaciones terroristas en Oriente Medio y mantienen conversaciones en zonas de influencia de la organización atlántica. Sin embargo, en los últimos años han surgido diferencias en temas como la situación kurda, el apoyo a Israel y enfoques sobre el programa nuclear iraní. Además, hubo una tensión significativa cuando el gobierno turco decidió comprar el sistema de defensa ruso S400, lo que condujo a sanciones (Sánchez, 2022).

Para Ankara, sus decisiones deben ser respetadas en virtud del ejercicio de la soberanía, procurando impulsar sus intereses sin romper los vínculos existentes. Por este motivo, no es extraño ver reuniones en las que participan opositores a Occidente, como Rusia, China e Irán, junto a los turcos, ya que ven esto como una forma de equilibrar relaciones y ejercer su propia influencia como actor de importancia trascendental en la región (Ballesteros, 2021).

Por otro lado, en el caso de China, existe un importante intercambio comercial, aunque también diferencias debido a inversiones y acuerdos con países como Egipto, Israel y Grecia, incluyendo administración de zonas portuarias que se convierten en una amenaza para los intereses turcos en el Mediterráneo. En cuanto al comercio entre ambos países, que fortalece la posición turca, menciona Interesse (2022):

China ha logrado convertirse en el principal destino de las importaciones turcas (2.412 millones de dólares), seguida de Rusia (2.173 millones de dólares), Alemania (2.129 millones de dólares), Estados Unidos (1.990 millones de dólares) e Italia (93 millones de dólares). (párr. 8-9)

Por lo tanto, Turquía mantiene con China una relación comercial más sólida que con Estados Unidos y otros actores occidentales. Sin embargo, persisten diferencias importantes en otros ámbitos, ya que las acciones de Beijing a menudo contravienen los intereses turcos en la región; además, hay diferencias ideológicas por el trato que recibe la minoría uigur en China, un pueblo de origen túrquico (Balci, 2019), tema que también genera tensiones similares con Rusia respecto a los tártaros de Crimea.

En el caso de Rusia, existen relaciones en materia de seguridad, como venta de armamento y el paso de embarcaciones rusas por los estrechos controlados por Turquía que conectan el Mediterráneo con el Mar Negro. Pero, en temas como Siria, Libia, Nagorno Karabaj e inclu-

so Ucrania, persisten diferencias significativas. Aun así, ambos países mantienen relaciones pragmáticas, adoptando cautela y evitando esquemas de dependencia o una confrontación innecesaria, a pesar de encontrarse en bandos opuestos en varios enfrentamientos militares (Ramírez, 2019).

India también participa en la región a través del intercambio comercial y de seguridad con aliados como Egipto e Israel; además, Turquía mantiene una alianza ideológica con Pakistán y apoya las reivindicaciones de Islamabad en Cachemira (Kaura, 2020). En lo que respecta a Arabia Saudita e Irán, los saudíes han manifestado su apoyo a Grecia, Chipre e Israel frente a las reclamaciones energéticas de Turquía en la región (Hernández, 2022). Mientras tanto, Irán respalda al gobierno de Bashar Al Assad en su lucha contra fuerzas opuestas patrocinadas por Ankara, y además es aliado de Armenia, apoyando sus intereses en Nagorno Karabaj (Echeverría, 2021).

Ambos países, Arabia Saudita e Irán, mantienen una lucha ideológica-religiosa para liderar la región, y el gobierno turco, que durante años mostró una postura islámica moderada, ha adoptado recientemente una visión más cercana al islam político, compitiendo así por la influencia en el mundo islámico desde un frente que parece menos radicalizado que el de los gobiernos de Riad y Teherán (García, 2019).

Estos ejemplos muestran que las relaciones con estos países confrontan los intereses turcos desde varios frentes teóricos y prácticos, ampliando la dependencia estratégica en ciertos casos, aunque Turquía busca diversificar alianzas. A su vez, estas dinámicas desafían las ideologías expansionistas turcas, como el panturquismo, el neo-otomanismo y el islamismo político, y cuestionan nociones estratégicas como la doctrina de la Patria Azul o el concepto del Gran Turán, que apunta a unir bajo un modelo exterior muy ambicioso a todos los ciudadanos turcos (Gutiérrez, 2022).

Finalmente, los intereses estratégicos de Turquía siguen múltiples caminos que procuran resultados concretos; aún no existe una doctrina única definida, pero se mantiene vigente lo que ha demostrado ser efectivo para fortalecer la imagen del país interna y externamente, permitiendo a su vez madurar un proyecto a largo plazo con la firma de Erdoğan (Isaac, 2016).

Conclusiones

La presente investigación analiza los intereses geopolíticos estratégicos de Turquía en el Mediterráneo Oriental y su influencia en los conflictos regionales durante el período de estudio. Se examinan tres enfoques: la teoría de la securitización, la interdependencia compleja y las competencias geopolíticas como ejes principales. Por medio de un enfoque cualitativo documental, apoyado por los marcos teóricos presentados, se ha logrado establecer que el gobierno turco persigue diferentes objetivos importantes, como el control energético, la influencia ideológica y la reafirmación identitaria como elementos que configuran su política exterior.

El gobierno turco, especialmente bajo el liderazgo de Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, ha implementado una estrategia pragmática y expansiva que oscila entre el multilateralismo funcional y el unilateralismo discursivo. Ha utilizado una estrategia de securitización en cuestiones tales como la causa kurda, los litigios con Grecia y la ocupación del Norte de Chipre, justificando intervenciones militares y reforzando su presencia en zonas marítimas en disputa.

