

# Academic Freedom and Autocratization: Perspectives from Mexico

*Nancy Domínguez, María Inclán, Liliana Obregón, Alberto J. Olvera, Sergio Ortiz Leroux & Armando Chaguaceda*

## Nancy Domínguez

**T**hank you all for joining this special panel on academic freedom. We are grateful to the speakers who have taken the time to share their ideas on a topic that is increasingly relevant today, not only in Mexico, but around the world, particularly in this shifting landscape for democracies. This is a subject we will undoubtedly revisit throughout the Congress as we discuss democratic erosion and fatigue, autocratic governments, hybrid political trends, and related issues, all of which are invariably accompanied by threats to academic freedom. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Dr. Armando Chaguaceda for his support in coordinating this event.

Let me quickly walk you through the format. First, each of us will introduce ourselves, where we come from, and our interest in or connection to the topic of academic freedom. We will then give the floor to our moderator, who will pose three questions to guide the discussion.

Allow me to take the liberty of going first. I am Dr. Nancy Domínguez Lizárraga, from the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa. My research focuses on forms of civic participation, as well as illiberal governments and practices within democracies, and it is within this framework that my interest in academic freedom emerges. Attacks on academic freedom represent one of the most significant consequences that arise when democracies begin to unravel. As I mentioned, I come from the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, and my interest in this topic also stems from a personal experience, as our university went through roughly two years of conflict with the State Government, which had a strong interest in effectively taking control of the institution, and everything that came with that had a direct impact on us. So, both my research focus and having witnessed firsthand a conflict between an autonomous public university and a state government have driven my interest in addressing this issue.

This is something we discussed when planning this panel: these may seem like isolated cases in Mexico, but they are not. Why? Because it is not just one institution, but rather multiple public, state-funded, and autonomous universities that

are facing these challenges, and private ones as well. And little by little, especially given the nature of the current government, we will likely see a growing number of threats to academic freedom. With that, I will not go on any further and will hand the floor over to my colleagues.

## María Inclán

I am María Inclán, research professor in the Division of Political Studies at CIDE, the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económica. I studied at The Pennsylvania State University, and my research has always been centered on social movements and regime change processes, both democratization and autocratization. My interest in and connection to the topic of academic freedom today lies in studying autocratizing processes, including attacks on freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and academic freedom, which is itself a form of freedom of expression. Like Nancy, I also have a personal interest in this topic, as I have been a firsthand witness to the attacks on academic freedom that have been taking place at CIDE since 2021.

## Liliana Obregón

I am Liliana Obregón, director of Gobierno y Análisis Político AC (GAPAC), and a professor at the Universidad Politécnica de Cooperación para el Desarrollo in Valencia. I would like to briefly tell you about what we do at GAPAC, a civil society organization with two main areas of work, one focused on strengthening organized civil society and the other on research. Over the past five years, we have had the great opportunity to expand our research work, with our main line of inquiry being the effects that autocracies produce in Latin America. Through ongoing monitoring, we have examined how the “sharp power” of authoritarian regimes is affecting different spheres across the region, including academia.

## Alberto J. Olvera

I am Alberto J. Olvera, a specialist in civil society, social movements, state-society relations, and politics more broadly. My interest in this forum is above all to contextualize what is currently happening in Mexico within certain areas of Mexican

academia and the risks this poses to freedom of expression. Mexico is a country with a long history of authoritarian regimes, and I am old enough to have begun my career in the midst of the PRI's authoritarian rule, knowing that even that regime allowed certain spaces for critical academic work, something that is now becoming increasingly scarce. We therefore need to place what is happening to us today in context in order to truly understand the full significance of what is going on.

### **Sergio Ortiz Leroux**

I am Sergio Ortiz Leroux, holder of a PhD in Political Science from FLACSO Mexico and a research professor at the Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México (UACM), where I am a member of the Research Group in Political Theory and Philosophy. My research focuses on political theory, and in particular on two doctrines that are especially relevant for understanding our time: liberalism and republicanism.

I would like to bring these political traditions into dialogue through the lens of the notion of freedom, because what we will be discussing today is precisely about freedom. A notion of freedom that is linked to freedom of expression, which is what academic freedom is. However, we must examine it critically, because freedom is not only called into question by market forces, but also by the State. That is to say, a free and largely unregulated market can exercise forms of tyranny, and a State without checks and balances and without certain limitations is also, from a republican standpoint, a form of despotism. And it seems to me that in the context of an excessive concentration of power in our country, we can see that freedoms are indeed being put at risk, among them academic freedom. We will touch on this a bit further along, stepping down from theory and looking for concrete examples to think through these issues in a more tangible way.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you all for your introductions. I will now explain how we will proceed. We will have three rounds in which each panelist will have three minutes to answer a question that I will pose to them, and at the end we will leave some time for questions from the audience.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge AMECIP and GAPAC for their courage in bringing this topic to the table. It is much like talking about security in a country like this one, it is a complex issue, and the questions I will be asking are by no means simple either. So, if you are all ready, we can begin this first round with a question for everyone. What elements of the context in which you carry out your work are

affecting academic freedom, in a general sense? We will start with Dr. Olvera.

### **Alberto J. Olvera**

I have the enormous privilege of being retired and therefore not being subject to any political pressure. However, I would like to mention some important contextual factors worth considering. Having had a long career, I am able to evaluate the present moment in light of many other historical circumstances that I have lived through.

I would highlight that during the authoritarian era of the PRI, in a particularly authoritarian state like Veracruz, where I come from, there was a kind of permission or niche where people on the left could act, think, and speak freely. At my university, the Faculty of Humanities, where the social science programs were concentrated, was a sort of free territory where people could say and do as they pleased, as long as it stayed within those walls. The unspoken condition was "*talk among yourselves in there*". This arrangement existed in many universities, even those openly led by partisan left-wing movements, as was the case in Sinaloa, Puebla, Michoacán, and Zacatecas.

There were certain free fiefdoms and others that were tightly controlled. For example, within a university as large as UNAM, you could find all kinds of arrangements. Other systems of control existed as well, such as at the Universidad de Guadalajara, the second largest university in the country, which went from being an ultra-PRI institution aligned with Díaz Ordaz in 1968, to becoming, by the late seventies, an officially left-wing university, even though its internal political practices have remained deeply authoritarian.

