

PORTUGAL DIPLOMÁTICO



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Month of MFA

By Bruno Oliveira

This month, the Minister of State and Foreign Affairs visited the Portugal Pavilion at Expo Osaka and welcomed his Swiss counterpart, Ignazio Cassis, to the Palácio das Necessidades.

Visit to the Portugal Pavilion at Expo Osaka

Expo Osaka 2025 has now ended, but before the event closed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs visited the Portugal Pavilion once again—one of the most successful pavilions at the entire world exhibition.

During this visit, which took place on the 6th, Paulo Rangel met with the pavilion's architect, Kenzo Kuma from Japan, who will have an exhibition in Portugal, more specifically at the Casa da Arquitetura in Matosinhos.



Paulo Rangel and Kenzo Kuma at the Portuguese Pavilion (source: MNE)

Encounter with Ignazio Cassis

On October 9, the Minister met with his Swiss counterpart, Ignazio Cassis, at the Palácio das Necessidades. At this meeting, they discussed the Portuguese community in Switzerland (one of the largest ones in the world), economic and cultural relations between the two countries, and the agreement process with the EU.



Paulo Rangel and his Swiss counterpart (source: MNE)

Portugal's participation in the EPC meeting

By Beatriz Inocência

On October 2, the seventh meeting of the European Political Community (EPC) took place in Copenhagen, with Portugal represented by Prime Minister Luís Montenegro. He took part in debates on the central topics of the meeting, including security and migration in Europe, and also held important bilateral meetings that highlighted Portugal's active role in international diplomacy as a member state of international cooperation.

What is the EPC?

The European Political Community was created in 2022. It is not an institution, but rather an informal platform for dialogue among leaders from over 40 European countries, with the aim of promoting political dialogue and cooperation to address current issues of interest to the continent, as well as to strengthen European security, stability, and prosperity.

The first meeting of this forum took place in October of that year, with the participation of 44 countries, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission. So far, there have been seven meetings, and the next ones are scheduled to take place in Armenia and Ireland.

The meeting and Portugal's role

In Copenhagen, the seventh meeting of the European Political Community brought together representatives from dozens of European countries to discuss issues of current relevance, focusing on security, support for Ukraine, and migration.



Family photo of the EPC (Source: Council of the European Union)

António Costa, President of the European Council, represented the European Union and chaired the meeting together with Mette Frederiksen, Denmark's Prime Minister. Even though António Costa was present at the summit, Portugal's representative was its current Prime Minister, Luís Montenegro, who preceded his speech with several bilateral meetings. He met with the British Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, to discuss Portuguese migration in the United Kingdom and the difficulties faced by Portuguese citizens in legalizing their status there.

In one of Montenegro's bilateral meetings — in this case, with Volodymyr Zelenskyy — Portugal reaffirmed its support for Ukraine, both financially, with a €220 million contribution in 2025, and politically, through efforts aimed at achieving “a fair peace process” and supporting Ukraine's integration into the European Union.

The commitment to assist “in Ukraine's accession process to the European Union, and in the military, logistical, political, and financial support that Portugal has been providing” was highlighted.



Luís Montenegro (fonte: Lintao Zhang/Euro news)

Although this was a bilateral agreement between Montenegro and Zelenskyy, the war in Ukraine remained a central topic of the meeting, and support for Ukraine was once again reinforced on the European stage.

Another key topic of the summit and the roundtables was migration. Montenegro emphasized this issue, which has also been widely discussed and analyzed in Portugal recently, stating that the country's current migration policy is “neither one of open doors nor of completely closed doors.”

During the meeting, the Prime Minister heard Denmark raise concerns about secondary migrant flows—that is, migrants who, after passing through Portugal, move on to other European countries. He clarified that these migrants may come from Portugal, but they are not Portuguese, in most cases.

Montenegro also openly praised the Danish socialist government led by Mette Frederiksen for its handling of the situation and reaffirmed that Portugal is likewise working to improve its approach.

Although not central to the summit, several side meetings also took place, including one with Moldova, during which António Costa congratulated Maia Sandu on her democratic election victory and reiterated Portugal's support for Moldova's European path.

Importance for Portugal

Portugal's presence at the EPC, through Luís Montenegro, reflects its commitment to strengthening European diplomacy beyond the strictly EU-based forums, by participating in a broader platform of cooperation among European countries, regardless of their institutional status.

For Portugal, such meetings allow it to build diplomatic bridges, reinforce its image as a country committed to multilateralism, and project itself on the key issues of the European agenda.

