



# *Editorial*

POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND CORPORATE SECURITY UNIT

## ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

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## GLOBAL, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL CURRENT ANALYSIS

### **The cases of migration in Europe, transnational drug trafficking in the region and, the electoral panorama in Colombia**

The objective of this document is to briefly detail three current international, regional, and local situations, where the topics to be developed are the migration crisis in Europe, the situation of transnational drug trafficking between Mexico and Colombia and, the current situation of the electoral landscape in 2022 in Colombia.

#### **The migration crisis in Europe**

In 2015, the countries of the European Union had been indirectly affected by the wars in North Africa and the Middle East, mainly the Syrian civil war, due to the thousands of migrants who sought to leave these conflict zones and arrive in Europe. It was common to see hundreds of immigrants perish on the international news in the Mediterranean and the borders between Greece and Turkey at times of high tension. This crisis caused internal disputes in the countries that make up the common European bloc, feeding different political sides and parties that were for and against it. The many displaced from the Syrian war, approximately six million people, generated the migration panic in many countries of Europe. In terms of humanitarianism and rights, European parliamentarians were quick to speak of security about the effects of migration. However, in the case of Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed the refugees in masse under her slogan “we can do it”. As the bloody moments of the war in Syria diminished, mass migrations were reduced, and the borders of the European bloc stabilized.

However, with the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan on August 30 of this year and the takeover of the country by the Taliban, a new episode of massive migration from this country and war zones from the Middle East to Europe begins. This new situation has revived the migration debate in Europe, now with greater intensity. Austrian Minister, Karl Nehammer, has recently remarked with annoyance that “it can’t be that Austria and Germany will solve the problem of Afghanistan for the European Union”. In the same way, Germany has changed its tone and points out: “we can’t solve all these problems” referring to the Afghan refugees. In addition to the Afghan population, a new migratory wave with Iraqis, Kurds, and Syrians has once again approached the European borders, starting a humanitarian and security debate, due to the presence of possible members of terrorist and radical cells such as the Islamic State and Al -Qaeda within the migrant population. However, unlike in 2015, the area that has been most affected by this new crisis is the border between Poland and Belarus. The migratory flow from Belarus has been increasing and has put pressure on the governments of Poland and Lithuania.

But why is there a new migrant route through the cold Belarusian lands to eastern Europe? These routes occurred mainly in the Balkans, areas of the Mediterranean, the Turkish border, and southern Spain. In addition to the periodic situation of migration due to instability in countries of the Middle East and Africa, the current crisis is accompanied by a geopolitical problem between Europe, the

United States, Russia, and Belarus. In August 2020, Belarus presents presidential elections, and this would be the starting point of what is being experienced this week on the border with Poland. The electoral results gave a large majority in favor of Aleksander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country for 20 years and is considered the last dictator in Europe. Several countries such as Russia and China recognized Lukashenko while the United States, Germany, France, and Canada doubted the legitimacy of the elections, as well as various sectors of the opposition in Belarus. This prompted the European Union and the United States to announce sanctions against the Belarusian government, mainly targeting Lukashenko and his close officials. Because of these sanctions and the political pressure on Belarus, Lukashenko, according to international media, specifically a BBC investigation<sup>1</sup>, has been using migrants as a retaliation strategy to affect the eastern borders of the EU. We have noticed how Belarus helped migrants from Middle Eastern countries by granting them tourist visas to circulate in the country and taking them to the borders with Lithuania and Poland with the support of its military forces. However, the Prime Minister of Poland, Mateusz Morawiecki, directly accuses the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, of coordinating with Lukashenko the situation to destabilize eastern Europe, in line with the war in eastern Ukraine. On the other hand, the Belarusian government has denied any relationship with the increase in migrants at the East-European borders. The migrant crisis at the European borders increases while the authorities of the bloc try to stop arrivals to Belarus by contacting countries in the Middle East and avoiding flights from these countries to Minsk<sup>2</sup>. In the same way, countries like Ukraine also see their border with Belarus affected by the migrant crisis and their border with Russia by the war in the Donbas, so that the eastern European borders have become a focus of hybrid warfare<sup>3</sup>. This is in addition to Lukashenko's threats to cut off the supply of gas pipelines that pass through his territory to Europe and to promote patrols with Russian bombings, all to take revenge for the EU sanctions against his government<sup>4</sup>. Poland estimates that there are between 3,000 and 4,000 migrants along its border in difficult humanitarian conditions, warning that the migration crisis with the neighboring country could last for months or even years<sup>5</sup>.