There has been and continues to be a wide variety of strategies and forms of coexistence between national and subnational authoritarian regimes and public universities. Within that context, limited spaces for freedom of expression existed under authoritarianism, and these gradually expanded throughout the democratization process. First came liberalization, as it is technically known in political science, which took place from the late eighties through the year 2000, during which critical voices grew increasingly prominent, and then came the transition itself, when the channels for debate widened both inside and outside universities.

It is necessary to have this historical perspective in order to understand what is happening to us now, which is a paradoxical situation. Many of us who were critical of authoritarianism, who lived within the tolerated niches or even held positions of authority in some public universities, went on during the transition to take on certain responsibilities, whether in government or in university administration. But,

self-critically, it must be acknowledged that the exercise of power within universities reproduced the very same inherited practices that were supposedly being challenged in the past. We have seen particular examples of this, such as corporatist union control over faculty in Sinaloa, corporatist control over students and academics at the Universidad de Guadalajara, and corporatist control over academics at the Universidad Veracruzana, practices that, even when dressed in left-wing rhetoric, are twin siblings of those of the authoritarian regime. I would like us to keep these facts in mind, as we tend to think that the present moment is unique, but it is not. There is much to learn from past experiences.

### **Sergio Ortiz Leroux**

Well, without dwelling too long on history, I do think we have grounds for concern. I am not sure we can categorically affirm that we are already in a more or less consolidated authoritarian regime, but I do see clear signs of a transition toward authoritarianism, and I would like, in any case, to draw on a work that was a classic in characterizing the Mexican political regime, which is precisely Daniel Cosío Villegas's work *"El sistema político mexicano"* (Mexico, Joaquín Mortiz, 1973). When Cosío Villegas characterized our political regime, he did so through two central elements: unlimited presidentialism, a presidentialist system, not merely a presidential one, which Jorge Carpizo later analyzed in light of the constitutional and metaconstitutional powers of the president, and the official party, which Giovanni Sartori described with the concept of the *"hegemonic party"*, distinct from both the single party and the dominant party. Those were the two axes of that system.

It seems to me that in many respects we find sufficient evidence to argue that, in a different context and time, those two elements are being reassembled and strengthened today. The Presidency has grown stronger at the expense of the other two branches of government, the Legislative and the Judicial. And all indications suggest that with the upcoming electoral reform we will have a party system very similar to a hegemonic or dominant type. And this, in terms of the political science literature, points to an autocratic or authoritarian system.

In this context of autocratization, I think we need to reflect on the problem of academic freedom and the freedom of universities. Because a democratic society, forgive me for leaning on theory again, is structured, according to the French philosopher Claude Lefort, around the distinction between the spheres of power, knowledge, and law. When power colonizes law and colonizes knowledge, we are faced with a process of concentration of power that can take on different names: authoritarianism, dictatorship, totalitarianism, and so on. And I believe that within our universities we must be very alert to

this concentration of power.

Now, this phenomenon plays out differently depending on the context, because in the case of universities in the federal states, at the subnational level, where democratic transition processes never took place, universities were and in many ways continue to be transmission belts for state governors. And it seems that this historical pattern, common to many state universities even those with formal autonomy, is repeating itself today, but no longer under the old PRI, but under MORENA. And in national universities, which function like small microsystems with their own rules, Alberto Olvera describes them as fiefdoms and aristocracies with their own internal logic and a degree of relative autonomy, this phenomenon manifests itself differently. I will leave it there for now and expand on this in my next interventions.

### **Liliana Obregón**

What have we identified at GAPAC? That the third wave of autocratization currently underway on a global scale has also brought with it a restriction of civic space and free, pluralistic social science research. We have seen this through the narrowing of academic spaces and topics, as well as through indoctrination and propaganda aimed at shaping how certain regimes are perceived.

Furthermore, in Mexico there are particular impacts on civil associations engaged in social research. In the new tax reform package published this year, 2025, authorized donor organizations are being required to obtain certificates of activity issued by various government bodies. This could be a DIF, or any entity connected to the federal or state government where the organization holds its tax domicile. Previously, for example, the National Registry of Scientific and Technological Institutions and Companies could issue this certification. This may be limiting and filtering the recognition and development of the work of various organizations. I could say that since 2018 this restrictive trend began to take shape, but now it is directly tied to a fiscal matter. As a result, human and financial resources, as well as time, must be devoted to issues that fall outside the core mission of the civil association, whether it focuses on research, advocacy, or social assistance. A tax burden that goes beyond the obligations and the very nature of civil society organizations themselves.

There is another issue that we have also identified through our monitoring, which is the forms of autocratic cooperation. Established autocratic regimes suddenly become quite creative and begin cooperating with their illiberal allies within democracies, essentially sharing a playbook along the lines of *"do it this way, this is what works"*, and this ends up having an impact on academia, public opinion, and society at large.

What I want to put forward is that, while academic freedom may develop within research centers and academic institutions, there is another arm, no less important, which is organized civil society dedicated to research, which also develops, produces, investigates, and disseminates knowledge. And it would seem that we are disconnected from one another.

### **María Inclán**

For me, the polarizing presidential rhetoric that we all witnessed during the previous administration, delivered through the morning press conferences, had a direct impact on academic freedom and freedom of teaching. So too did the legal and criminal attacks against members of the academic community. It is important to understand that these attacks, which may have been directed at a particular institution or a specific group of colleagues, had and continue to have broader effects on all academic institutions and on those of us who are dedicated to academic work and wish to continue doing so freely. Political and ideological polarization not only limits academic collaboration, but an attack on some, though it may sound like a cliché, is a potential attack on all. Justifying these attacks through polarizing frameworks or framing them as isolated cases contributes to the overall deterioration of academic freedom and freedom of expression for everyone.

### **Nancy Domínguez**

Regarding the question of what elements or contexts are at play, first of all, academic freedom and the autonomy of many of our universities have been formally recognized since Article Three of the Constitution. However, that autonomy and freedom have come into question as a result of certain characteristics of Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government and now of the current administration, through the modification or creation of the General Law on Higher Education, which subsequently seeks to be replicated at the state level. That is where the first problem we face in Sinaloa arises, as this law is being used to seek greater control over the university. And here, rather than focusing in this round on the specific case of Sinaloa, I would like to address in broader terms why governments might have an interest in autonomous universities or in universities in general.

First, let us remember that universities are home to what some have called "*the thinking class*". Let us also remember that universities are where researchers conduct work from a critical perspective, producing studies that a government may consider "*offensive*". That may be the first point of interest that governments have in universities in general.