Regarding migration, the fact that Portugal was confronted with the issue of secondary migrant flows passing through its territory highlights the country's dual role — as both a destination for migration and a gateway into the European area for those who later move elsewhere.

In the field of defense and support for Ukraine, Portugal's renewed financial and political commitment represents a clear expression of European and international solidarity, contributing to the strengthening of its role in European security and continental geopolitics.

The challenge now lies in turning declarations into concrete actions, maintaining Portugal's prominence and diplomatic role in an increasingly demanding international context, and continuing to invest in diplomacy and its importance for the country's future collaborations — both in Europe and on the global stage.

Local elections in Portugal

By Raquel Bravo

Winners and Losers in an International Context of the Personalization of Politics

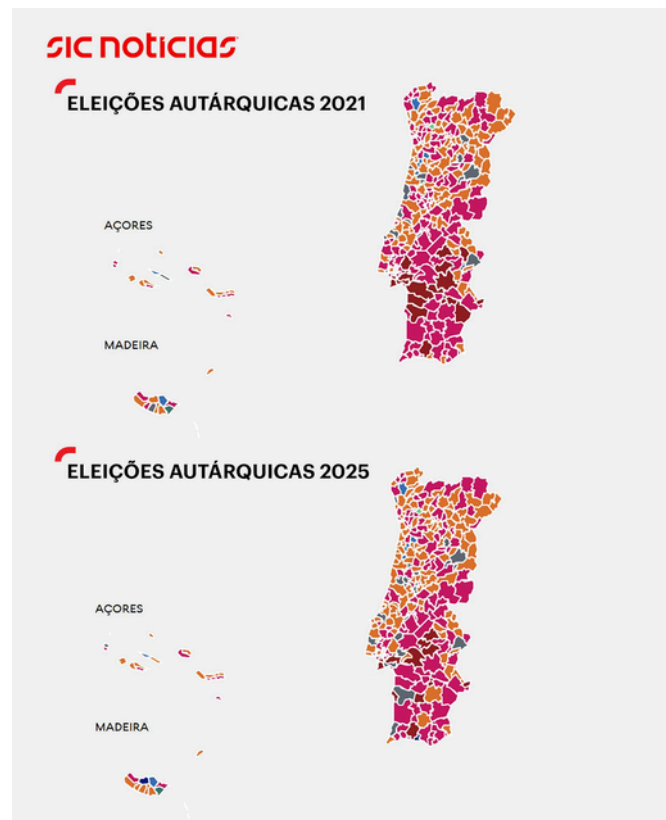
On Sunday, October 12, Portugal went to the polls to elect its local authorities. Compared with the previous election in 2021, the current municipal map appears in a slightly more orange tone.

The big winner was the Social Democratic Party (PSD), which secured the largest number of municipalities and won in Portugal's main cities such as Lisbon, Porto, and Braga. Running alone or in coalition, the PSD triumphed in 136 municipalities, against 128 for the Socialist Party (PS) — a reversal of the 2021 results, when the PS held 149 councils and the PSD only 114. With this result, the Social Democrats also regained the presidency of the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP), which had been controlled by the PS since 2013.

However, unlike the legislative elections held in May this year—when the PS fell to third place nationwide, overtaken by the Democratic Alliance (AD, a PSD/CDS coalition) and by Chega—the Socialists performed well above expectations, ending up only eight municipalities behind the PSD.

On Sunday night, the PS Secretary-General, José Luís Carneiro, emphasized that “the PS has returned as the main political alternative to the Government”, highlighting the party's vitality and the voters' renewed trust. The PS continues to hold councils in every district of mainland Portugal as well as in the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores.

Has the party therefore re-established itself as the main alternative to government? In fact, at the local level, the traditional PSD/PS two party system seems to remain strong and resilient, countering the emerging tripartite dynamic (PSD/Chega/PS) that



Municipal map 2021 and 2025 (Source: SIC Notícias)



PSD victory (Source: RTP Notícias)



Chega wins three municipalities (Source: SIC Notícias)

emerged from the 2025 legislative elections. This shows that, despite losing control of the ANMP, the PS continues to hold significant local influence.

These elections were also the first municipal elections in which Chega won mayoralties, securing victories in three municipalities: São Vicente (Madeira), Albufeira (Algarve), and Entroncamento (Santarém). The result was surprising, as the party gathered just over 600,000 votes, compared with 1.4 million in the May legislative elections.

Between the Local and the Global: The Personalization of Politics

Without establishing a direct causal link, it is possible to contextualize Chega's municipal performance within a broader global trend — that of the personalization of politics.