Mientras tanto, ha ejercido una diplomacia mediante acuerdos bilaterales, alianzas selectivas y la participación en foros internacionales, aunque sin abandonar su retórica neoimperial basada en la simbología del pasado otomano, mezclada con los valores de la presencia turca en diferentes zonas de Asia, incluyendo las regiones de Oriente Medio.

De acuerdo con una perspectiva prospectiva, se considera que Turquía desea continuar consolidándose como un actor disruptivo pero indispensable en el sistema internacional y con fuerte vinculación a temas regionales. Si bien es cierto que su agresiva defensa de lo que considera los intereses nacionales le ha generado tensiones con la Unión Europea, Estados Unidos y actores de la zona como Egipto, Grecia e Israel, el gobierno de Ankara ha demostrado una importante capacidad de adaptabilidad en escenarios cambiantes y de poder explotar vacíos geoestratégicos. Así, la consolidación de un “eje turquista”, así como el fortalecimiento de su presencia naval, podría sugerir que Turquía seguirá desafiando los equilibrios establecidos, especialmente en materia de delimitaciones marítimas, rutas de recursos energéticos y su liderazgo en el mundo islámico sunita.

En cuanto a la respuesta a la interrogante científica —¿Cuáles son los intereses geopolíticos estratégicos de la República de Turquía en el Mar Mediterráneo Oriental que han influenciado su participación en conflictos regionales?— se puede concluir que estos intereses se orientan a garantizar la autonomía estratégica, la consolidación de una esfera de influencia

regional, el aseguramiento de recursos energéticos y la proyección de un modelo político-religioso que combina elementos como el nacionalismo, el islamismo y el autoritarismo.

La importancia del Mediterráneo Oriental para Turquía radica en sus recursos energéticos. Ankara ha buscado impulsar relaciones de cooperación con actores como Libia y reconfigurar sus vínculos con otros como Israel, Chipre y Grecia. Incluso ha intervenido en las disputas gasíferas entre Israel y Líbano o territoriales con los palestinos para obtener beneficios. Ha buscado mantener el control y proteger sus intereses en la región, fortaleciendo su seguridad y estatus como actor importante frente a otros líderes regionales y globales.

La teoría de la interdependencia compleja ha permitido analizar las relaciones de conflicto entre los países que disputan una región, junto con los elementos de cooperación a los que se ven obligados por su entorno político o necesidades regionales para garantizar la estabilidad. Las cambiantes dinámicas de la política exterior de Ankara apuntan a que busca una posición de poder privilegiada en la región; sin embargo, la política agresiva del presidente Erdoğan genera desconfianza en sus relaciones con otros actores del sistema internacional.

Asimismo, las medidas tomadas para tener una política exterior menos ambigua y fortalecer sus capacidades como actor regional son evidentes. Si bien ello genera dudas entre sus aliados, la importancia de este país en la configuración internacional le permite actuar con mayor libertad en algunos escenarios, favoreciendo sus intereses en la práctica de la política internacional actual. Los intereses geopolíticos estratégicos de Turquía en el Mediterráneo Oriental son multifacéticos y abarcan la seguridad, la economía, la energía y la influencia regional; debido a esto, sus comportamientos pueden ser cambiantes, pero están bien justificados por su situación.

Por último, para futuras investigaciones, se sugiere realizar análisis comparativos entre las acciones geopolíticas de Turquía frente a las posiciones regionales de países como Irán, Arabia Saudita, Emiratos Árabes Unidos, Rusia o China, analizando el impacto interno de la política exterior turca en la configuración de su modelo basado en gobernanza y legitimidad. Asimismo, se recomienda la incorporación de métodos mixtos de análisis cuantitativos con herramientas geoespaciales, análisis de redes o el planteamiento de escenarios; de esta forma, se lograría un abordaje exterior más complejo y multifacético.

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ARTICLE

The Erosion of American Values and Economic Stability Under President Trump

La erosión de los valores estadounidenses y la estabilidad económica bajo el presidente Trump

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Abstract

This article examines the impacts of President Donald Trump's economic, foreign, and scientific policies during his second administration, focusing on the escalation of tariffs and the weakening of alliances, and their repercussions on the U.S. and global economies. Drawing from a range of sources, including economic analyses and expert opinions, it explores how protectionist measures impact economic indicators, consumer behavior, and international relations. The findings suggest that these aggressive tariff strategies have led to increased economic uncertainty, disrupted global supply chains, and strained diplomatic ties, potentially undermining the long-term economic stability of the United States. The weakening of U.S. soft power (closing of USAID, Voice of America, the Inter-American Foundation, etc.), the withdrawal from UN agencies and agreements (Paris Agreement, WHO, UNESCO, UN-RWA), and the decimation of scientific research institutions open the door to other powers, in particular China and Russia.

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Keywords:

Trump administration, trade policy, tariffs, protectionism, global economy, recession, international relations, American values, soft power, science, research and development.