This is not something new, unique, or exclusive to Morena. At the time, PRI governors also attempted to undermine the

autonomy and freedom of our university. But up to a certain point there were unwritten codes, and as Dr. Olvera points out, the PRI understood that dealing with universities was not easy, that entering into conflict with them was not straightforward. And, to a certain degree, it allowed universities a level of operational freedom to function on their own terms. Those unwritten codes began to break down starting in 2018. That is the broader context I wanted to lay out.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you very much, Doctor. We will do a recap of the comments that have been raised at the end. I will now move on to the second question for the panelists: what specific events can you point to that are affecting academic freedom? Here we are asking about more concrete facts. In this case we will start with Dr. Inclán.

### **María Inclán**

I will refer to the intervention of the federal government because, as CIDE is a public research center, the sector authority that oversees us is SEHCITI, a federal government body. In addition, during the previous administration we all witnessed the government's use of criminal proceedings against 31 members of the academic community. We also witnessed violations of the legality and internal institutional framework of public research centers on the part of CONACYT, now renamed CONAHCYT, through its interference in the appointment of new authorities, who in turn have centralized decision-making and discretionally implemented operating rules, performance evaluations, the functioning of academic councils, internal committees, and the review panels of each public research center. Broadly speaking, those would be the concrete actions that have been affecting public research centers specifically.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you very much. Ms. Liliana, please go ahead.

### **Liliana Obregón**

Thank you. I would like to present the case of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences, CLACSO, the largest institutionalized network of social science research centers in Latin America. Since 2021, when we began monitoring authoritarian propaganda in the region, we identified biases in academic programs, a tendency toward defending authoritarian left-wing regimes, a frontal attack on any right-wing government, including those of democratic origin and practice, that were present in Latin America, and very concretely, CLACSO's official expressions of support for the Cuban

regime following the repression of the massive protests in Cuba in July 2021.

So there is clearly a bias in these topics, publications, and so on. On a personal note, within that environment, I said to myself “*let us get to know them a little better*”, so I enrolled in a Latin American studies diploma program, reviewed the bibliography that was being distributed, and was asked to write an essay on a social topic we were studying. I then took on the issue of civic space restrictions for Mexican civil society organizations during the period from 2018 up to that point, drawing a comparison with the previous administration. I addressed the loss of funding programs for civil organizations, restrictions related to auditing or over-auditing in terms of the SAT or fiscal matters, and so on. Well, when I received my grade, it was clearly a case of censorship of what I had written. There was no explanation, no rubric, nothing that clarified why that grade was being given. I was simply told that I “*had not been impartial*”.

So I will leave it at that, and of course it does not carry the same weight as what Dr. Inclán describes in the case of CIDE, but it is a situation that is being reproduced time and again within a body of studies, and CLACSO ends up replicating this across many settings, that is, shaping the formation of many students throughout Latin America. That is my experience on this matter.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you for sharing, Ms. Liliana. We now turn to Dr. Sergio Ortiz.

### **Sergio Ortiz Leroux**

I see this space as a melting pot of reflections on how academic freedom is being affected, where it is clear that Public Research Centers stand out prominently, as the cases of CIDE and the Instituto Mora illustrate the scale of the problem in terms of budget cuts and harassment of academics. El Colegio de la Frontera Norte has also faced a number of problems that affect public research centers as well.

Although I am not an expert on the matter, and many of you certainly have more up to date information, it seems to me that in state universities a relationship dynamic that persisted for several decades under the authoritarian PRI regime is being reproduced in many ways. Let us recall that the stability of public state universities depended on their close relationship with the governor. It was even common for public officials with no academic background whatsoever to teach at these universities.

And it seems to me that this phenomenon is now being

reproduced in many ways with MORENA governors, as loyalty lies with the governor in office at any given time. Within universities, there is no longer a willingness to “*speak ill*” of the government, many academics stay silent out of fear, and others join in the applause out of sheer opportunism. But I believe that this transmission belt dynamic, beyond formal autonomy, continues to persist in many state higher education institutions. At the federal level things shift somewhat, and I think that when we talk about UNAM we are actually talking about many UNAMs, because the research system is one thing, the schools and faculties are another, and the preparatory schools are yet another.

But there are some signals that should surprise or concern us, and I will bring up one of them. I have belonged to UNAM for more than 35 years, first as a student and later as a part-time professor, and during this time I cannot recall having read a public disclaimer like the one issued by UNAM’s Office of Social Communication distancing itself from a Technical Study carried out by the Institute of Legal Research in June 2024 on the Judicial Reform, which warned of the dangers of that reform in light of the concentration of power in the Executive branch.

The UNAM Rector’s Office stated, among other things, that it did not take responsibility for that study and therefore that it did not represent the official position of the institution. It is worth remembering that in any university there are research outputs of different natures and ideological orientations, and it is not the task of university authorities to claim or disavow those research outputs, which are an indispensable part of academic life and of the plurality of any university community. A statement of that nature should therefore, at the very least, give us cause for concern.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you. Dr. Olvera, the same question, three minutes.

### **Alberto J. Olvera**

What we are experiencing today in several universities is the government’s use of classic control mechanisms applied with a political criterion.

One is the management of public funding. Universities are in crisis, with budgets being effectively cut, not to Sergio’s UACM, it should be noted, but to the others. This is not clear or transparent, and university authorities themselves conceal it, but the budget has been reduced for almost all public universities.

There is also a growing internal polarization within several universities, which mirrors the polarization outside, in society

and in the public sphere. And that polarization leads many traditionally critical researchers to self-censor. For example, at the Universidad Veracruzana there was only one event held to discuss the judicial election, and there were no others throughout all of 2025. Why? Because it was considered “*risky*” to discuss a controversial election. None of the academics in the law area dared to say anything, nor did the sociologists or political scientists. Perhaps no one had explicitly forbidden them from doing so, but this is what we might call “*preventive self-censorship*”, which speaks volumes about the lack of civic courage among my colleagues. It must be said frankly.

There are sometimes, in extreme cases, instances of direct censorship. For example, the cancellation of a program on university television and radio that served as a relatively open and pluralistic forum. At the Universidad de Guadalajara and the Universidad Veracruzana there have been cases of this kind, at the very least. This corresponds to a scenario in which polarization largely determines the prevailing atmosphere, one that is very unfavorable to public debate and especially to criticism. I, who was born and lived through the PRI era, feel as though I have returned to the worst of those practices.

