



Editorial

UNIDAD DE ANÁLISIS POLÍTICO Y SEGURIDAD CORPORATIVA

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

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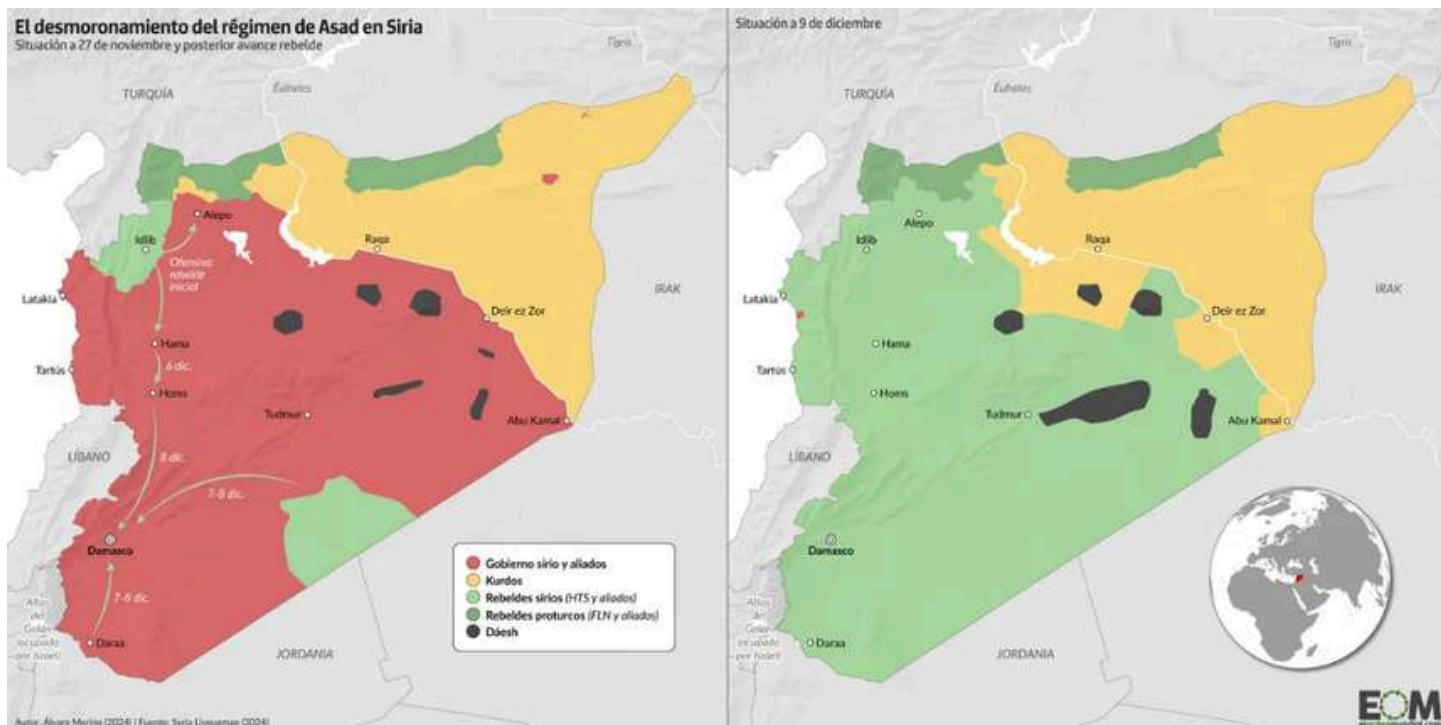
Syria: impact of the fall of Bashar al-Assad in the Middle East.



Resource: Wikimedia Commons, Syrian rebels in Aleppo, 30 November 2024.

On November 27, rebel forces launched an offensive against Bashar al-Assad's troops, which culminated in the fall of the regime in less than 15 days. The Syrian Civil War has deep roots in the dictatorship of Hafez al-Assad, who ruled Syria from 1971 until his death in 2000, and in the continuation of his son Bashar al-Assad in power. Despite promising democratic reforms, Bashar's regime remained authoritarian, leading to growing distrust among the Syrian population. In 2011, spurred by the Arab Spring, Syrians began demonstrating in the streets demanding democracy, but the government's response was brutal, sending in the army to suppress the protesters. This led to the formation of rebel groups across the country, which took up arms against the regime.