Over recent decades, Western democracies have witnessed the centralization of parties around charismatic figures, capable of mobilizing voters through media exposure and anti-establishment rhetoric. Such parties are inextricably tied to the visibility and narrative of their leaders, as seen with Donald Trump (United States), Javier Milei (Argentina), and Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil).

This model tends to favor success in national elections, where charisma, outrage, and polarization dominate, but it weakens parties at the local level, where voting is shaped by proximity, competence, and community reputation.

Thus, in the municipal elections, the “Ventura effect” — referring to Chega's leader, André Ventura — fades, as local candidates are less well-known within their communities. While the PS and PSD, with long-established local networks, maintain deep-rooted local structures, Chega, as a younger and less institutionalized political force, has not yet built a comparable municipal base.

A resilient local bipartisanship

The 2025 Portuguese municipal elections therefore confirm the vitality of bipartisanship at the local level and show that, even in an international context increasingly dominated by the personalization of politics, the strength of parties continues to depend on their grassroots presence and proximity to the territory.

Portugal thus presents an interesting contrast: while national politics increasingly revolves around strong individual figures, local power remains rooted in trust, institutional presence, and the enduring influence of traditional parties.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Visits the Middle East

By Dario Vargas

Between the 14th and 15th, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paulo Rangel, visited Saudi Arabia and Turkey — two short political visits aimed at strengthening relations between Portugal and the two states.

On the 14th, Paulo Rangel visited Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, where he met with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud. During this meeting, the two ministers discussed the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in particular the implementation and future of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and Portugal's possible contributions. They also addressed bilateral relations between Portugal and Saudi Arabia, covering not only diplomatic aspects but also economic and cultural dimensions.

Paulo Rangel highlighted the leading role of investment in various economic sectors, particularly renewable energy and construction, noting that the presence of several Portuguese companies in these areas has already become visible in the country. He also mentioned that Saudi companies have numerous investment opportunities in Portugal in sectors related to the energy transition that Saudi Arabia is currently pursuing. The minister also emphasized the importance of KAICIID – the International Dialogue Centre, an intergovernmental organization focused on intercultural dialogue, founded by Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Austria and headquartered in Lisbon – as one of many initiatives aimed at improving cultural relations between the two countries.



Portuguese Foreign Affairs Minister Paulo Rangel (left) is received by his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud (right) (Source: Arab News)

During this visit, Paulo Rangel was also received by the Luso-Saudi Council for Economy and Business, an institutional platform under the aegis of the Portuguese Business Confederation that seeks to deepen economic ties between the two countries. He also travelled to Diriyah, a historic city that served as the first capital of the Saudi royal family, before meeting with several members of Saudi civil society.

On the 15th, Paulo Rangel travelled to Ankara, the capital of Turkey, where he was received by Hakan Fidan, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs. The two delegations discussed bilateral relations between their countries in economic, defense, cultural, and political dimensions. Again, the conflict in Gaza was discussed, as well as the Russo-Ukrainian war and Turkey's accession process to the European Union.

The minister acknowledged that the current economic relationship between the two countries is “unfavourable for Portugal” but is “growing in intensity” and has strong potential to “improve significantly” through tourism, cooperation in international projects — particularly in Lusophone Africa — and in the defense sector, among other areas. At the cultural level, Rangel expressed interest in promoting the teaching of Portuguese among the Turkish population.

In addition to this ministerial meeting, Paulo Rangel was also received by the Portugal-Turkey Parliamentary Friendship Commission, a body linked to the Turkish parliament that aims to promote dialogue, cooperation, and the exchange of knowledge between the two countries from an institutional standpoint, as well as by members of Turkish civil society.

This visit to Turkey also takes place in the context of preparations for the centenary of relations between the two states, to be celebrated in 2026.



Portuguese Foreign Affairs Minister Paulo Rangel (left) meets with his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan (right) (Source: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Interview with Pedro Costa Pereira

In this edition, our interviewee is the current Permanent Representative of Portugal to the European Union, Ambassador Pedro Costa Pereira. With a career intrinsically linked to Europe, Pedro Costa Pereira began his professional career in 1987 as an Assistant at the College of Europe, before entering the diplomatic service. His first post was at the Embassy in Paris, and he has also worked in Brasilia and Brussels, at the Permanent Representation to NATO and at the Permanent Representation to the European Union, the latter for the third time. In Lisbon, in addition to various other positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in offices, notably that of the Prime Minister, he served as Director-General for European Affairs and Director-General for Foreign Policy. Interview conducted by Bruno Oliveira.



Ambassador Pedro Costa Pereira

First of all, I would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to do this interview. First of all, I would like to ask what is the role of the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the European Union (REPER)?