Self-censorship, restrictions, and control through budget management, that is what happened in that era, within a far more authoritarian political context, but that atmosphere is back in the current university system. To get out of that situation, it is necessary to step forward, to protest, and to call things as they are. There are cases where that is already happening, and I hope that in my final intervention I will have time to give an example.

### **Alejandra Salado**

My apologies for cutting you off now on time, Dr. Olvera. Dr. Nancy, please go ahead.

### **Nancy Domínguez**

I am not sure how I can recount in three minutes how we have experienced these attacks on academic freedom. First, in general terms, through the budget strangulation that universities across the country are facing, and through the stigmatization of research activity. Ever since the previous government labeled us as “*fifis*”, conservatives, and neoliberals doing that kind of science, a clear stigmatization became evident.

And so I return to the case of Sinaloa. What did we experience? Well, on March 1st, 2023, the approval of a State Law on Higher Education that was deeply violating of university autonomy. Article 3 of that law, Article 51, and Article 59, three articles that were in violation. First, Article 3

stated that it would be the State Congress that would carry out consultations in order to reform the organic laws, specifically the university’s organic law, and that this consultation would be organized and conducted by the State Congress. But they also included a very telling phrase: a non-binding consultation. Meaning, they would consult the university community, but ultimately what they said would matter very little and in the end things would go ahead as decided anyway. That is Article 3. In Article 51, budgetary control.

What did it say? As you know, public universities operate in a certain way. The federal government sends money to the state, and the federalized funds pass through the State Secretary of Public Education. So they would be the ones distributing the resources to the university. In other words, an additional filter and a greater level of budgetary control was being introduced, on top of the cuts that were already in place. And the third, through Article 59, stated that it would be the Secretary of Public Education and Culture that would approve our study plans and programs. In other words, university autonomy was being blatantly disregarded, and with these three articles, university autonomy was effectively being dismantled.

In response, the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa filed for injunctions and won them at the federal level. And at the moment when the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa said “*we do not accept this law*” and the injunctions were won, a full-blown political persecution began through the State Superior Audit and the criminalization of a series of cases for abuse of authority.

Why was it abuse of authority? Because the university did not allow the State Superior Audit to audit the university’s own revenues, which the Federal Law on Higher Education itself states cannot be audited. A series of legal proceedings then began, leading to a conflict that lasted 18 months. And that is more or less where I will leave the context for now.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you, Doctor. And now we move on to the final round. We will begin this time with Ms. Liliana Obregón. The question I would pose to everyone is: what impacts or reactions has this context generated within the university community? That would be the question. Please go ahead.

### **Liliana Obregón**

Thank you. It seems to me that unfortunately, up to this point there have been various attacks and we have been fragmented in our response, in the sense that they attack CIDE, but then CIDE defends itself alone, then they attack UNAM

on other issues and UNAM half-responds on its own...

So there is no coordinated response. I think that spaces for discussion like this one are important for making the situation more visible and for building, in response to it, a common front between academia and organized civil society. I believe that is a key issue for achieving the desired impact of civic resistance, because up to now I think the response has been fragmented.

It is therefore important to build academic networks. I also think it is important to be self-critical. It seems that sometimes, when censorship occurs, if we do not agree with the ideological perspective being censored, we tend to minimize it or even celebrate it. I think we also need to be self-critical and evaluate the act for what it is, regardless of the ideological spectrum involved, in a spirit of plural solidarity within democracy, which is ultimately one of the core values that academia imparts. And also, when faced with situations of censorship and the stifling of academia, we have a responsibility to make them visible.

This ranges from frontal attacks on institutions to obstacles placed in the way of sensitive research topics in students' theses. We have encountered students whose degree project proposals were not approved because some authority did not like the topic. It had nothing to do with methodology, nothing to do with the quality of the research, but simply the topic itself was considered uncomfortable and therefore could not be researched. That is also important to acknowledge, and it represents a contradiction when it comes to achieving academic freedom.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Yes, it is very important to be able to choose our own lines of research without fear. Well, let us move on then, if you agree, to Dr. Olvera. What impacts or reactions has this context generated within the university community?

### **Alberto J. Olvera**

The political polarization that the country is experiencing generates very negative effects within universities. Trust is lost, even friendships among colleagues, and a confrontational and difficult atmosphere is created, which mirrors what society is experiencing outside, but concentrated within the small settings of university life. This is a serious loss, as the mutual trust that existed for many years, and that allowed for more fluid debate, is no longer there. Today, currents of opinion form that create groups based on political preferences rather than scientific or academic interests. This type of politicization of university life is especially harmful because it leads to the

fragmentation and politicization of academic life.

For universities to defend their freedoms of research and public engagement, they must reclaim a principle that has been completely forgotten during the transition to democracy: the social responsibility of universities. In almost all public universities, academics were very comfortable with our autonomy, watching events unfold from a safe distance. Universities have lost much of their critical capacity and their ability to intervene in public life. We have become irrelevant to Mexican society. There were moments when universities played a far more prominent role, for example during the democratic transition process. This atmosphere of polarization and internal division has led universities to become even more isolated from the society in which they are embedded.

Public universities are autonomous, but we are autonomous even from society itself, because we have no real connection with it. To defend freedom of expression we must also defend the freedom of expression of journalists, who are under terrible pressure in this country right now. We must defend the freedom of expression and demonstration of social leaders whose civic space has been dramatically reduced. Today, for example, the argument of gender-based violence is being used to attack specific journalists who simply point out how the daughter of a politician or local strongman uses that inheritance to take over public positions. Now it turns out that if you say that a certain person is the daughter of a political boss, it becomes a case of political gender-based violence. We have many such cases in 2025, ranging from well-known journalists like Héctor de Mauleón to lesser-known ones like Radio Teocelo in Veracruz. In short, to defend academic freedom, we must defend all freedoms. And I believe that, in that sense, the public university must reclaim a far more prominent role in Mexican public life.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you, Doctor. We now turn to Dr. María Inclán.

### **María Inclán**

Well, of course the community has responded. We saw mobilizations of students and faculty at CIDE and at the Universidad de Guadalajara. UNAM also reacted when attempts were made to undermine the university's autonomy. In addition, networks and civil organizations have been created such as PROCENCIA, FIMPES, REDNACECYT, Ciencia y Sociedad at the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, and others. And finally, at this moment we have a window of opportunity to make an impact, as we find ourselves in a legal limbo.