Map of the rebel offensive in Syria



Resource: EOM, 2024.

In November 2024, a coalition of rebel forces, led by the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Shams (HTS), managed to seize important strategic points and captured key cities, reaching as far as Damascus, where they discovered that Bashar al-Assad had fled. Hours later, Russia confirmed that Assad had taken refuge in Moscow. The lack of support from their allies, Russia and Iran, who were focused on other conflicts such as the war in Gaza and the war in Ukraine, allowed the rebels to seize the opportunity to overthrow the regime. This power shift in Syria has had a major impact on both regional conflicts in the Middle East and international politics.

The future of Syria will largely depend on the position of the United States, whose role in the region remains uncertain. According to Ali Bilgic, the behavior of key players in Syria will be defined by the US decision to get involved or not. For Washington, the fall of the Assad regime, backed by Moscow and Tehran, represents a positive sign, as it has been trying to replace the Syrian government since 2011. President Joe Biden warned that the situation in Syria could further destabilize the region. If the U.S. decides not to intervene, the power vacuum in Syria could be filled by other actors, and Russia would be one of the main ones, especially to maintain its naval base in the country, which is strategic for its operations in Africa. Despite the political changes in Washington, Ali Bilgic believes that a U.S. president is unlikely to ignore Syria, as there is too much at stake for the United States. In addition, the U.S. continues to have a military presence in northeastern Syria, where the Kurds control important natural resources such as oil and gas. U.S. support is essential for the Kurds, who maintain detention camps for former Islamic State fighters. This explains why total withdrawal of US forces in Syria was never a viable option, even during Donald Trump's presidency (BBC, 2024).



Iran, for its part, has expressed its desire to maintain “friendly” relations with Syria, although its influence has diminished considerably. Tehran provided key military support to Assad's forces and trained one of the main militias fighting opposition groups. However, the fall of Assad and the challenges facing other Iranian allies, such as Hezbollah, have left Syria more isolated. Hezbollah, which was key to the Iran-Syria connection, has been weakened after its confrontation with Israel, and other Iranian-backed factions, such as the Houthis in Yemen, have also suffered losses. Some analysts see the fall of Assad as a near-fatal blow to Hezbollah, and this change in geopolitical dynamics is seen as positive for Israel, which welcomes the reduction of Iran's influence in the region ([BBC](#), 2024).