Resumen

Este artículo examina las repercusiones de las políticas económicas, exteriores y científicas del presidente Donald Trump en su segundo gobierno, centrándose en la escalada arancelaria y el debilitamiento de las alianzas, y sus repercusiones en la economía estadounidense y mundial. A partir de diversas fuentes, como análisis económicos y opiniones de expertos, se explora cómo las medidas proteccionistas repercuten en los indicadores económicos, el comportamiento de los consumidores y las relaciones internacionales. Las conclusiones sugieren que las agresivas estrategias arancelarias han provocado un aumento de la incertidumbre económica, han perturbado las cadenas de suministro mundiales y han tensado los lazos diplomáticos, socavando potencialmente la estabilidad económica a largo plazo de Estados Unidos. El debilitamiento del poder blando estadounidense (cierre de USAID, Voz de América, Fundación Interamericana, etc.), la retirada de agencias y acuerdos de la ONU (Acuerdo de París, OMS, UNESCO, UNRWA) y el diezmamiento de las instituciones de investigación científica abren la puerta a otras potencias, en particular China y Rusia.

Palabras clave:

Administración Trump, política comercial, aranceles, proteccionismo, economía global, recesión, relaciones internacionales, valores estadounidenses, poder blando, ciencia, investigación y desarrollo.

Introduction

The implementation of protectionist trade policies under the Trump administration marked a significant shift in the United States' approach to international commerce. Since 1945, the U.S. has championed free trade principles, promoting open markets and global economic integration. However, the imposition of substantial tariffs on imports from key trading partners signaled a departure from this stance, with the declared aims of bolstering domestic industries and reducing trade deficits. Average tariff rates increased from 1.5% in 2016 (before Trump's first term) to 25% in 2025.

This policy shift has sparked debate among economists, policymakers, and international stakeholders. Proponents argue that such measures protect American jobs and industries from unfair foreign competition. Critics, however, contend that the tariffs have led to increased costs for consumers, retaliatory measures from other nations, and disruptions to global supply chains.

This article analyzes the Trump administration's economic, foreign, and scientific policies, examining their economic implications and assessing their alignment with broader U.S. strategic interests. The work is based on a review of public secondary sources and follows an essay style. The method of analysis is documentary; sources were selected based on their relevance to the political and economic analysis of current trends in the United States.

The attacks by the Trump administration on scientific and academic research, including slashing the budgets of premier scientific institutions like the NIH, CDC, NSF, NOAA, and NASA, are likely to diminish American economic, political, and military power in the long run.

I also review the efforts made by the second Trump administration to weaken American soft power by eliminating the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); weakening other development assistance efforts by the State Department, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC); closing Voice of America and other international public media; and dismantling the Inter-American Foundation, the U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF), the United States Institute for Peace, and other institutions. The weakening of U.S. soft power and scientific research will only benefit China, Russia, Iran, and other adversarial powers.

Trump is Undermining the Values that Made America Great

America's greatness was built on a foundation of ideals and values. These principles—observance of the rule of law, the separation of powers, free trade, enlightened soft power, strict adherence to the Constitution, and ethical standards for our public servants—have been fundamental to the history of the United States. But under the leadership of Donald Trump, many of these pillars are being chipped away at the behest of personal whims, ideological postures, and a disregard for what has made the U.S. truly exceptional.

The Rule of Law: A Casualty of Trump's Impunity

The rule of law is the bedrock upon which all civilized societies are built. It ensures that no one is above the law, that justice is blind, and that power is held accountable. Under Trump, however, this foundational principle has been undermined time and again. From his refusal to honor subpoenas to his open defiance of legal norms, Trump's actions have consistently highlighted a disdain for the very system that has allowed America to thrive. Whether it's his disregard for court rulings or his attacks on the judiciary, Trump's behavior sends a dangerous message: the rule of law is negotiable when it inconveniences your agenda.

A new low was set recently, when the FBI arrested Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Hannah Dugan (Inskeep & Manuel, 2025), supposedly for obstructing justice in the case of one undocumented immigrant. Judge Dugan was accused of ushering an undocumented defendant and his attorney out of the courtroom through a private door, helping him evade federal agents who sought his arrest, and was charged with obstruction and concealing an individual from arrest. The incident marked an unprecedented move by federal authorities against a sitting state judge and ignited debate over judicial independence and immigration enforcement.

Trump also initially disregarded a unanimous (9-0) Supreme Court ruling that “affirmed the lawlessness of Mr. [Kilmar] Abrego Garcia's removal to a Salvadoran prison, observing that even “[t]he United States acknowledges that Abrego Garcia was subject to a withholding order forbidding his removal to El Salvador, and that the removal to El Salvador was therefore illegal.” (Alonso-Yoder & Valdez, 2025) The Court ordered the administration to facilitate Garcia's return, citing the disregard of due legal process and a direct violation of a binding court order.

And of course, Trump was found guilty of 34 felony charges and was indicted for dozens of other felonies before his re-election, but he evaded jail by running for President (becoming the first American President to have been convicted of felonies). Trump's conviction stemmed from falsifying business records to conceal payments, and, following his 2024 re-election victory, sentencing was suspended per Justice Department precedent.

Trump's consistent undermining of legal institutions weakens trust in the system that has held the U.S. together for over two centuries. In doing so, he erodes the principles that guarantee liberty and justice for all, favoring a cult of personality where laws become subject to the whims of a strongman.

The Separation and Balance of Powers: A Broken System

The framers of the Constitution designed a system of government that relied on the separation of powers to ensure no one branch could dominate the others. Yet, Trump's administration has repeatedly sought to erode these boundaries. From his attacks on Congress to his efforts to eliminate or defund lawfully established executive branch agencies and programs, the checks and balances envisioned by the Constitution have been placed under stress.