Let me explain. The attacks on the internal life of public research centers took place within the framework of the approval of the General Law on Humanities, Science, Technology and Innovation, which was passed on that Black Friday of 2023. However, now that we have a new agency called the Secretary of Science, Humanities, Technology and Innovation (SECIHTI), it requires a new organic law. Since the General Law on Humanities, Science, Technology and Innovation was approved to govern the now defunct CONAHCYT, a new general law is needed to regulate the new SECIHTI. The legislative approval process must be restarted, and this opens up an opportunity to put forward a new legislative initiative that corrects the flaws of the previous law, among them the failures in protecting academic freedom. It is worth noting that these flaws and risks were flagged in the open parliament forums that took place before being suspended to make way for the approval of the general law on that Black Friday of 2023.

In my participation in the open parliament forums I made three observations: first, regarding the violations against academic freedom contained in the legislative initiative; second, regarding the violations against the labor rights of staff; and third, I specified that by aligning the regulations of public research centers with the mandates of CONAHCYT, academic freedom was being undermined. Why? Because aligning all the objectives, programs, and internal regulations of public research centers, as well as their funding, with the National Strategic Programs (PRONACES), runs counter to the free exercise of teaching and research by faculty, researchers, and students. Today we have the opportunity to draft a new law. The opportunity lies primarily with the Executive branch and the Secretary itself, but the academic community can and must have a say in its development. Academic freedom must be fully and unreservedly upheld, as a form of freedom of expression it falls within the scope of human rights, and the General Law on Humanities, Science, Technology and Innovation must therefore be brought into alignment with Article 3 of the Constitution.

Another window of opportunity in that same regard opened last Friday, August 1st, 2025, with the decision of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation to lift the postponement in the issuance of the resolution of the injunctions under review by the Collegiate Circuit Courts, in which the constitutional question regarding the Decree by which the General Law on Humanities, Science, Technology and Innovation was issued remains unresolved. This opens the possibility for the courts to address the demands of colleagues and students from private institutions to have access to scholarships, research funding, and membership in the National System of Researchers without discrimination.

Collectively and individually, attention is being drawn to the need to address the protection of academic freedom in the modifications to the law, but ultimately, the opportunity here lies with the executive authorities and our legislative representatives, for them to take responsibility for reforming the law so that SECIHTI has a functional organic law that protects the human rights of all members of the sector and of the citizenry. Thank you.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you, Doctor. We now turn to Dr. Sergio.

### **Sergio Ortiz Leroux**

Well, as promised, I will now speak about the Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México. First, we need to dispel a stigma. We have been labeled as the “*University of El Peje*”. Dr. Daniel Tacher is here, a professor at UACM, and he can correct me if I am wrong. We are not the university of any particular politician, that is to say, we are an autonomous and plural institution. If there is a perception in certain circles of public opinion that we are a transmission belt for Lopezobradourism, that is simply not true. Within UACM there coexists a diversity and plurality of ideas, perspectives, and groups of different backgrounds. There is no clearly hegemonic Lopezobradorist tendency or group within UACM, at least not that I can see among the faculty. I have discussed this on several occasions with my colleague Armando Chaguaceda.

Now, it is true that the Mexico City Government has not cut our budget, but if we factor in inflation it has decreased significantly. And there is another relevant piece of data. The original project for UACM sought to grow, to create new campuses, and the university has not grown, it has stagnated. And what has grown? What has grown is the other university project of the Mexico City Government: the Rosario Castellanos Universities, which represent, among other things, the precariousness of the public university, because we are the last public university created in Mexico City in the proper sense, that is, with full-time professors, collective bargaining agreements, fixed salaries, benefits, a union, and so on. At the Rosario Castellanos there is none of that. It is simply a model of labor precariousness that has now been generalized at the national level, a model that is economically very profitable.

However, I feel that UACM finds itself in a kind of limbo, and here we must also be self-critical. We have not been openly censored up to now, but there is, nonetheless, a sort of self-censorship. There is a great deal of apathy and silence among many professors, a comfortable silence, a complicit silence of not speaking publicly about the country’s political

problems in terms of the autocratization we are experiencing. There is something of an unspoken understanding of do not stir the hornet's nest, because doing so could have consequences for the university. That is my perception of UACM.

### Alejandra Salado

Thank you very much, Doctor. Dr. Nancy, please go ahead.

### Nancy Domínguez

What have we experienced? Marches and strikes. I think the strike was what generated the greatest awareness at the national level. Because talking about a strike of 180,000 university students and staff in the middle of a total violence conflict in the state of Sinaloa with a paralyzed economy, was what made the federal government take notice. In other words, the federal government said *"well, we cannot have a public university of that size at a standstill"*. And it was with the intervention of the federal government, through a process of obligation directed not only at the university but also at the State Government, essentially saying *"you are going to sit down and negotiate"*. It was such a deeply political issue that it essentially came down to *"you accept the reform to the Organic Law in exchange for all legal proceedings being dropped"*. And that is how the conflict at the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa was resolved.

It came down to accepting an Organic Law, an Organic Law that restored universal suffrage and the unitary vote of all university members, in exchange for the dropping of all investigative proceedings that had been opened against university authorities. So what lesson does this leave us with? Right now the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa enjoys a degree of peace, or a healthy peace, where there is, we might say, an excellent relationship with the Governor of the state of Sinaloa.

What is the fear? That a playbook is now known, and that at any moment new investigative proceedings could be reopened or new ones initiated. And I believe that is the warning signal for autonomous universities across the country, and for universities in general, that when you have control of the Legislative and Judicial branches, you can practically do whatever you want with public, autonomous, and academic institutions.

Why? Because they have control over changing the laws as they see fit. And since there is no longer, or will no longer be, a defense or a way to find support in a judiciary that also has an autonomous tendency, but rather one that has also become politicized, and that at the end of the day will answer to someone, will answer to a political interest, that

places universities in an even greater position of vulnerability. And I want to pick up on something Sergio mentioned just now, about things being done properly. Well, now, with the reforms to the branches of power and the electoral reform that is coming with this commission that was just announced, universities had better brace themselves. Because for the moment, the party in power has not gone after universities full force, not because it has not wanted to, but because it has not been able to. But if electoral control is now going to be established, then universities will be seen as just another entity that can easily be brought under control. And I will close with this: what is that self-censorship that was mentioned a moment ago?