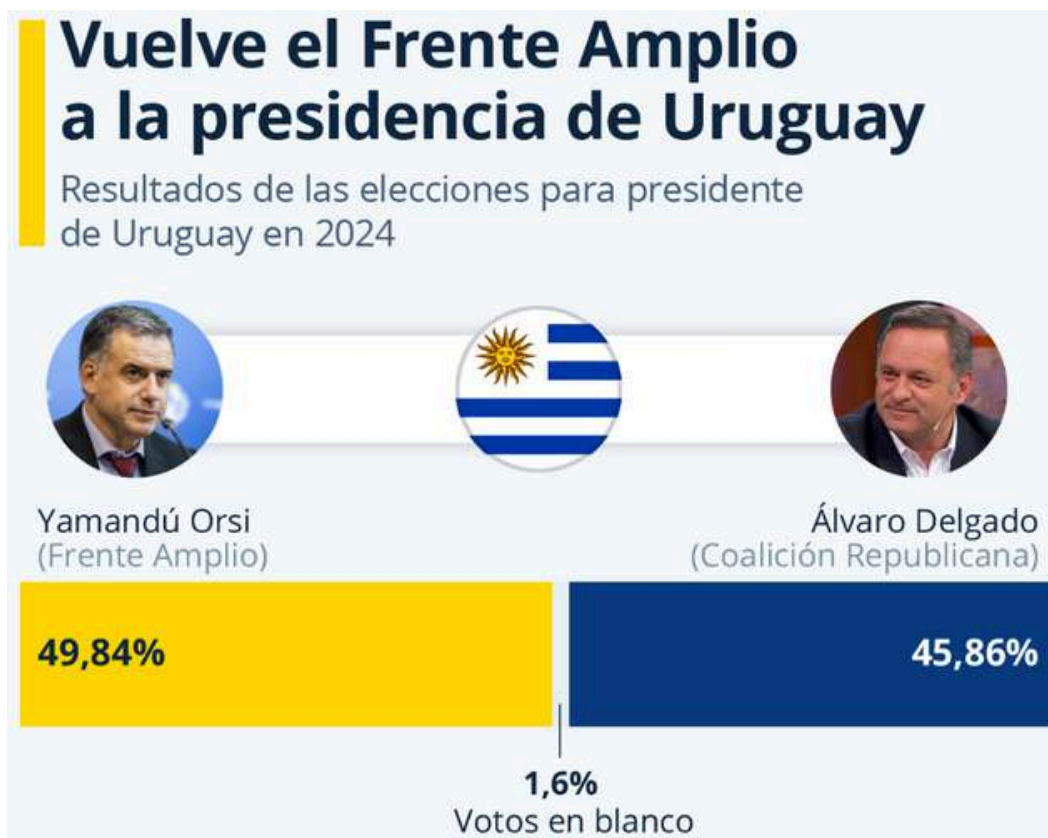
Israel, while focused on the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon for more than a year, continues to strike military targets in Syria, especially those related to Assad's alleged chemical weapons arsenal. Since the fall of Assad, Israeli fighter jets have carried out numerous strikes in Syria, including the destruction of a research facility linked to chemical weapons production. In addition, the Israeli government has temporarily taken control of the demilitarized zone in the Golan Heights, arguing that the disengagement agreement signed in 1974 with Syria has “collapsed” as Syrian troops have withdrawn from their posts. Israel occupied the Golan Heights in 1967 during the Six-Day War and annexed it in 1981, a move that is considered illegal under international law, although Israel denies it. The area is home to some 20,000 Druze Arabs and more than 30 Jewish settlements with some 20,000 people. Syria has insisted that it will not accept a peace agreement with Israel unless it withdraws from the Golan Heights. During the 2011 uprising, Israel calculated that, despite Assad's ties to Iran and Hezbollah, his government was preferable to what might emerge if the Assad regime fell. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel will “send a hand of peace” to Syrians who wish to live in peace with Israel ([BBC](#), 2024).



Return of the left in Uruguay: causes and consequences of a growing trend in the region.

Last Sunday, November 24, presidential elections were held in Uruguay, giving as winner the leftist Yamandú Orsi with 49.8% of the votes. Orsi, who belongs to the Frente Amplio and is a political ally of José “Pepe” Mujica, beat the candidate of Luis Lacalle Pou's center-right government, Álvaro Delgado, by almost four points. The new president will take office on March 1, 2025 and will hold office for five years. The president's presidential project will aim to promote economic growth, reduce poverty and “redefine the social protection matrix”. Security will also assume an essential role in the agenda, as one of the issues of greatest concern to citizens is insecurity, fueled by drug gangs and organized crime ([France 24, 2024](#)).

Unlike other countries in Latin America, in Uruguay the arrival of a left-wing president after a right-wing one does not necessarily respond to an exhaustion of the predecessor government or to the citizens' search for a radical change. In this case, both candidates had a chance of winning and the electoral environment was not particularly polarizing.



Resource: Statista, 2024.

However, Orsi began to take advantage in June 2024, when he began an intense campaign that culminated in the strengthening of his presence at the national level. This intensified after the first round, when the now president-elect became increasingly close to the citizenry, toured the departments farthest from the capital and showed his negotiation skills ([France 24](#), 2024).

Parallel to the increase of Orsi's voters, Delgado's followers decreased, not because citizens negatively rated the previous right-wing mandate, but because an image of "stagnation" began to spread in reference to Uruguay ([El País](#), 2024).