The role of the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the European Union is, as the name suggests, to represent his country to the European Union and to represent it on a permanent basis. The Permanent Representative monitors all matters in the European Union, affirms and defends his country's positions, and seeks to ensure that national interests are duly taken into account, reporting to his authorities and advising them so that they can take a position on a wide range of issues.

And when we refer to our presence in the European Union, we are talking about the European Union as a whole. The work of the Permanent Representative focuses more on the Council of the European Union, but also closely monitors what is

happening in the in the other institutions, namely in the European Parliament, in the European Commission, in the Committee of Regions, in the Economic and Social Committee. It exercises, therefore, a multifaceted activity.

The REPER, and therefore also the Permanent Representative, also monitors and promotes the situation of Portuguese officials in European institutions. It is true that the main objective of Portuguese officials in European institutions is to defend European interests, while at REPER our primary purpose is to defend the positions of the Portuguese government in the European Union. However, we are well aware that the way issues are viewed in the European institutions varies according to the sensibilities of those who work there, so it is very important that these sensibilities can also be Portuguese. Portugal's presence in the European institutions is indeed very important for Portugal.

In addition to this representative work, the Permanent Representative must also head Portugal's largest diplomatic mission abroad. REPER is indeed a very large diplomatic mission, and this leadership and coordination role is an important part of the Permanent Representative's work.

One of the main functions of the Permanent Representative is his participation in COREPER (Committee of Permanent Representatives), and I would like to ask what COREPER consists of and what the difference is between COREPER 1 and COREPER 2.

There is indeed a difference between COREPER 1 and COREPER 2, which I think I can easily explain, given that during my previous term at REPER, where I was Deputy Permanent Representative, I participated in the work of COREPER 1, and now that I am Permanent Representative, I participate in COREPER 2, where, incidentally, I had already served during my first term at REPER at the beginning of the century as 'Antici', which, for those who do not know, is the closest collaborator to the Permanent Representative. In other words, COREPER 1 is composed of the Deputy Permanent Representatives, who are the Number 2s of the Permanent Representations, while the Permanent Representatives are present in COREPER 2.

COREPER is the Committee of Permanent Representatives. It is a central body in the functioning of the European Union's decision-making system and is provided for in the European treaties, namely in Article 16.7 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 240 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Its main function is to prepare the decisions to be taken by the Council of Ministers. Both COREPER and the Council are one and the same, i.e. there is only one COREPER and only one Council of Ministers. However, just as the Council of Ministers meets in various configurations, such as the Agriculture, Fisheries, Foreign Affairs, Economic and Financial Affairs Councils, COREPER also meets in two configurations, COREPER 1 and COREPER 2.

They deal with different issues. COREPER 1 deals with matters of a more technical nature. COREPER 2, which comprises the Permanent Representatives, deals with more sensitive and politically important issues and, in general, all matters that may be included on the agenda of the European Councils. In the moment, the current discussion theme of negotiation at COREPER 2 is the next Pluriannual Financial



In COREPER and in all other Council formations, Portugal sits between Germany and Slovenia (according to the order of the rotating EU presidencies).

Framework. It is an extremely technical matter, but one with a very high political sensitivity. The fact that it is a technical matter does not necessarily mean that it will be dealt with by COREPER 1. It may be the case that a matter is initially dealt with by COREPER 1 and then, as it gains importance and political sensitivity, it has to be referred to the European Council, thus passing through COREPER 2.

COREPER plays a very important role in preparing Council decisions. Suffice is to say that around 60% or more of legislation in Portugal stems from the mere transposition of decisions taken at European level, and that many of the decisions in the European Union are, in practice, taken at COREPER level. It is true that these decisions still have to be politically validated in the Councils of Ministers. But they are validated as 'A items', which are almost always approved without discussion, with Member States in the Councils focusing only on the much smaller number of 'B items' that are still open.

In turn, the work of COREPER, both 1 and 2, is prepared by the various working groups and committees that exist, so that the matters can then be considered and decided upon by the Permanent Representatives. When matters are blocked in the working groups, they are referred to COREPER, so that it can provide guidance to the lower levels. The same applies to the Council. When matters are blocked at COREPER level, they are referred to the Council so that the political level can provide guidance to enable the work to proceed. Ultimately, the same applies to the European Council, which acts as the highest decision-making and tie-breaking body. As can be seen, COREPER plays a central role in the very complicated decision-making process of the European Union.

I was aware of this institutional complexity between these institutions and even between the member states themselves, but actually it is even more complicated than what we know in reality.