Trump has consistently weaponized the presidency, using it not as an instrument of public service but as a tool to secure personal and political advantage. His contempt for Congress' oversight role was demonstrated in the 2019 impeachment process, when he stonewalled congressional subpoenas and obstructed investigations. The reality of his presidency has been one in which the executive branch operates above the law and free from accountability, setting a dangerous precedent.

Trump has further undermined Congress' role in holding the "power of the purse" by approving the budget for the federal government and its agencies, yet simply refusing to comply with budgetary mandates. He has also trampled on Congress's role in passing tariff bills by unconstitutionally abusing "emergency powers."

Free Trade: A Retreat into Isolationism

Trade has always been a central aspect of America's role in the world. It is no coincidence that the U.S. became a global superpower, in part, because of its leadership in the world's economic systems, built on the principles of open markets, fair competition, and multilateral cooperation. Yet under Trump, free trade has been replaced by protectionism and isolationism, resulting in the destruction of international alliances and the undoing of decades of careful diplomacy. (This topic is further expanded below.)

Enlightened Soft Power: Abandoned for Aggressive Nationalism

Soft power—the ability to influence and lead through culture, diplomacy, and international development—has long been one of America's strongest assets. Institutions like USAID, the Inter-American Foundation, and Voice of America have allowed the U.S. to spread democracy, human rights, and American ideals around the globe. But under Trump, these tools of soft power have been underfunded and, in some cases, dismantled.

Trump's preference for unilateral action over diplomatic engagement has made America less trustworthy on the world stage. His withdrawal from the World Health Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic (and again in 2025), his withdrawal from UNESCO in his first administration and again in 2025, his disdain for international agreements, and his embrace of authoritarian leaders at the expense of America's democratic allies have all played a part in diminishing America's global influence. The soft power that America once wielded with grace and strength has been replaced by an aggressive, isolationist posture that alienates the very allies who once looked to the U.S. for leadership. This topic is further expanded in the next section.

The Constitution: A Plaything for Political Convenience

The Constitution of the United States is not just a written document; it is the foundation of the American Republic. It has endured for over 237 years because of its flexibility, its ability to guide the nation through crisis, and its commitment to the ideals of liberty, equality, and justice. But under Trump, the Constitution has become a tool to be manipulated or ignored when it does not suit his agenda.

From his frequent attacks on the press to his encouragement of violence, Trump's actions have made it clear that he sees the Constitution as little more than a barrier to be overcome rather than a framework to be respected. His disregard for the First Amendment, his rhetoric aimed at stoking division and hatred, and his efforts to suppress the right to vote all demonstrate an alarming ignorance of the Constitution's true meaning.

He has even deported U.S. citizens (including minor children with cancer), and he continues to suggest there are "loopholes" that would allow him to be elected for a third term (there are no such loopholes; such a course of action would be completely unconstitutional and illegal, as it would be a clear violation of the 22nd Amendment).

Antitrust Enforcement: A Forgotten Priority

At the heart of the American economic system lies the principle of competition. The government's role in enforcing antitrust laws has been essential to keeping markets fair and preventing monopolies from stifling innovation. Yet, during Trump's tenure, antitrust enforcement has been significantly weakened. His appointments to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division were largely perceived as advancing corporate interests rather than protecting consumers.

Trump's policies often favor big businesses over small ones and allow monopolistic practices to flourish. The failure to hold tech giants accountable—even as they have amassed unchecked power—is a glaring example of how Trump's administration has allowed the corporate elite to consolidate power and further diminish the competitive landscape that made America's economy so dynamic. His deregulation of cryptocurrencies has also drawn widespread criticism, especially as he and his family have issued "memecoins" and reportedly enriched themselves by billions of dollars.

The fact that four of the five richest men in the world contributed to and attended his inauguration, and that he named the richest person, Elon Musk, to lead his efforts to dismantle USAID, the Department of Education, the State Department, and several regulatory agencies that had been investigating him and his companies, reflects an alarming trend towards an oligarchy or plutocracy (Whitfill Roeloffs, 2025). As of this writing, Musk has left his government advisory role and apparently distanced himself from Trump.

There have been at least 14 billionaires in his cabinet or in high-ranking advisory roles: Tesla CEO Elon Musk, Entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, professional wrestling mogul Linda McMahon, Wall Street executive Howard Lutnick, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, money manager Scott Bessent, entrepreneur Jared Isaacman, real estate tycoon Steven Witkoff, investment banker Warren Stephens, CONAIR entrepreneur Leandro Rizzuto Jr., investor Thomas Barrack Jr., banker Frank Bisignano, investor David Sacks (now “AI and cryptocurrencies czar”), and disgraced real estate investor Charles Kushner (father of Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner; he was jailed, pardoned by Trump in his first administration, and named Ambassador to France in 2025) (ABC News, 2024).

A Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations memo estimates that Elon Musk and his companies stand to avoid at least \$2.37 billion in legal liabilities “through his efforts to gut the federal workforce and exert influence over federal agencies.” As of January 20, 2025, Musk and his companies “were subject to at least 65 actual or potential actions by 11 different federal agencies”—the subcommittee estimated financial liabilities for 40 of the 65 actions by 8 federal agencies (McBrien, 2025).