When the Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, besieged by that political persecution, reached out to fellow universities for support, many, many of them said *"personally I support you, but the problem is that my governor will not allow me to get involved and has me tied down financially"*. So the budgetary dependence that we face, the financial crises that most universities in the country are experiencing, combined with the little or nonexistent separation of powers that we will have in the coming years, places us in an extremely difficult context when it comes to academic freedom. And this would be, I believe, a first warning sign for Mexico, because the worst period, in my view, is yet to come in the years ahead.

### Alejandra Salado

Excellent. Many important topics have been raised here. We asked our panelists to speak about concrete facts, and that is exactly what they have done. I would now like to open the floor for the audience to ask questions, whether directed at a specific panelist or to the group as a whole.

We will start here by taking note, we will begin with the doctor, and someone over there will help with the microphone.

### Public 1

Thank you. Hello, good afternoon everyone, and thank you very much for your presentations. I feel very optimistic, you have left me with a deep sense of calm. My appreciation goes to those who organized this panel, to Dr. Armando Chaguaceda and Dr. Nancy Domínguez, congratulations: I believe this is a very important topic that needed to be discussed.

I would like to pose a question to the entire panel. I believe it is a fact that there are setbacks in academic freedom as part of a broader rollback of democratic freedoms and rights in the country. Budget cuts, the very law governing scientific policy is an authoritarian law that concentrates authority, confuses jurisdictions, and so on, that is already an institutionalized pro-

blem. There is also the issue of persecution, self-censorship, threats, and the conditioning of how universities function, among other things.

But I would like to ask you to reflect on a topic that seems fundamental to me, and I would like to know if you share this view. It seems to me that the drastic shift that marks the difference with respect to PRI authoritarianism, in this case, is what we might call an anti-scientific conception of science, the humanities, and technology in the country. From the very moment the previous administration took office, all government policy, practice, and so forth was framed within a conception in which the basic criteria of factual truth, veracity, demonstration, evidence, reasoning, experimentation, and infrastructure necessary to generate scientific knowledge were erased in exchange for an ideologized vision of what they called southern epistemologies, ancestral knowledge, and all of that, as a form of relativization that in my view ultimately served to accommodate whatever narrative was needed for the exercise of centralized authority within CONACYT at the time. But at the ideological level I believe it represents a very significant rupture. The current government has toned down that rhetoric, but it remains the framework that structures all scientific policy.

## Public 2

Hello, good afternoon. First of all, it is a pleasure, and congratulations on the panel. My first question is, for you as professors or experts in this area or those who have faced this situation, what institutional strategies have you seen to be effective in safeguarding academic freedom from external ideological pressures, whether from a political actor, a movement, or an association? And the other question, which I think may be very important, is what role are we playing as students in these situations to defend academic freedom in a way that does not become a risk for us as students? I believe those would be my two questions. Thank you very much.

## Public 3

Thank you, and thank you as well for the courage it takes to maintain these spaces at a time when spaces are closing. I join in the denunciation of the use of fiscal policy to restrict the capacity of civil society, not only through increasingly strict rules, but also through questionable practices such as the unilateral and unannounced cancellation of tax seals, and so on. My first of two questions is related to that.

It seems to me that we are living through a kind of epistemic populism that is narratively competing with the usefulness of objective knowledge in favor of a subjective knowledge that depends on power, according to what is convenient or not at

any given moment. This is interesting because we also see it on the northern border with Trump, and I understand that López Obrador had very little engagement with science. But my question is whether this administration, also notable for being led by a woman with a scientific background, will we see a shift away from the epistemic populism that Obrador had already mapped out so clearly? And the second question is, what happened to the traditional meeting spaces such as the Academia Mexicana de la Ciencia and the Colegio Nacional? How is it that they were sidelined even in the first month of the administration? What happened there?

## Public 4

I was actually heading in a different direction, but I heard UAS mentioned and came over, because I am from the Universidad Autónoma de Occidente de Sinaloa. And there is something very interesting here. What I have come to tell you is very different from what the presenter has been saying. She speaks of external threats. I have come to share an experience we had here at this panel. I participated in the movement. For the first time in its history, we took over the Universidad de Occidente, in all its 60 years of existence. There had never been a dissent, we did it, right?

And I bring with me a very important experience. Formal university autonomy, stemming from the 1918 Córdoba movement, that issue is already settled. The external threats we already know about and cannot prevent due to economic dependence, both in the ordinary subsidy and in the extraordinary funds we are made to compete for through performance evaluations and competitive funding pools. My question is, what are we going to do about the internal threats? Autonomy must work both outward and inward.

Well, who protects university autonomy from internal threats, from interest and power groups that entrench themselves within the university? Because once they get in, they do not want to leave. And right now, what is happening at UAdeO, well, there it is. The rector who left, Sylvia Paz, a scientist, but democracy was not her thing at all, she was afraid of that, that did not work here, right? Let us work on this side instead, right? Do not talk to me about internal democracy, or elections, or any of that. I am going to decide, trust me, I know who will move the Universidad Autónoma de Occidente forward, trust me, right? And I will tell you who comes next. That is the practice. And they compare themselves to UNAM, UNAM has nothing to do with this, I studied there. I studied and worked there, I was a full-time associate professor until I moved to Sinaloa. UNAM is something else entirely, it does have autonomy. And so does UAM. The rest, forget it. So yes, I agree, we need to protect ourselves from external threats, but what do we do about the internal interest groups? Speak out

against them and you get repressed, you get fired.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you very much. Would anyone like to start? We will go with Dr. Inclán to respond. All of the questions were quite broad, so please go ahead.

### **María Inclán**

I will be very concise to give my colleagues an opportunity to respond. Indeed, populist discourse is inherently damaging to academic freedom. In a study we recently conducted, my colleague Víctor Hernández Huerta and I demonstrated that populist discourse has inherent effects on academic freedom. Why do we say this? Because the discourse is accompanied by three types of attacks: political attacks, budgetary attacks, and discursive attacks. And we did not study this only in the Mexican case. We conducted a global-level study. This study will be published in *Perspectives on Politics*, hopefully soon.

Finally, regarding what we can do to protect academic freedom: I believe this lies in strengthening institutional frameworks, specifically in strengthening the managerial and budgetary autonomy of autonomous universities, but also of public research centers.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Ms. Liliana, please go ahead.