Yes, the institutional system of the European Union is indeed very complex. And there is an additional layer of complexity with the growing role of the European Parliament. The European Parliament started out as merely an advisory body, but over time, as it gradually acquired powers in the decision-making process, it has become a true co-legislator with the Council. All of this is well-oiled and works, but it is complex. Of course, there are issues, especially those of greater political sensitivity, on which there are sometimes obstacles that are difficult to overcome. Even for people who have been following these issues for a long time, it is sometimes difficult to understand the decision-making process. The complexity is very real and the resolution of problems also depends on whether the issues are decided by qualified majority or unanimously. I remember when I was in COREPER 1, the more technical COREPER, I was constantly doing calculations to see whether or not there was a qualified majority for a decision to be taken on something that interested us, or to see if I already had the blocking minority I needed to block a decision that would harm us. This game of forming qualified majorities or blocking minorities in negotiations is a daily reality in COREPER meetings, whether COREPER 1 or COREPER 2.

Since joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, your career has been closely linked to the European Union, or Europe in general, and this is now your third time working at the Permanent Representation, this time as Permanent Representative. How do you feel knowing that you have spent so many years representing Portugal at this international organisation?

I feel great satisfaction at having devoted a large part of my diplomatic career to dealing with issues that I truly enjoy, that I know well and, above all, that are truly important for my country. I also take great pride in this. Not only because I have been able to contribute to results that are important for Portugal, but also because of the trust placed in me by the successive governments that have appointed me to carry out my duties. Looking back, I feel that it was very worthwhile when, in 1986, I was at the College of Europe in Bruges, the year Portugal joined the then European Communities. It had a huge impact on my career, and certainly on the two subsequent years I spent working there as an assistant. Being an assistant at the College of Europe was, in fact, my first job. I also remember applying to work for the European institutions. My admission to the General Secretariat of the Council was almost complete when I was informed that I had also been accepted into the diplomatic service, so I had these two options available to me. The ironic thing is that I turned down the Council



Ambassador Pedro Costa Pereira at the COREPER

Secretariat because I didn't want to have a career that was too focused on Brussels. Basically, I thought, 'I'll choose the diplomatic career because I don't want to stay in Brussels forever.' And so I went into the diplomatic service. At this point, if I count the time I spent at the College of Europe, at NATO, and in my various posts at REPER, I have already spent more than 17 years in Belgium. I have, of course, held other posts, notably in Lisbon and in other countries, such as France and Brazil, but even in those posts I always ended up dealing with European issues in some way.

But I am very happy to have chosen a diplomatic career. I think that anyone who pursues this profession must be able to deal with any kind of issue. The key is to recognise your country's interests, and an experienced diplomat, when they see an interest, recognises it and seizes it. A diplomat can work at the OECD, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, or be posted to the United States or South Africa, and be able to quickly understand, at any given moment, where their country's interests lie. But it makes sense to specialise more deeply in one subject or another. In my case, that specialisation fell on European affairs and security and defence issues, as a result of my time at NATO.

One of the important moments when you were working here at the Permanent Representation was the financial crisis in 2010. How did that affect the work of the Representation or even relations between Portugal and the European Union?

It had a huge impact. When I arrived here in 2011, we had not yet requested macro-financial assistance. We requested it shortly afterwards. But there was one Member State that had already requested it, and the feeling I had when my colleague from that country spoke at COREPER was that no one paid much attention to him, simply because his country was in a situation of dependence and enormous fragility. This is not an enviable situation for any Member State, because it greatly reduces our scope for defending our interests. When we found ourselves in that same situation, I realised that, in practice, this reduced capacity to act had also become a reality for us. Portugal's role in the various bodies, whether in working groups, COREPER or even the Council, became much more difficult. We had less credibility with our partners. The immense austerity efforts undertaken by our country at that time were difficult, but they enabled us to restore our credibility and recover our room for manoeuvre. At a certain moment in time, we switched to "the other side" and everything just became a bad memory.

What conclusion do I draw from this period? From the point of view of diplomacy and Portugal's negotiating credibility, the effort was undoubtedly worthwhile. With the tough measures that were taken, we overcame the situation of dependence in which we found ourselves and which placed us in a position of immense fragility vis-à-vis our partners. It was very important to show our partners that we were truly willing to resolve the situation. That is how we regained our full negotiating capacity.

You mentioned that you were working at the permanent representation to NATO. How was the relationship between this representation and NATO, or even between the European Union and NATO itself?