Ethical Guidelines for Federal Employees: A New Low

Ethics are the bedrock of public service, and for generations, ethical guidelines for federal employees have been designed to ensure that public servants work for the good of the nation rather than personal gain. Under Trump, however, these ethical standards have been eroded almost beyond recognition, with conflicts of interest running rampant throughout his administration. Whether it was his family’s business dealings, his encouragement of nepotism, or his refusal to divest from his private empire, Trump set a dangerous precedent for future administrations.

The absence of ethical accountability has created an environment where corruption has been normalized, and self-dealing has become the order of the day. Federal employees are no longer expected to serve the public with integrity, but are instead expected to further the president’s personal interests. This disregard for ethics has far-reaching implications for the functioning of the federal government and its relationship with the American people.

Trump offered a “Private Dinner to Top 220 Investors in His Memecoin”, which caused the price of this memecoin to surge by 60%. “As he markets digital currencies to the public, Mr.

Trump has also appointed regulators who are scaling back crypto enforcement and called for legislation that would boost the industry's prospects in the United States" (New York Times, 2025).

The End of American Soft Power

The Trump administration seems determined to weaken the United States, which is something that can only benefit adversary countries such as China and Russia. To wit, it has:

- Illegally eliminated USAID, which provided \$40 billion per year in development assistance.
- Dismantled the Inter-American Foundation, the U.S. African Development Foundation, and the United States Institute of Peace, which provided small grants to civil society organizations.
- Weakened the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), which includes Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and Radio Martí.
- Suspended or cancelled many other development assistance projects funded by the U.S. State Department, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), and directly by the State Department.
- Withdrawn from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- Withdrawn from the World Health Organization, UNRWA (aid to Palestinians), and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).
- Left UNESCO again (Irish & Melander, 2025).

Joshua Kurlantzick wrote for the Council on Foreign Relations (Kurlantzick, 2025) that:

China has also been inching closer to U.S. soft power in many parts of the world and will now seek to eclipse Washington's soft power by immediately stepping into the void. Southeast Asia is one example: China already dominates regional trade and has increasingly dominated regional diplomacy. Additionally, it has bolstered its soft power and won more significant concessions from Malaysia and Indonesia on the South China Sea dispute than in the past.

Furthermore, Trump issued an Executive Order stipulating:

Within 180 days of the date of this order, the Secretary, in consultation with the UN Ambassador, shall conduct a review of all international intergovernmental organizations of which the United States is a member and provides any type of funding or other support, and all conventions and treaties to which the United States is a party, to determine which organizations, conventions, and treaties are contrary to the interests of the United States and whether such organizations, conventions, or treaties can be reformed.

Theoretically, this order could even affect the U.S. participation in multilateral development banks (MDBs). Currently, the U.S. is a shareholder in the following international financial institutions:

- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- World Bank Group (including IBRD, IDA, and MIGA)
- Inter-American Development Bank Group (including IDB Invest and IDB Lab)
- Asian Development Bank (AsDB)
- African Development Bank (AfDB)
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- North American Development Bank (NADB)

It would not make any sense—politically, economically, financially, or geo-strategically—for the U.S. to withdraw from the MDBs. With a small amount of paid-in capital, the U.S. influences the policies and lending of these institutions and ensures a competitive bidding process for procurement of goods and services (which also benefits U.S. companies).

According to Fitch Reports (2025a):

The US has exerted considerable influence on MDBs and has used them to achieve some of its geopolitical goals. These MDBs have also provided a counterweight to China as a source of development financing. Any signal that a withdrawal from an MDB by the US has become a real possibility would likely lead us to put its rating on Rating Watch Negative (RWN) if we expect that, for this MDB, an actual withdrawal would lead to a downgrade.

Fitch Report (2025b) adds:

The impact on capital ratios would depend on the size of the US shareholding in an MDB and the conditions of the withdrawal, for example whether the US is repaid its paid-in capital only or its (much larger) share of accumulated reserves, and the phasing of repayments. An MDB's capitalisation would also be affected by lower highly rated callable capital (as Fitch's ratings criteria consider 10% of callable capital subscribed by 'AAA' and 'AA' rated shareholders as its main capital metric).

To avoid affecting the rating of these MDBs, the U.S. shares would need to be acquired by countries with similar or higher credit ratings. For the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), for example, this could include Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Perhaps China and South Korea could be given an opportunity to increase their shareholdings (currently only 0.004%, due to U.S. opposition to a larger share). Other highly rated countries could also be invited to join (e.g., Australia, Luxembourg, Singapore), or the European Union as an institution could join.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Climate Investment Funds (CIF), Global Environment Facility (GEF), and Green Climate Fund (GCF) could also be affected by the withdrawal of U.S. contributions and pledges (during the first Trump administration, the U.S. did not provide the funding to the GCF that had previously been pledged).

A withdrawal from the IMF would have a severely negative impact on the stability of financial markets and on macroeconomic conditions in most of the world. An analysis of a potential withdrawal from the IMF and World Bank states:

Developed countries funding the institutions, including the United States, have used them to ensure global financial stability and to encourage countries to adhere to fiscally responsible, open economic models... U.S. withdrawal would also surprise experts and investors, as the institutions give Washington that influence at a relatively low cost. Stepping back, they say, would be a gift to China and others seeking to dislodge it as the global leader. (George, 2025)

A final negative impact would fall on the IMF, World Bank, and IDB, as they are headquartered in Washington, D.C. (within blocks of the White House and the Treasury Department—no coincidence). If the United States were to leave, their international staff would require visas, and, since the institutions themselves are governed by agreements of privileges and immunities with their host nation, they would most likely have to move their headquarters outside the United States.