### **Transnational Drug Trafficking: Case of Mexico and Colombia**

This year 2021 marks half a century since the then president of the United States, Richard Nixon, declared war on drug trafficking. This internal Washington policy deeply marked Colombia, Mexico, and other Latin American countries<sup>6</sup>, modifying its internal and external agenda against a common hemispheric enemy. The countries most affected by this fight against drug trafficking have been

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-59223471>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dw.com/es/ue-obtiene-progresos-en-crisis-migratoria-con-bielorrusia-pese-a-tensiones/a-59808566>

<sup>3</sup> <https://elpais.com/internacional/2021-11-20/ucrania-refuerza-su-frontera-con-bielorrusia-ante-la-crisis-migratoria-y-la-amenaza-rusa.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2021/11/12/mundo/se-agrava-crisis-migratoria-en-europa/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2021/11/18/la-crisis-migratoria-se-instala-entre-la-union-europea-y-bielorrusia/>

<sup>6</sup>

Colombia and Mexico, which have presented historical roots with this phenomenon, internal wars against organized groups, problems of territorial control, and links between their drug trafficking groups. The relationship between Colombian and Mexican drug trafficking is not new, coming from the time of the great drug cartels such as the Medellín Cartel and the Cali Cartel. However, for various reasons, the relationship has increased in recent years and new dimensions of this transnational criminal phenomenon have emerged. Since 2016, with the agreements between the National Government and the FARC-EP guerrilla, there have been new dynamics of narcotics production in the country. The guerrillas were abandoning the territories and these, in turn, were occupied by various illegal actors, eager to take over the business that the armed group had left behind. Since 2018, the Ombudsman's Office has denounced the growing incidence of Mexican drug trafficking cartels in the national territory. These cartels have been strengthened through drug trafficking in Colombia, mainly in the departments of Cauca, Córdoba, Magdalena, Antioquia, La Guajira, San Andrés, and Putumayo, according to complaints from the Ombudsman. These illegal actors have reached the national territory to maintain the production of narcotics and guarantee the country's routes to the United States and Europe<sup>7</sup>. These cartels do not need to bring their armies or settle in large tracts of land because when they send their emissaries, they identify the organizations that can offer them their interests (cocaine, logistics for the transfer of merchandise, or security). They hire these organizations, pay what is necessary, and retire to monitor their businesses and their wars against other cartels. The strong economic capacity of these transnational drug traffickers gives them advantages to contract Colombian armed groups, demand cocaine production from them, and establish stable distribution routes. Since the periods of the Colombian drug cartels and the demobilization of the country's largest illegal group (FARC), there were no longer groups that controlled the total links of production, so these transnational actors took the opportunity to stabilize and control the business. Similarly, the dispute over the territories between criminal gangs, paramilitary groups, and terrorists such as the ELN, has caused the atomization of drug trafficking in the territories, thus facilitating the production and increase of plantations. According to the Illicit Crops Monitoring System of the United Nations Organization, in the last measurement made (2017) it was established that in Colombia there are more than 171,000 hectares of cultivated coca, something never seen before since the UN made these estimates<sup>8</sup>. Due to the entry of Mexican criminal capital and the purchase of criminal 'franchises' in the national territory, the influence of transnational drug traffickers in the Aztec country is increasing. These groups do not distinguish ideology in the Colombian organized armed groups, because with the high flow of capital they can buy entire groups<sup>9</sup>. Gradually, they have become a relevant link in regional and hemispheric drug trafficking because

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2020/10/04/narcotrafico-mexicano-en-colombia-cada-vez-mas-visible-armado-y-posicionado/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-49013151>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.france24.com/es/20200612-carteles-mexicanos-control-colombia-armas>

they have become responsible for sending large shipments of drugs to Central and North America<sup>10</sup>, becoming the main suppliers of cocaine in the hemisphere.