It is a close but complex relationship. In fact, although both organisations have been based in the same city for over 60 years, they have never held a single summit attended by all the Allies and all the Member States. Their working methods and respective mandates are different. This sometimes makes it difficult to coordinate the work between the two organisations. There is the issue of confidentiality of information. It should also be borne in mind, on the NATO side, and this is a politically interesting point, that some of the Allies that invest most in defence do not belong to the European Union, which also makes coordination between the two organisations difficult. But in practice, NATO is always very present in the work of the European Union and the European Union is always very present in the work of NATO. The reason is simple. They are two organisations with the same values and the same main objectives. Both organisations have the preservation of peace as their founding objective.

The most important thing is that, essentially, the two organisations work in a complementary manner. In practice, cooperation exists. One example is what is happening right now in Ukraine. NATO seeks to preserve the security of its area of responsibility through its deterrence and defence capabilities. And that point is extremely important, because we are talking about Europe, which is NATO's area of responsibility. And the European Union, in accordance with its own mandate and competences, does what it does best, namely by imposing sanctions and using its vast economic and regulatory capacity. Another example is military mobility in European space, an essential issue for NATO, but one that is mainly dealt with within the framework of the European Union, which is where the necessary competences lie.

In short, the two organisations coordinate almost naturally because they have the same objective, a very similar composition, with the 23 countries of the European Union also being NATO Allies, and, last but not least, through effective informal cooperation between NATO and European Union staff, and between the leaders of the two organisations, namely the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council and the Secretary General of NATO. And, of course, coordination also takes place in the capitals of the Allies that are also Member States of the European Union, because these 23 countries have only one set of forces and one set of budgets that they have to make available to both organisations.

Finally, how do you see the future development of relations between Portugal and the EU, given their history since 1985/86?

We are a European and Atlantic country, so both the European and Atlantic dimensions are extremely important to us. In this respect, our membership of the European Union and NATO are each valuable in their own right. Portugal sees the European Union as the space in which it is integrated. We want Europe to be a space synonymous with prosperity, growth, well-being and, above all, peace. Therefore, for us, when we look at the European Union, we see a space in which we want to be ever more fully integrated, seeking to ensure its smooth functioning. For Portugal, the smooth functioning of the European Union is a vital interest. The European Union is becoming increasingly complex, which means that we, for our part, need to be increasingly capable of understanding how it works. Only in this way can we create the best conditions for our own interests to be taken into account in a Europe that we want to be fully functional.



Ambassador Pedro Costa Pereira in the European Council

“Miala pory, Rajoelina”: How Gen Z shook Madagascar

By Magda Gonçalves

In just a few weeks, what began as protests against recurring water and electricity cuts in Antananarivo has turned into Madagascar's biggest political crisis in years, with young people organized under the informal banner of "Gen Z Madagascar" demanding not only immediate solutions for basic services but also systemic changes in power. The movement, which combines university activism, social media, and cultural symbols (including an adaptation of the manga emblem *One Piece*), pressured the government to the point that President Andry Rajoelina dissolved the cabinet and eventually lost military support and left the country.

Root causes of complaints: services, inequality and credibility

Protests erupted on September 25th, fueled by persistent water and energy shortages that directly impact the daily lives of families and small businesses. For many young people, whose generation has never experienced inclusive economic growth in recent decades, these cuts are symptomatic of a distant political elite and administrations repeatedly incapable of solving basic problems. The mobilization successfully transformed local frustration into a political narrative: demanding accountability, transparency, and institutional renewal.

Tactics, symbols and organization: the face of Gen Z

Unlike traditional movements with centralized leadership, Gen Z in Madagascar uses social media, student associations, and local "coordinators": spontaneous mobilizations converged in historic squares like Ambohitato and Independence Avenue. Black clothing, masks, and the repeated use of a colorful pirate symbol created identity and international visibility, making demonstrations recognizable and difficult to delegitimize solely by partisan labels.

Escalation and State Response

Security forces responded with dispersals, tear gas, and rubber bullets. The clashes left dozens injured and, according to international agencies and the UN, at least 22 died during the weeks of unrest—figures disputed by the government. As the violence escalated, elements of the military elite (notably the CAPSAT unit, which played a historic role in the country's politics) refused orders to repress and began protecting protesters in key areas, accelerating the loss of the executive branch's monopoly on power.

Immediate result and institutional vacuum

The dissolution of the government and the President's departure abroad created an institutional vacuum that fosters two opposing interpretations: on the one hand, a provisional victory for the youth, who demonstrated their capacity for mobilization; on the other, the risk of a transition led by the armed forces or an opportunistic political class without a program of profound reforms. Recent reports indicate the entry of military personnel into central positions and a growing debate about how to translate mobilization into inclusive democratic institutions.

