

Off the Page

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The Great Scam of the New Order

Milei, Kast, Trump and the Factory of Institutional Fascism

By Vicente de la Serna

A few years ago, calling an elected government fascist was considered an exaggeration. Today, looking at the map of the West without using the word is simply self-deception. We are not facing a classic conservative right, not even the neoliberalism of the 1990s. We are facing something more sophisticated and more dangerous: an institutional fascism that does not need coups d'état or uniforms to impose itself. It does so through laws, through algorithms, through language that conceals while it strikes.

And the strike, it must be said, is coordinated.



Foto: [Antonio Cansino-Woman](#)

The Same Script, Different Accents

Javier Milei in Argentina, José Antonio Kast in Chile, Donald Trump in the United States, Giorgia Meloni in Italy, Marine Le Pen in France, Santiago Abascal in Spain. They all share not only an ideology, but an operations manual. The homogenization is so evident that it is insulting that they are still analyzed as isolated national phenomena.

The economic program is identical: destruction of the welfare state, privatization of the public sphere, extreme labor flexibilization, surrender of natural resources to transnational capital, and an "anti-caste" rhetoric that, curiously, never touches the interests of the large economic conglomerates. Milei says his mission is to be a "mole that destroys the state from within." Trump promises to "drain the swamp" while filling his cabinet with billionaires. Kast presented himself as a champion against corruption, until it was revealed that he was a shareholder of offshore companies in Panama that he never declared. The connections to the drug trafficking of Asprilla in Colombia and the Trump administration are no coincidence. In the U.S. administration, drug traffickers seem to be a problem only if they do not cooperate. Money is always welcome in the country with the highest drug consumption in the world, where local drug lords curiously do not exist even in the news.

The scam follows the same pattern: they speak in the name of the people while serving the powerful. They denounce the "caste" while replacing it with an even more rapacious one. And they do so with a discourse so homogenized that they could exchange their speeches without anyone noticing the difference.

The Culture War as Real War

The discursive axis of this globalized far-right is the so-called "culture war" – a term that sounds abstract but conceals a concrete operation: criminalizing dissent. Milei, at the 2025 World Economic Forum, declared his intention to "exterminate the virus of woke leftism," which he defined as a "cancer"; he said he would eliminate the figure of femicide from the penal code and accused the LGBT community "in its most extreme versions" of being "pedophile." Trump, for his part, has turned the persecution of the "radical left" into state policy, purging the federal administration of any trace of progressive thought. Kast, in Chile, was described by former government spokesperson Camila Vallejo as the protagonist of a "great scam."

Do you notice the symmetry? It is not a coincidence. It is design.

These leaders share a transnational network of think tanks, foundations, and media that provide them with the same vocabulary, the same imaginary enemies, the same communication strategy. Milei signed the Madrid Charter, promoted by the Spanish far-right party Vox. He has shared stages with Le Pen, Abascal, Orbán, Meloni, and Kast himself. They are not occasional allies; they are soldiers of the same campaign.

Bots, Surveillance, and the Fabrication of Reality

But homogenization does not only occur in the leaders' speeches. It occurs on social media, where armies of bots amplify, distort, and exhaust. The strategy is not to convince; it is to confuse. To flood the public space with so many contradictory versions of reality that truth ceases to be a shared horizon and becomes just one option among many.

The goal is not debate; it is the annihilation of the rational public sphere.

Milei, for example, does not only use social media to communicate; he uses them to systematically provoke, insult opponents, and sow an atmosphere of permanent hostility. Trump has been doing the same for years. The goal is not debate; it is the annihilation of the rational public sphere. When everything is noise, when everything is suspicious, when everything can be "fake news," the only authority left is that of the caudillo who says, "I know the truth."

And behind the bots, the surveillance systems. The technology that supposedly connects us has become infrastructure of control. Every click, every like, every protest recorded by a drone or a cell phone feeds a database that knows who dissents, where, and when. You don't need the Gestapo when you have Meta, X, and the state's algorithms. Surveillance is total, but invisible. And invisibility is its greatest terror effect.

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„Vicente de la Serna betritt und verlässt viele Labyrinth.
Er tut es würdevoll und so gesprächig,
wie ein Kaffee mit Freunden,
während er einfache und tiefe Lektionen erteilt
– wie ein Dolch. [...]