### **Liliana Obregón**

First, to the students who are here: many congratulations. It is very encouraging to know that you are engaging with these issues. And to give a response, I was saying that perhaps we need to analyze things more critically, setting aside political spectrums to some extent. Just last Saturday I had lunch with someone and they were telling me that Bukele is good and Maduro is bad. And I said “*well, for me they are the same*”. And we started, let us talk objectively about why you consider Bukele to be good and why Maduro is bad when in my view they are both autocrats. And these kinds of exercises, which may seem simple, gradually help us move forward. Setting aside the left or right spectrum is important when we are talking about academic freedom, because otherwise it becomes acceptable for the right to censor but not the left, or vice versa. This is something that needs to be worked on even in the classroom. That is the first point.

And that counters this populist discourse that we are seeing across Latin America, coming from both the left and the right, but both of which contribute to the erosion of academic

freedom, which is the effect we have been witnessing across much of the American continent under this wave of autocracy. So that would be one approach that I think would be valuable, and also making these situations visible, I repeat, from the classroom, from research projects, from the readings that you can request from your professors. So I will leave it there and address that directly to the students. Many congratulations.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Would anyone else like to respond before we open another round of questions? Please go ahead.

### **Nancy Dominguez**

In terms of institutional strategies, we must form a united front. Universities, whether public, private, or autonomous, must come together with the primary goal of pushing back against budget cuts. As universities we must also seek, to some extent, our own sources of revenue, and while our dependence on subsidies and federal funding will continue to exist, we must find ways to address the lack of real increases that have in no way kept pace with inflation in recent years. This is not an issue that started with MORENA governments, it goes back further. We therefore clearly need to seek out other sources of income. That is beyond question. Now, what is another issue that also affects academic freedom

This leads us to major challenges in addressing this problem. Even what our colleague from Sinaloa was saying, how do we confront power groups? Power groups exist in every university. In every university there are power groups, and that is not something we can change or modify overnight. No, here we are talking about a more fundamental issue, which is academic freedom. Having the capacity to express opinions and conduct research as we have done even under PRI governments. And today, I do not know if this happens to my colleagues at this panel, but there comes a point when as an academic you begin to self-censor, out of fear of the reprisals you might face for expressing your opinion on a topic. For instance, corruption was once a wide-open area of study. Even here at the AMECIP Congress, from the very first Congress, when we discussed topics of accountability, corruption studies, and so on, those were among the most active panels, with many papers presented on the subject. Today there are none. Why? Because corruption has disappeared? No, that is not it. It is simply that there may be a fear surrounding the study of these topics.

Why? Because there is no longer funding for it, and because conducting a study on the level of corruption in the country costs money. And the government is not going to fund you to come and tell them they are corrupt. But it is a problem

that genuinely exists and that we must address. It needs to be understood that there must also be a critical stance and not everything that is said about universities should be taken at face value. Because there is also the issue of the stigmatization that exists around us and our actual work. Look, corruption exists in Mexico and it is not going to disappear in the coming years. But that does not justify using the existence of corruption as a reason to dismantle all the other institutions that entail or uphold the degrees of freedom that we have today. Professor Azul Aguiar said as much a moment ago in the presentation of her book. When one criticizes the Judicial Reform it is not because you are defending the Judiciary as it was before, but simply because this Judicial Reform is not the answer to the problems that existed in that area in Mexico. On the contrary, it leads to greater political control. So I think that is where the issue lies: if we are going to criticize the work of universities and research centers, of course you will find things to fault. But that is not the urgent point of discussion right now. The urgent matter is how the academic work of university students and faculty is being undermined through something as fundamental as academic freedom.

### **Sergio Ortiz Leroux**

I would like to comment on a topic that was placed at the center of the discussion and which I find extremely important. What was called the “*anti-scientific conception*” is very closely related to epistemic populism. I recall that the former director of the now defunct CONACYT, Dr. María Elena Álvarez Buyla, coined a phrase that was not only misguided but also false. She spoke of “*neoliberal science*”. You can discuss and question public policy directed at education or science and identify a neoliberal, social democratic, paternalistic, or populist stamp on it. But talking about “*neoliberal science*” is an absurdity or an overreach, because that does not exist. For science to be science it is validated through a set of rules and procedures that have been standardized by academic communities.

It seems to me that these excessive discourses and language have become normalized in a national and international context that is openly anti-scientific, anti-intellectual, and at its core anti-Enlightenment. That entire idea of indigenous knowledge, the equation of any form of human experience with a body of knowledge created by academic and scientific communities, is part of that atmosphere common to both left-wing and right-wing populisms.

The generation of alternative realities associated with what might be called the culture of fake news, that world in which any charlatan or snake oil salesman gains greater legitimacy and public visibility through off the cuff remarks than a researcher, scientist, or intellectual, is also another very

serious problem that we face. I believe that if we want to defend academic freedom, expose the open and hidden forms of censorship, and break out of ostracism and apathy, we must also defend the status and dignity of the scientific and humanistic knowledge produced in universities. If we do not do this work, then I suspect that influencers will begin to replace us academics. Thank you very much.

### **Alberto J. Olvera**

I will be brief because two elephants in the room were mentioned. One is epistemic populism. That is a global trend, not just a local one. You find epistemic populisms in Germany, the United States, France, Argentina, Brazil, and of course in Mexico. It is an ideology of the era, one that combines scientific elements, such as serious environmentalism, and a new approach to indigenous knowledge, to become a populist blend in which all types of knowledge are equated with one another. It is a problem of our times, and we had to deal with the former director of CONACYT, an epistemic populist who took partly correct principles to an extreme. I do not think that will continue in the next administration, but for now we must reckon with the fact that it exists among authorities and at the level of academic grassroots.

The second elephant, an even larger one, is the matter of power within universities, and one wonders with what moral authority we are demanding that our freedoms be respected when universities themselves have been a hub of authoritarianism, a historically authoritarian niche. We have very undemocratic university governance structures. The extreme cases are the historical strongmen, such as Raúl Padilla at the Universidad de Guadalajara, the most well-known of all, but there were also others in Colima, in Sinaloa, and in several other universities.

We have a duty to democratize university life, and in that sense there is a task that falls to us. It is not only a matter of making demands outward, we must also drive democratization inward, because the truth is that the situation has been very comfortable for us. The truth is that the authoritarian political system created a kind of state of exception for public universities. Alright, here you go, sort things out among yourselves, stay calm, and enjoy a certain set of relative privileges. Some universities are more privileged than others, of course. And as long as you do not make noise, everything passes. But the truth is that this order led to intolerable phenomena that cannot be allowed and that we must denounce. That is a task that falls to us.

What happened with the Colegio Nacional and the Academia Mexicana de Ciencias? Their budgets were cut. It must be said that they were not very democratic organizations either.