Orsi's victory marks the resurgence of the Uruguayan progressive coalition, where great figures such as José "Pepe" Mujica or Tabaré Álvarez stand out ([France 24, 2024](#)). This resurgence of the left is not limited to Uruguay; on the contrary, it has been a regional trend for some years. In Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro is leading, in spite of all the questions about his victory and his dictatorial character. In Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva arrived, in Chile Gabriel Boric holds the position and in Colombia, since 2022, the president is Gustavo Petro. Although not in all cases, in many of them the left has arrived after a period of hard rightists, which evidences the exhaustion and polarization of regional contexts ([BBC, 2024](#)).

Although the transition from a right-wing to a left-wing administration generally indicates a period of radical change in Latin America, this is not the case in Uruguay. Historically, Uruguay has been one of the most solid and stable democracies in the region. Unlike other countries, the transition from one administration to another with opposing spectrums is not linked to the ideas of the birth of a new country. In fact, Uruguayans have always preferred slow transitions, where policy continuity is independent of who comes to power. Be it left or right, in Uruguay what was started in the previous term of office is not hindered, as evidenced by the legalization of marijuana or the use of renewable energies ([BBC, 2024](#)). Due to the above, it is expected that in the coming years there will be no radical changes in the neighboring country, but that the plans and projects that have been built since the previous term will continue, although surely with different approaches and priorities.