These transnational drug trafficking movements have not gone unnoticed by the authorities, mainly in the United States, where the Joe Biden government identified multiple Latin American countries among the main transit nations or illicit drug producers, seeking to expand cooperation with Mexico and Colombia. In addition to pressure countries that do not respond positively in results in the fight against transnational drug trafficking, mainly Bolivia and Venezuela<sup>11</sup>.

### **Overview of the presidential elections in Colombia**

In November, the polling firm Invamer conducted a survey on the intention to vote in the upcoming presidential elections in the country for the year 2022. In this survey, the names that stood out were those of Gustavo Petro, Sergio Fajardo, and Alejandro Char, while names like Alejandro Gaviria and Óscar Iván Zuluaga decreased their visibility. The candidate Rodolfo Hernández maintained a stable position in this poll. The protagonist of this last poll was Gustavo Petro, who also appears as the winner with his coalition, the *Pacto Histórico*, and appears the winner in all possible scenarios, both in the first and in the second presidential round. In the first case, it had a voting intention of 48.4%, and in the second round of 68.3%. Behind him, Sergio Fajardo appears, who despite the difficulties he has presented due to his pending accounts with control bodies such as the Comptroller's Office and the Prosecutor's Office, is the one who continues with a vote intention of 25.5% in the first round, and 39.8% in the second round. In third place, Alejandro Char presents a voting intention with 26.1% and is presented as the head of the *Equipo por Colombia* with Federico Gutiérrez (26.4%) and Enrique Peñalosa (22.7%). Similarly, Francia Márquez was second in voting intention in the *Pacto Histórico* (7.5%), only surpassed by Petro (82.4%). Rodolfo Hernández presented electoral support with an intention of 18.3% in the first round and 37.6% in the second. Alejandro Gaviria did not stand out too much as a candidate, despite the strong expectations that he had initially presented, presenting an intention to vote in the first round of 5.7% and the second of 27.6%. Another candidate who has remained with a reduced intention is Óscar Iván Zuluaga, who, given the lack of alliances and the strong division that he left in the *Centro Democrático* due to his dispute with Senator María Fernanda Cabal, had a vote intention of 15.7% in the first round and 31.7% in the second. The movements of these politicians will go to consultation in the next three months, where a single presidential candidate will appear for the May 2022 elections<sup>12</sup>. In summary, the electoral landscape according to the Invamer survey is presented as follows in the intention of the voters:

**Gustavo Petro:** 42,1%

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-59031820>

<sup>11</sup> <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2021/09/15/la-casa-blanca-dice-que-venezuela-y-bolivia-no-han-cumplido-con-las-obligaciones-antinarcoicos-promete-asociaciones-con-mexico-colombia-china-e-india-trax/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/resultados-encuesta-invamer-diciembre-elecciones-presidenciales-colombia-2022-BE16122939>



**Sergio Fajardo:** 18,9%

**Rodolfo Hernández:** 13,8%

**Óscar Iván Zuluaga:** 12,7%

**Federico Gutiérrez:** 11,4%

**Voto en blanco:** 1,2%

Similarly, the survey also presented the popularity of the current president, Iván Duque Márquez:

**Approval:** 25.1%, falls 4 points compared to the month of August

**Disapproval:** 69.8%, up 2 points compared to the last poll <sup>13</sup>

In the hypothetical scenario in which there were only two candidates for the presidency, Petro would beat all the politicians with an advantage of more than 60%, except for the case of Sergio Fajardo, who would win with 56.8% and Rodolfo Hernández, who would win at the polls with 58.7%<sup>14</sup>. Faced with this situation, several analysts agree that the low popularity of the president and the division within the ruling party, the *Centro democrático* under candidate Óscar Iván Zuluaga will have to maneuver with coalitions that may be related to his policy to be an actor of the high weight to decide positions in the elections, but will not have the same strength and capacity as the past contests, so the center of gravity of the elections will be in the so-called political center, where the parties of all political currents they will try to establish alliances or attract their constituents. This is the same way that forces the most voted candidate, Gustavo Petro, to maneuver with the so-called political center because, since he is currently the most optioned candidate, he will be the common adversary of the other candidates and coalitions.

On the other hand, the elections in Colombia have raised the concern of several politicians in the United States. Some Republican congressmen have noted with concern the possibility of Petro reaching the presidency, which could affect the status quo in Colombia and distort the country's socioeconomic system. In the same way, they point out to the Joe Biden government as not being interested in knowing who the next president of Colombia could be, a country that is the main ally of the United States on the continent. However, faced with these comments, Brian Nichols, current Undersecretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs, points out: "I am not going to characterize the candidates in Colombia, that is a decision of the Colombians, and we hope for free, fair and transparent"<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.valoraanalitik.com/2021/12/07/colombia-pacto-historico-lintencion-voto-presidenciales/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/segun-encuesta-de-invamer-petro-ganaria-las-elecciones-del-2022-ME16120628>

<sup>15</sup> [https://caracol.com.co/radio/2021/11/17/internacional/1637147891\\_884775.html](https://caracol.com.co/radio/2021/11/17/internacional/1637147891_884775.html)

### **Conclusions.**

1. The migrant crisis in Europe is presented as a new scenario of confrontation between the EU and Russia, where the latter's main geopolitical ally, Belarus, uses the migration crisis as a hybrid weapon of war as pressure for sanctions and distrust of the West against to your government. All this as the Donbas war in eastern Ukraine and the military tensions between this country and Russia intensify, the aftermath of Brexit in Western Europe and the difficulties between NATO members in Europe, mainly between Greece and Turkey. These current situations are presented as profound challenges to the system established by the EU, its stability, and its ability to maintain its hegemony according to its interests in the region and its areas of projection.

2. Due to the demobilization of the FARC in 2016 and the abandonment of strategic territories by the former guerrilla, various actors have taken advantage of this power vacuum to cover the routes and territories related to the drug trafficking business. The difficulty of controlling and consolidating the territories in the geography of Colombia has facilitated the entry of capital and members of transnational drug trafficking groups in the region, mainly Mexicans, whose objective is to maintain control over the entire narcotics production chain. This problem of transnational drug trafficking, which affects the security of many countries in the hemisphere, makes Colombia and Mexico the main protagonists in keeping the threat of transnational drug trafficking under stability but also understanding that the internal dynamics of both countries affect the entire hemisphere.

3. The electoral panorama in Colombia narrows more and more just six months after the first presidential round, where the numerous actors converge in front of the most strategic alliances to their interests and capture the largest possible electorate, it is presented as a complex scenario where the race virtually leans toward the progressive candidate Gustavo Petro. Only six months before the first presidential round, the doubts generated by the candidate of Colombia Humana may facilitate that the candidates who follow him due to the intention of the vote converge on a common front due to the doubts that Petro's program presents against the status quo and the political-economic system in Colombia, doubts that even transcend outside the country even in the United States. Faced with the reduction in the capacity of the governing party and the lack of popularity of the president, the political center manifests itself as the center of gravity of the elections, where the politician seduces his electorate, and his main political figures will be guaranteed his entry into the elections in the Casa de Nariño.

***Note.** The investigative work and analysis recorded in this report are exclusive to 3+ Security Colombia. Therefore, it is recommended not to disclose the document in question.*

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