Some are engaging in self criticism, and within the AMC there is an attempt at renewal. The juries for competitions have changed, for example. But if you are part of a jury of scientists, what a dreadful experience it is to work with peers. Problems of power, egos, personal factors, and power dynamics that influence decisions and distort the production of knowledge. We should keep this in mind as well. I emphasize the critical side of things because we must acknowledge our limitations, as academics are not heroes but rather actors in a setting and a time in which I believe we are falling short.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you, Doctor. There is one contribution that was left pending. We will give the floor for that one, as we are running short on time, and then I will give each of the panelists 30 seconds for a closing remark, followed by a reflection from Dr. Chaguaceda. So let us go ahead with the question.

### **Public 5**

Very brief. Just two things. In the Senate of the Republic, the autonomy of UNAM was inscribed in letters of gold. It is the responsibility of everyone, inside and outside UNAM, to uphold the fact that if autonomy, freedom of teaching, and freedom of research are important for UNAM, they are important for all universities, public and private research centers, for everyone. There should be no difference. And the second point, with academic freedom of research and teaching in other countries, because other countries undergoing autocratization processes, Poland, Nicaragua, and we could go on, but I will not take up any more of your time. Thank you very much.

### **Alejandra Salado**

Thank you, Doctor. Let us move on then. I would now invite each panelist to share their final words or conclusions. Starting with you, Doctor. Yes, let us begin whenever you are ready.

### **Sergio Ortiz Leroux**

Many thanks for the invitation, how wonderful that spaces like this for reflection and critical thinking exist, and may they be replicated elsewhere!

### **María Inclán**

Thank you. I also extend my sincere gratitude for the invitation and want to emphasize that we must strengthen the institutional framework and internal legality of our academic institutions, because power groups are not going to go away. Those power groups will always be there. For example, we

must regulate and bring transparency to the administration of funds, the appointment of authorities, and the promotion of different areas of research, all under the compliance of a clear set of rules. With clear rules and adherence to them, universities and research centers can exercise and defend their managerial and budgetary autonomy from power groups, and in that way, each one, from their own field, protects academic freedom. Thank you.

### **Liliana Obregón**

Well, I simply want to thank you for this space. Thank you very much. And also to our audience, thank you very much for being here. And a brief announcement: all of our GAPAC materials are available for free download on our website at [www.gobiernoyanalisispolitico.org](http://www.gobiernoyanalisispolitico.org). We look forward to seeing you there.

### **Nancy Domínguez**

Taking advantage of Dr. Azul's presence, I also want to extend our gratitude to her as she was one of the key driving forces behind this event. And I would like to take this opportunity to make a commitment to her, both as president of AMECIP and as a member of the National Board of Directors: this is the first activity held on the topic of academic freedom, and we will continue with periodic activities in a virtual format. I believe this is a topic that must regain considerable importance for the country, but also, as was mentioned, we need to hear about the experiences of other countries on this subject. What have they done, and what are the best practices that we can replicate in Mexico to address this problem? Which, I repeat, may seem new, but is advancing at an alarmingly rapid pace. The times ahead are complex, but on an optimistic note, the unity of universities and of the academic community is what can make a difference, because it is easy to attack a single academic, but attacking an entire university community is a far more difficult undertaking. I believe that may be the way forward, and thank you all for attending.

### **Alejandra Salado**

We now turn to Dr. Armando for a final closing comment on the panel.

### **Armando Chaguaceda**

I will add very little, because this panel has been a welcome confirmation of what we had anticipated: that it would be an excellent collective discussion, which is precisely why we organized it in a dialogic format. But I will make three

observations for the future of these initiatives. The first is that this is an initiative that brings together organized civil society and academia. GAPAC and AMECIP are part of civil society and are also entities with a central academic dimension. It is from that synergy that progress toward a defense of civic space may or may not emerge.

The other important matter that our colleague mentioned is looking at international experiences, but adding to that the internal reflection. Mexico is the Spanish speaking country with the largest academic community in the world in our language, the most extensive, the best equipped, very unequal in its internal quality without a doubt, but because it is so large it has very good researchers and institutions. Therefore, what happens in the Spanish-speaking world with regard to academic freedom is decided in Mexico. And in this sense I do believe there are two specificities that we need to reflect on. I will not offer solutions but rather invite reflection. And it was said here that coordination is good, that we are coming together, and so on.

First, one specificity of progressive epistemic populism is that, unlike reactionary epistemic populism, it includes within academia some of its own gravediggers. That is to say, there is a segment of the academic community that I have called the cannibal academy, because it devours its colleagues and devours the very conditions of possibility for the freedom within which they were formed. This generally does not occur with conservative reactionary populism, because there the attack comes from other places, other sources, other loci of power. That is an important specificity, and it is why we need to look, for example, in comparative perspective, less at Turkey, less at Poland, somewhat more at Venezuela, and a bit more at the early experience of Argentina and the beginnings of what was once the Cuban Revolution, and so on.

And the second point I want to make is that we must also be self critical about the frameworks and language we use to address this problem. At this moment there are interesting initiatives in defense of academic freedom in the inter-American space, but they claim that the threats come exclusively from Trump, Milei, and Bukele. But what about the other side of the equation, the “*progressive*” populism and authoritarianism, to which, moreover, a good part of its academic victims belong by family affiliation? Without a trans-ideological conception of threats, where both the threats and the defenses can come from all possible directions, this issue cannot be resolved. Therefore, the networks working in defense of scientific activity, academic freedom, and civic space must be very critical on this point. We cannot continue in Latin American and inter-American academic networks to privilege, due to ideological biases or the interests of our donors from the Global North, some attacks on academic

freedom over others. We cannot continue to view threats to academic freedom only topographically, from above, from outside, from power, but must also, as our colleague said, look at the threats that come from within academia itself against academia.

I want to close with one idea. Civic space, that convergence of rights, resources, and practices in defense of freedoms, has in freedom of expression a fundamental element. And Sergio said something very valuable here. We must defend the specific language, the specific contribution, and the social utility of scientific knowledge. Let us see if at the next AMECIP these panels can continue to take place. And along the way, perhaps some of us will still be found in the struggle. Thank you very much.

### **Alejandra Salado**

We thank everyone for attending, for your participation, and for your interest in this topic, which will surely be a line of work that we are obligated to continue pursuing. Have a wonderful afternoon and continue enjoying the Congress.