Although selling their buildings in Washington could yield a financial windfall (the buildings are valued at several billion dollars), there would be substantial disruption until new headquarters could be found and built. (Currently, they have small or regional offices in some borrowing member countries.)

In my novel *The Last Human* (Fierro, 2021), I envision the IDB relocating to Panama in the future (due more to the impact of climate change and terrorism on Washington than to the withdrawal of the host country). Of course, Trump is now considering invading Panama, so it is not clear if that would be the optimal solution. Perhaps it could move to what would then be the largest shareholders, Argentina or Brazil, and strengthen regional offices (as I also predict in my novel).

Regarding hard power, Trump has fired highly qualified career officers in charge of various branches of the Armed Forces and replaced them with less experienced officers who have demonstrated political allegiance to Trump. He has appointed a Fox News host as Secretary of Defense, weakened all of the U.S. strategic alliances (NATO, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia), and repeated Russian talking points about these alliances and partners.

Trump has also threatened to invade or occupy friends, neighbors, and allies (Canada, Mexico, Panama, Denmark/Greenland), as well as to perform an ethnic cleansing of the Gaza strip. All of these moves seek to weaken the United States, which would only strengthen China and Russia.

Attacks on Scientific and Academic Research²

In the months since Donald Trump was sworn in for a second term, the attack on America's scientific and academic institutions has been neither quiet nor subtle. It has been open and systematic.

In his first term, Trump made no secret of his disdain for expertise. Climate scientists were muzzled, pandemic officials sidelined, and university researchers vilified. But what we are seeing now is not a mere repeat—it is a more disciplined and determined effort to dismantle the very foundations of American scientific and medical advancement.

Take, for example, the ongoing decimation of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In March, the administration proposed a 38% budget cut to the NIH and a 44% cut to the CDC. Trump also proposed a 55% cut in the budget of the National Science Foundation, the virtual elimination of federal spending on climate and ecological research, a 24% cut to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and its National Weather Service, and a 53% cut in NASA's research budget.

Tens of thousands of staff members have been fired or taken early retirement at all of these institutions. According to a survey published in *Nature*, 75% of scientists were considering leaving the U.S. for countries that are less hostile to science (Witze, 2025).

There are significant efforts by the European Union, the UK, Canada, and China to attract these scientists. An article published in *El País* highlights that:

The European Union has launched a €500 million (\$584 million) initiative to attract foreign talent—especially from the U.S.—in an effort to turn the American scientific chaos into an opportunity to strengthen European science... The Make Our Planet Great Again (MOPGA) program... was created by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2018 to attract U.S. scientists to the country.. (Mediavilla, 2025)

Behind the anti-science rhetoric lies a deeper agenda: to weaken public trust in independent research and to concentrate knowledge within politically compliant echo chambers. The

² This section is based on Fierro (2025).

CDC has become a hollowed-out shell, its experts replaced or silenced by ideologues with little regard for epidemiological reality; the vaccine advisory committee was replaced by anti-vaccine conspiracy theorists (Stobbe, 2025).

Meanwhile, federal funding for basic and applied research—the kind that fuels innovation in clean energy, biomedicine, and artificial intelligence—has been slashed across the board. Programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and Department of Energy’s Office of Science have been defunded or redirected toward projects favored by corporate allies of the administration. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has indicated it is planning to close its scientific research arm, which provides expertise for environmental policies and regulations (Stein, 2025).

Research universities, especially those in blue states, have been targeted for what Trump’s surrogates call “ideological cleansing,” leading to a chilling effect on academic freedom not seen in this country since the McCarthy era. The pretexts have been absurd: support for “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” and supposed antisemitic practices. In the case of Harvard, the administration demanded control over Harvard’s hiring and curriculum. The university has refused, and has faced a series of attempted punitive actions, including eliminating research grants (which did not fund professors or teachers, but rather scientific and medical research), and now even cancelling foreign student visas (Harvard has sued to halt these unacceptable reprisals).

Max Boot (2025) writes:

Trump says he wants to eliminate all of Harvard’s federal contracts and give the money to trade schools. This is populism gone crazy. Valuable as trade schools are, they will not be making breakthroughs in fighting Alzheimer’s disease, cancer, strokes, sickle cell anemia or other diseases that are being researched at Harvard.

What makes this assault even more perilous is the infrastructure of obedience being built around it. The restructured Department of Education has launched audits of university curricula, penalizing institutions that promote supposedly “divisive” topics like climate change, systemic racism, or reproductive health. Meanwhile, Trump’s new appointees to the National Science Board are not scientists at all, but pundits and political operatives tasked with ensuring that research aligns with Trump’s values.

Trump's "Big, Beautiful Bill" (actually, a terrible bill that takes health care and food from the poor to give tax cuts for billionaires and corporations) slashed subsidies for electric vehicles and renewable energy, including research in these fields; this will consolidate China's dominance in these industries of the future.