Diplomatic implications and implications for international partners

For diplomatic missions and multilateral organizations, the situation poses practical and ethical challenges, such as how to support the restoration of order without legitimizing rights violations, how to maintain dialogue with young and fragmented actors, and how to help build public capacities (water/energy infrastructure, fiscal transparency) that reduce the likelihood of new upheavals. The external response must balance pressure for respect for human rights, technical assistance for basic services, and support for inclusive political processes, avoiding favoring short-term solutions that merely replace leadership without reforming structures.

In the coming years, all eyes will be on Antananarivo. The first question is who will actually govern. With the collapse of the cabinet and the departure of the president, there is a power vacuum that could be filled by a military junta or a fragile civilian coalition. If the military assumes political control, the country could face international isolation and even regional sanctions. On the other hand, a civilian-led transition will require a rare combination of consensus and responsiveness to the urgent needs of the moment.

Another decisive factor will be the future of Gen Z itself. So far, the movement has demonstrated an impressive capacity for mobilization and creativity, but transforming the energy of the streets into concrete proposals will be the true test. Will young people be able to remain united, form recognized leadership, and negotiate real reforms? Or will their strength eventually be diluted, captured by more experienced political elites?



Protests in Madagascar (Source: BBC)

Finally, the international community also has a role to play. The African Union, the UN, and Madagascar's key partners are watching cautiously, considering how to support a return to stability without interfering with the internal process. The way these actors balance diplomatic pressure and technical support could determine whether the country enters a new cycle of hope—or whether it returns to the pattern of crises that has marked it in recent decades.

Parliamentary Elections in the Czech Republic

By Jorge Paixão

Between October 3rd and 4th, the Czech electorate exercised its constitutional right to vote, electing their respective representatives in the chamber of deputies, through a proportional distribution of all 200 seats across the country, as they do, every four years, with the last parliamentary election having taken place in October 2021.

The results of this election were not unexpected. For years the national polls of voting intention pointed to the high probability that no party, or any electoral alliance, would obtain an absolute majority in parliament. This prediction would eventually be proven right on the 4th, however, even without a majority, there was still a clear winner of the night, namely the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens, or simply ANO, led by Andrej Babiš, which obtained its best electoral result since its creation in 2011, and which won the first place in the legislature, with a difference of 53 representatives to the second place, the ODS, or Civic Democratic Party, of Prime-Minister Petr Fiala, which only won 23 seats and together with the other parties in his government, only preserved 74 seats of its previous legislative majority of 104 in parliament.

Who is Babiš and what does he represent?

To understand the impact of this election in its entirety, it is important to contextualize the current Czech political landscape, not only as a successor state to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, which subsequently underwent a different political evolution from the other European nations in the West of the continent, as was the case in much of Eastern Europe, especially the former member countries of the Warsaw Pact, but also as a state integrated into the institutions of the European Union, NATO and other international diplomacy groups more commonly associated with Western liberal democracies.

In this context, the possibility of greater integration with the rest of the continent and its opposition, characterized mainly by Eurosceptic movements that support a more isolationist vision, which aims to balance Czechia's sovereignty with its needs as a state, through a greater distancing from the EU, a preference for diplomatic neutrality between NATO and CSTO and also a reversal of the international sanctions placed on the Russian Federation since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian Conflict in 2022, as it is an opportunity to reopen the country to Russian imports, with emphasis on the importance of natural gas, which, as a cheap source of energy, allows a reversal of the inflationary crisis and its increase of prices, relative to consu-

mer costs for the population. The division between these possible diplomatic paths for Czechia as a state is the main ideological breaking point within Czech society, a phenomenon common in most Eastern European states, which have only recently been integrated with the rest of the continent.

At the same time, the narrative of ideological division between left and right traditionally associated with liberal democracies has been counterposed by the politics of the nations on the East side of the former "Iron Curtain", as is the case of Czechia, in which, due to the negative connotation of the past, together with the emergence of two new types of political movements related to interest groups, namely populist parties associated with social discontent and the interests of pensioners and socially progressive parties associated with the younger and/or a more urban electorate. Both the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) went from being the first and third political forces in the country in 2013 to running on a joint electoral list in 2025, without obtaining a single seat in Parliament. As the role of these traditionally left-wing parties is replaced by these new movements, with emphasis on the case of ANO2011, which by defending a socially conservative but fiscally progressive position, with reductions in consumption taxes, increases in income taxes for teleworkers, a generalized opposition to austerity and cuts in the public sector, with protection in particular for pensioners, allowed it to have a fiscal stance traditionally associated with the centre-left, which eventually led to both ČSSD and KSČM supporting Babiš in his 2023 presidential bid against Petr Pavel, a former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, former Chief of Staff of the Czech Armed Forces and former member of KSČM's predecessor party, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, or KSČ.