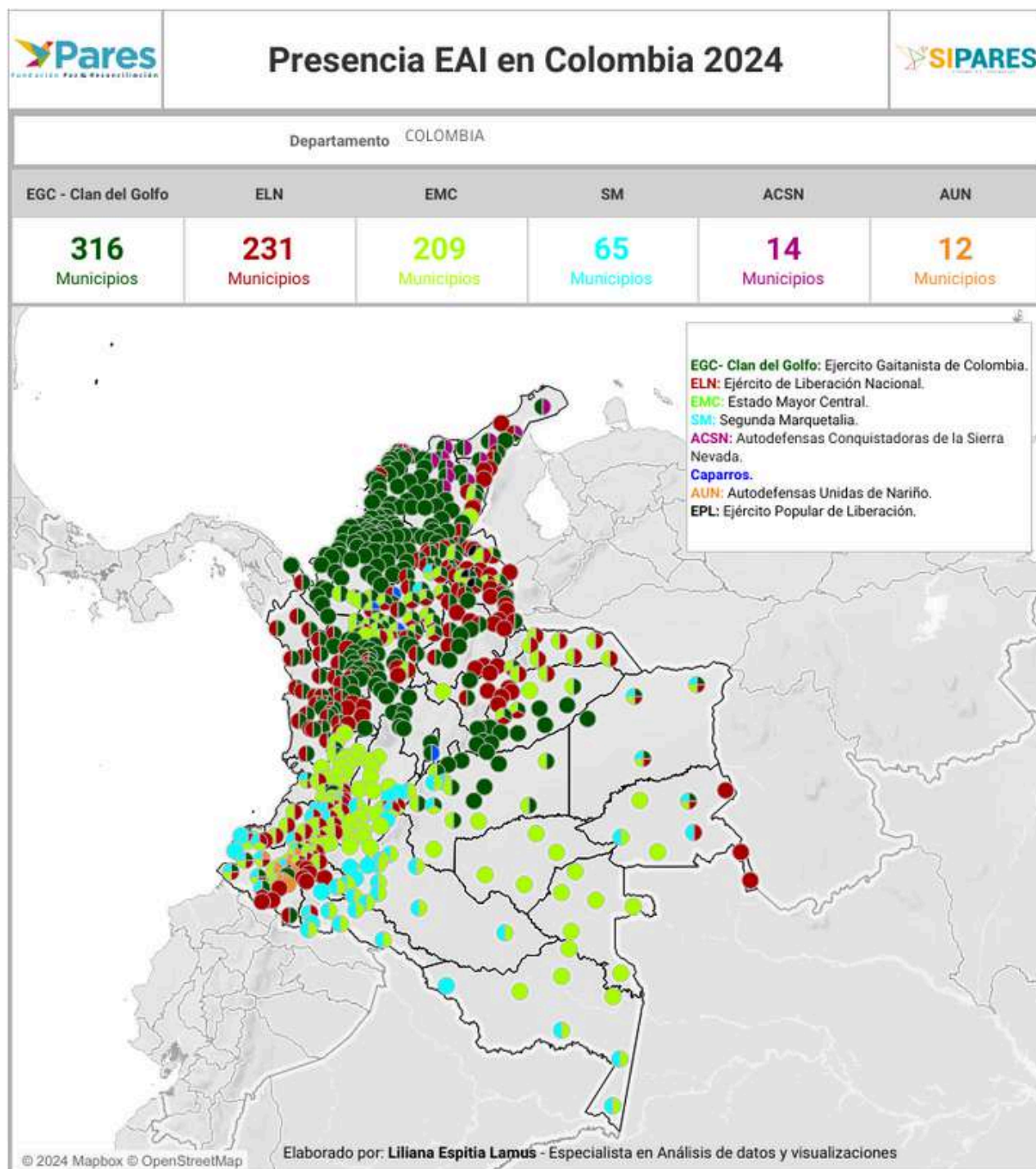


Negotiations and peace building with the GAOs in Colombia: How are attempts at dialogue with the national government and the internal ruptures of the structures related?

Peace has been one of Gustavo Petro's main banners since his presidential candidacy. In this framework, since 2022, the "Total Peace" project has been developed, which seeks to establish dialogue and negotiation tables with criminal structures at different levels nationwide, with the aim of reaching agreements to accept justice and reduce the levels of violence and insecurity in the country. From the very beginning, the broad obstacles and challenges related to the project came to light, among them the possibility that not all the organizations had a real will for peace. Two years after the first measures were implemented, the security panorama in Colombia is extremely complex and structures that are sitting or have been sitting at the tables have been strengthened and consolidated in the territory.

Negotiations between the National Government and the different Organized Armed Groups (GAOs) and Organized Criminal Groups (GDOs) are at different stages.

In the case of the Clan del Golfo, the dialogues have not advanced; both parties are in an exploratory phase, where the organization's peace-building intentions have been questioned. With respect to the ELN, the process has been critical and at this point there is nothing concrete. The dialogues have been strongly affected by the constant violations of the bilateral ceasefire by the GAO in several areas of the country. The panorama with the Estado Mayor Central (EMC) and the Segunda Marquetalia seems to be more favorable. In the case of the EMC, the dialogues have had positive results, the bilateral ceasefire is currently in effect and the government has recognized several members of the group to be part of the ceasefire monitoring mechanism. With the Segunda Marquetalia, the government has not reached a ceasefire, but it has agreed to de-escalate the conflict and continue at the negotiation tables (La Silla Vacía, 2024).



Resource: Pares, 2024.



In this negotiation context, some structures have experienced internal ruptures, to the point that new groups have been created as a result of fragmentation. In the case of the EMC, differences with respect to the negotiation processes with the government led to the split of the organization into two: one led by alias “Iván Mordisco” and the other led by alias “Calarcá”. The latter is the faction currently negotiating with the government. The Second Marquetalia also experienced a process of rupture in 2024, the substructures Coordinadora Guerrillera del Pacífico and the Comandos de Frontera distanced themselves from the rest of the organization and are the ones in the process of political negotiation. The ELN is another of the structures that fragmented this year due to different positions regarding the negotiations with the National Government. During the second semester of 2024, the GAO Comuneros del Sur emerged, a group that was previously part of the ELN but separated from the organization during the talks. Negotiations with the Comuneros del Sur are currently on the right track, while the situation with the ELN remains critical.

The panorama in the country is complex. Rather than mitigating the conflict and insecurity in the country, the multiple dialogue roundtables have ended up strengthening most of the GAOs. In spite of this, at the same time that they are consolidating in the territory, they have also experienced situations of rupture. This is not only due to the context of negotiation with the National Government, but also to the strength and cohesion of the criminal structures; the organizations may be growing faster than their cohesion as a group, which in turn may be due to the horizontal rather than vertical structure of the groups themselves.

Note. The investigative work and analysis contained in this report is exclusive to **3+ Security Colombia**. Therefore, it is recommended not to disclose the document in question. **3+Security Colombia Ltda.**, reserves the right to interpretation that may arise by the reader in the review and visualization of the information presented”.



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