An open letter signed by thousands of scientists says there are obvious parallels between what Trump is trying to do and the corruption of science by past totalitarian regimes:

History illustrates, in no uncertain terms, the danger of state-dictated 'scientific truths.' The anti-scientific interpretations of genetics by Lysenko in the Soviet Union resulted in famine that killed millions. State-sponsored programs in Nazi Germany based on the 'science' of eugenics led to the genocide of millions of Jews, people with disabilities, and people identifying as LGBTQ+ who were deemed to have 'life unworthy of life.'

Some may argue that institutions are resilient, that American science has weathered storms before. But resilience is not immunity. With each defunded lab, each threatened professor, and each deleted dataset, the long-term damage compounds. Innovation cannot be decreed into existence by executive order. It requires trust, openness, and sustained support—none of which this administration has shown interest in providing.

The Trump administration is also attacking the arrival of foreign students and scholars, going so far as to cancel and revoke student visas. What is at stake is not just the future of American science, but the soul of the republic itself. In undermining the engines of discovery, Trump's second term is not only dimming the lights of reason—it is extinguishing them.

Will Trump's Trade War Lead to a Recession?

On April 2, on a day that President Donald Trump called "Liberation Day," he announced that he would increase tariffs on imports from almost every country in the world (the only exceptions being Russia, Cuba, North Korea, and Belarus—supposedly because these countries are under sanctions, even though Russia exports \$3.5 billion to the United States). Not even two islands inhabited solely by penguins were spared, which led to the proliferation of penguin "memes".

Trump announced particularly high tariffs on his major trading partners: 34% for China, 20% for the European Union, and 46% for Vietnam, on top of the 25% previously imposed on Canada and Mexico.

To calculate the so-called “reciprocal tariffs,” the U.S. government did not present the tariffs that other countries impose on imports of U.S. goods (which are in general very low), but instead used a peculiar formula.

Analyst James Surowiecki was the first to note that they estimated it using a crude formula: trade deficit/imports of goods from the United States. The authorities later confirmed this formula but included two additional coefficients: Epsilon (price elasticity of import demand) and Phi (elasticity of import prices with respect to tariffs). However, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) set these coefficients at 4 and 1/4, so they effectively canceled each other out, and the simple formula remained.

There are four problems with this formula (apart from the fact that it is not true that they are “reciprocal tariffs” at all; for instance, the European Union has an average tariff of 3.5%, not 20%):

- According to one of the authors of the academic study cited for the Phi coefficient, Alberto Cavallo, the true value is closer to 1 (0.945) and not 0.25, so the estimated value should have been one fourth the one given (Berkowitz, 2025).
- There are a dozen countries with which the United States has a trade surplus (including Australia, Brazil, Belgium, Chile, Colombia, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom), so applying the formula should have given a negative value, or at worst zero. But Trump imposed 10%, or 20% in the case of EU member states.
- Only the balance of trade in goods (products) is used for the calculation; the balance of trade in services should also have been included. For example, in the case of the EU, the trade deficit in goods was \$158 billion in 2023; but the trade balance in services was a surplus for the U.S. of \$104 billion. Taking the total trade balance into account, the deficit would be only \$54 billion, about a third as large.
- The calculation includes raw materials the United States needs to import. For example, in Canada’s case, the trade deficit was \$45 billion; but excluding the export of oil, gas, and electricity, the U.S. would have a trade surplus with Canada of \$45 billion.

The reaction of the U.S. stock market was immediate. The S&P 500 Index fell 19% through April 8 (from the peak reached in February); a drop of more than 20% is already considered a “crash” or collapse. The Nasdaq index, more focused on the high-tech sector, had an even sharper drop, of 24.4% by April 8 (compared to its peak under Biden), entering “bear market” territory.

Subsequently, on April 9, following Trump’s announcement on his social network that he would lower tariffs to 10% for 90 days for all countries except China, Canada, and Mexico (as well as for specific sectors such as automotive, steel, and aluminum), the market partially recovered. Trump has continued to announce tariff increases on China, which reached 145%; China has responded by increasing its tariffs to 125%. Later on, they were “temporarily” reduced for “90 days” to 30% and 10%, respectively, although this artificial deadline passed with no resolution.

Paul Krugman estimated that the average effective U.S. tariff, which was 1.5% in 2016 (before the first Trump administration), would have risen to about 20%, even considering the likely diversion of part of China’s imports to third countries. This is the highest level since the Smoot-Hawley Act of 1930. Other analysts estimate a weighted average of 27%, whereas the IMF estimated 25.9%.

Other signs of growing economic and financial stress include: the increase in the Economic Policy Uncertainty Index; the rise in the VIX stock market volatility index; and the jump in Treasury bond yields (to 4.5%), which could indicate an even riskier phenomenon—the abandonment of Treasury bonds as a “safe haven” amid economic uncertainty and their possible replacement by German Bunds. The constant increases and (temporary) decreases of tariffs add uncertainty and diminish credibility in the basic economic policies of the United States.

Trade Wars Have Brought Great Depressions

On the previous three occasions when the United States unleashed a global trade war, a Great Depression quickly followed. In 1828, Congress passed the so-called “Tariff of Abominations,” which eventually led to the Great Depression of 1837, lasting until the mid-1840s. As the tariff sought to protect the industries of the North but negatively affected the exports of the South, it was also one of the causes that later led to the Civil War.