Durch diese Kathedrale aus Worten, bewegen sich zwei Tiere.
Ein poetisches Tier. Ein politisches Tier.
Ich grüße sie beide. Ich teile ihre Kämpfe,
ihre Wut, ihre Träume.“

– Reynaldo García Blanco, kubanischer Dichter

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Institutional Fascism: No Coup Needed

This is where we must stop fearing the word. What we are seeing is not a classic dictatorship. There are no tanks in the streets — yet. But there is something that, in a way, is more efficient: an institutional fascism that uses democratic forms to empty them of content.

What else is it to purge the public administration of "DEI ideology" under the excuse of "meritocracy"? What else is it to imprison organizers of social protests, as Milei proposes? What else is it to turn the left into an internal enemy, migrants into an existential threat, women and dissidents into targets of symbolic and legal violence?

"anti-woke politics"; it is ideological persecution. It is not "content moderation"; it is censorship. It is not "information verification"; it is control. And it is not "democratic conservatism"; it is institutional fascism in expansion.

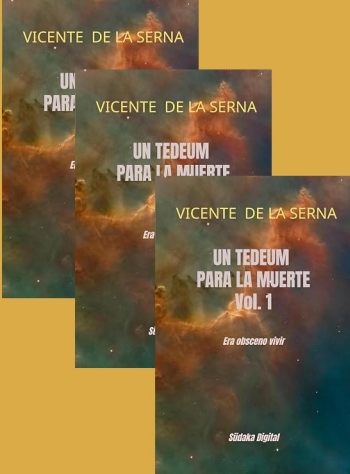
Milei, Kast, Trump, Bolsonaro, de la Espriella, and the others are not local phenomena. They are the spearhead of a global project that seeks to reconfigure the Western world under a logic of authoritarianism disguised as freedom.

Milei, Kast, Trump, Bolsonaro, de la Espriella, and the others are not local phenomena. They are the spearhead of a global project that seeks to reconfigure the Western world under a logic of authoritarianism disguised as freedom. A project where freedom is only for those who can afford it, where democracy is only for those who think correctly, and where the future is only for those who do not question the present.

We have no choice but to name everything. Because in the world they are building, silence is no longer complicity. It is surrender.

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ANALYSIS

The Bukele system, the Monroe Doctrine, and the new face of authoritarianism in Latin America

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The state of exception in El Salvador, in force since March 2022, has been extended 45 times and has become the central mechanism of a model of government that concentrates power, dismantles institutions, and operates outside the rule of law. What began as an emergency measure to combat gangs has been transformed, according to international organizations, into a repressive "state policy."

Crimes against humanity and the human cost of the regime

A report prepared by the International Group of Experts for the Investigation of Human Rights Violations in El Salvador (GIPES), presented before the UN, documents more than 1,700 sources that point to the systematic commission of crimes against humanity: murder, torture, sexual violence, imprisonment of children, and forced disappearances. The experts conclude that there are "reasonable grounds to believe" that Nayib Bukele's government has perpetrated these crimes within the framework of the state of exception.

(Photo: Alcatraz. Marcellorabozzi)



The figures are overwhelming:

- More than 90,000 people detained, many without compliance with due process.
- Nearly 500 deaths under state custody documented by organizations such as Cristosal and Socorro Jurídico Humanitario, with authorities merely describing them as "natural deaths."
- 540 cases of forced disappearance, with victims who may have ended up in mass graves without their families' knowledge.
- 3,319 minors detained, including at least 22 who suffered torture and ill-treatment.
- 789 attacks on press freedom during 2024, an increase of 154% compared to the previous year.

Bukele himself acknowledged that at least 8,000 people were detained without justified cause, which evidences the arbitrary nature of the arrests, often based on physical appearance, tattoos, or anonymous calls to meet quotas.

Photo: pixelanarchy



Concentration of power and institutional erosion

The Bukele system is not limited to repression. In July 2025, the Legislative Assembly, controlled by his party Nuevas Ideas, approved constitutional reforms that allow indefinite presidential reelection, eliminating the limits established by the Constitution. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) described these reforms as "a serious setback for democracy and the rule of law."