In 1890, the McKinley Tariff Act—which Trump admires so much—was passed, increasing the average tariffs on all imports from 38% to 49.5%. This was one of the reasons that led to the “Panic of 1893” or Great Depression, which lasted until 1897. One of the reasons given for this tariff increase was to pressure Canada to join the United States. The opposite happened: Canada retaliated, eliminated internal trade barriers between its provinces, and increased its trade with Great Britain and the Caribbean (its total exports tripled).

In 1930, Congress passed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act. In this case, the Great Depression had already begun in 1929, but the ensuing trade war made the depression much worse, lasting until the onset of World War II in 1939. The Act was a major factor in reducing U.S. imports and exports by 67% during the depression.

It should be noted that, as a consequence of the tariff laws of 1890 and 1930, the incumbent Republican presidents (Harrison and Hoover) lost their next election by a wide margin, and in fact, the Democrats won the presidency and both houses of Congress. After 1930, the Republicans would not return to the White House until 1953.

Will Trump’s Tariffs Lead to a Recession?

Several investment banks and think tanks consider a recession likely, especially given retaliation from trading partners. Economists at JPMorgan say the chances of a U.S. recession are now 60%. Already in the first quarter of 2025, there was a contraction of 0.5%, which occurred even before the tariffs were announced. The tariffs will also cause inflation to rise, leading to stagflation (which last occurred in the 1970s under Ford and Carter). In the 1970s, stagflation was mainly caused by the Arab oil embargo and a quadrupling of oil prices, not by a self-inflicted decision.

The IMF reduced its GDP growth forecast for 2025 for the United States by 0.9% between January and April 2025. Analysts from The Economist, The Wall Street Journal, and the International Monetary Fund previously said the economy under Joe Biden was very robust and the “envy of the world.”

Steven Rattner (2025) cites estimates from The Budget Lab on how much Americans will pay for Trump’s tariffs. The average household will pay between \$3,000 and \$3,500, and the poorest Americans will lose 4% of their income. DriveTech Partners (2025) estimates that

Price levels from all 2025 tariffs are expected to rise by 2.3% in the short run, translating to an average consumer loss of \$3,800 per household. The pain isn't distributed equally, however. Households at the bottom of the income distribution face annual losses of \$1,700, representing a much larger percentage of their disposable income.

Estimates of the initial inflationary impact range from 2% to 4% (which would be on top of the current 3%), but these figures could be higher based on retaliatory actions by other countries, which in turn could lead to even higher U.S. tariffs.

Trump's tariffs are not strategic, since they do not focus on certain sectors or a period of time—they apply across all areas. This compounds the distortions that will be generated and ensures that Americans will pay higher prices for these goods without any possible benefit to American producers.

Impact on developing countries

Many developing countries (especially the Least Developed Countries, or LDCs) have enjoyed low-tariff access to the U.S. market. Other countries, such as those in Central America, as well as Colombia and Peru, have signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the United States.

In most cases, these countries will now face higher tariffs when exporting to the U.S. The only exceptions could be countries (such as Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador) that currently do not have an FTA, but to which the new 10% tariff will be applied. In the case of Ecuador, for example, this will put it on equal footing with its neighboring countries, Colombia and Peru, which do have an FTA with the United States.

The tariffs will not apply to oil and gas, but it appears that they will be imposed on tropical products that the United States does not and cannot produce (except in very limited quantities in California, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico), such as bananas, cocoa, coffee, avocados, or pineapples.

An important trend is likely to resemble what happened in Canada after 1890: other countries will seek free trade agreements with each other and integrate more closely. In the case

of Ecuador, for example, it already has FTAs with the European Union, EFTA, MERCOSUR, ALADI (Latin America), China, the United Kingdom, South Korea, the Andean countries, Chile, and four Central American countries, and is finalizing negotiations with Canada.

Conclusions

What has made America great is not only the size of its economy or the strength of its military, but the values that underlie these institutions. It is the rule of law, the separation of powers, free trade, and a commitment to ethical governance that have made America a “shining city upon a hill,” as President Reagan said (in a speech citing Pilgrim John Winthrop). Under Trump, these ideals have been attacked for short-term political gain and personal enrichment, as well as to evade justice and regulations.

Trump’s tariffs and trade wars have not only hurt American consumers by driving up prices, but have also damaged the global trading system. His disregard for international agreements like the World Trade Organization, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and his withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) have isolated America from its allies. The long-term effects of these policies are starting to be felt as the world looks to new regional and global powers to step into the leadership vacuum Trump has created.

Beyond the intellectual and academic needs of promoting science, applied research and development is the fuel that enables productivity growth, and in the long run, even political and military power. Weakening these areas will only benefit our rivals.

The United States will not only become more isolated economically, but also politically, as its political and military alliances are also under attack by Trump. The destruction of American soft power will accelerate this process. All of this weakens the United States and strengthens rival powers, such as China, Russia, and Iran.

As we look toward the future, we must ask ourselves: can we rebuild the institutions that have been broken? Can we restore the principles that made America an example of democracy and justice? The path ahead is unclear, but one thing is certain: the fight to preserve the soul of the nation is just beginning.

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2. **Resumen y abstract:** En español e inglés (máx. 250 palabras, un párrafo). Incluye objetivo, método, resultados, discusión y conclusiones.
3. **Palabras clave:** Entre 5 y 12 en ambos idiomas, separadas por punto y coma, conforme a tesauros reconocidos (UNESCO, ERIC, DeCS, MeSH).
4. **Abreviaciones:** Definidas en la primera mención y usadas de manera consistente.

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