The government has also:

- Dismissed the attorney general and the judges of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court in 2021, replacing them with loyal officials.
- Passed laws that allow the dismissal of judges and prosecutors over 60 years of age, used to eliminate independent magistrates.
- Implemented a Foreign Agents Law that obliges organizations receiving foreign funds to register as "foreign agents," imposes a 30% tax on all external financing, and allows sanctions for activities considered contrary to "public order," violating international human rights law.

As a result, at least 140 human rights defenders and journalists have fled the country for fear of reprisals. Organizations such as Cristosal, El Faro, and the Association of Journalists of El Salvador (APES) have closed or relocated their operations.

The "coolest dictator" and tolerance for authoritarianism

The description of Bukele on social media as "The coolest dictator in the whole wide world" is not a joke, but a symptom of a broader phenomenon: the normalization of authoritarian leaderships in Latin America. An analysis of political radicalism points out that frustration with traditional parties has led electorates to vote for options that erode democracy, disdain institutions, and persecute the opposition and the press.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to El Salvador. Throughout the region, leaders who present themselves as outsiders build a narrative of "moral indignation" that divides society between a virtuous "people" and an "other" (migrants, opponents, critical media) that must be eliminated. In that logic, authoritarian behaviors are tolerated in pursuit of a supposed greater good.

Trump, the Monroe Doctrine, and the surrender of sovereignty

Donald Trump's foreign policy toward Latin America has reactualized the Monroe Doctrine ("America for the Americans") in terms of hegemonic control. The Trump administration transferred migrants to El Salvador and deepened a relationship of dependency that, in many cases, has been welcomed by the region's new leaders.

The paradox is that, while governments like Bukele's consolidate power without checks and balances, they bow to Washington's interests on migration and security matters, surrendering sovereignty without obtaining significant concessions in return. This willingness to cede control in exchange for political support and international legitimacy reinforces the logic of a region conceived as a backyard, where human rights and democratic institutions are sacrificed on the altar of security and order.

The problem is that the "order" being imposed is not democratic. It is the order of the permanent state of exception, of forced disappearance, of institutionalized torture, and of a silenced press. And while the international community watches, the message being sent is that authoritarianism is acceptable if it comes with a reduced homicide rate, even if that reduction has been achieved at the cost of tens of thousands of broken lives and a democratic institutional framework shattered to pieces.

SOURCES:

On the Foreign Agents Law and its impact

Several sources detail the approval, content, and consequences of this law, which is a central pillar

of the "Bukele system" described in the article.

Central Law: Legal analysis of the Foreign Agents Law, its obligations, and sanctions.

Despacho 505: Reaction of more than 20 NGOs that describe the law as a "direct threat" to civil society.

Lexis Ecuador: Report on the approval of the law and UN criticism, as well as its impact on civil society and the press.

SWI [swissinfo.ch](https://www.swissinfo.ch): Statements by President Bukele defending the law and rejection by organizations that see it as part of an authoritarian escalation.

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ): Report on how the law affects the Association of Journalists of El Salvador (APES) and independent journalism.

On the persecution of media and journalists (El Faro case)

The article mentions the harassment of the critical press, and these sources document the case of the digital newspaper El Faro.

International Federation of Journalists (IFJ): Condemns the freezing of assets of El Faro journalists as an escalation in judicial persecution.

La Hora: Details how the government froze funds and properties of founding partners of El Faro.

Prensa Libre: Reports El Faro's complaint about the intervention of personal assets of its shareholders.

La Nación: Covers El Faro's complaint and statements by its director, Carlos Dada, about political persecution.

Prensa Libre (second article): Reports on the freezing of assets as part of a "fiscal persecution" against the outlet.

On the Monroe Doctrine and Trump's policy toward Latin America

These sources address the resurgence of the Monroe Doctrine and the Trump administration's foreign policy in the region.

Cuba Si: Analysis of the geopolitical significance of the "new" Monroe Doctrine and Trump's approach toward the "backyard."

Excelsior: Opinion on how Trump reinaugurates the Monroe Doctrine, dividing the region's countries between "friends" and "enemies."

DW (Deutsche Welle): Analysis of the long history of U.S. intervention in Latin America and the "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine.

CIDOB: Analysis of Trump's policy toward the region as a renewed "backyard" approach.