The political phenomenon of Andrej Babiš, a 71-year-old billionaire, owner of the second largest Czech national conglomerate, Agrofert, began in 2011, when Andrej founded ANO11, an initially civic movement, created with the purpose of mobilizing social discontent against corruption. A year later, in 2012, the movement would be reorganized under the format of an electoral party, in order to reach a greater number of people. The characteristic that most identifies the party since its formation would be its ideological syncretism. Originally the movement was associated with the parties of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, or (ALDE) and since 2019, its successor, Renew Europe. Both European groupings come from an ideological school of modern liberalism, a clear indicator of the transition and ideological flexibility of ANO11 as a populist movement in the last decade. However, since 2024, as a founding member of the Patriots for Europe group, ANO11 has been detaching itself from its reformist past, getting closer to right-wing populist movements, such as Fidesz in Hungary and FPÖ in Austria, as well as taking inspiration from US President Donald J. Trump's "America First" movement, with its own slogan of a "Strong Czechia". Nonetheless, Babiš's movement remains a "chameleon" in regard to its ideology. The party considers itself as "a right-wing party

with social empathy" this is due to its fiscal position traditionally attributed to the center-left, but at the socio-cultural level its position as a right-wing conservative movement, adopting a critical position on social progressivism, measures against climate change, and since 2024 the institutions of the European Union themselves, a consequence of the formation of the Patriots for Europe group.

Fiala's government

In 2017, with the electoral collapse of the traditional left, both ANO11 and ODS managed to increase their representation in the legislature. In this situation a minority government was formed between ANO11 and ČSSD with the external support of KSČM in parliament. This government, similar to the one of 2013, faced several scandals, with several judicial investigations into possible conflicts of interest between the billionaire prime minister and his business conglomerate, Agrofert, with the alleged embezzlement of 2 million euros in European funds between the years of 2015 and 2017. Andrej was also accused of having been an agent recruited by the secret police during the 1980s in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and having actively participated in the intimidation of political opponents. In 2018 his son declared that Babiš ordered his abduction and forced him to live with his mother in Switzerland. Later the Czech National Institute of Mental Health, where he had previously been hospitalized, went up in flames, with great speculation surrounding the possible causes of the disaster.

This government has also had a lot of difficulty in effectively dealing with the crisis of the global SARS-CoV 2 pandemic, with strict isolation policies, but at the same time a very high number of deaths percentually, especially in the age groups of citizens over 70 years of age. The restrictions imposed especially affected ANO11 and its voter base, for its populist narrative against everything that can be considered as an overreach of governmental power in the personal lives of citizens.

Thus, with the continued electoral decline of the left and growing discontent with Andrej's executive, in 2021 the opposition, namely the ODS, led by Petr Fiala, in coalition with the Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL) and Tradition, Responsibility and Prosperity 09 (TOP 09) ran together on an electoral list, called Together (SPOLU), with a fiscally conservative agenda, ambition to solve the pandemic crisis in Czechia, the reduction of inflation and consumer prices, mending the relationship between Prague and Brussels and the reversal of the cuts made by the previous government with investments in the most important areas of the public sector. The 2021 parliamentary election, initially in the polls, indicated a continuation of the government, however, by a difference of 0.66% of the votes between ANO11 and SPOLU, on October 9, Petr Fiala and his coalition would be declared as the winners of the night. Andrej conceded victory to his opponents and a government between SPOLU and the PirStan electoral list formed by the Czech Pirate Party (Piráti) and the Mayors and Independents (STAN) formed Fiala's cabinet, which governed from 2021 to 2025.

Fiala's government was initially accepted with great enthusiasm by the Czech electorate. Many considered the result as the end of the political dominance of ANO11 and the beginning of a new cycle. This was mainly the result of the emphasis given during the election campaign by the government's opposition to vote against Andrej Babiš as Prime-Minister and not so much to the policies proposed by each party to deal with the main issues affecting Czechia. However, as in 2013 and 2017, popular discontent against the coalition eventually began to grow, specifically after two scandals, one with the leader of the Czech Pirate Party, Ivan Bartoš, as Minister of Regional Development and Minister of Digitalization, being criticized by architects, labor unions and construction authorities, for his failure to implement a scheme to digitize building permits, eventually led to him being dismissed by the Prime-Minister, which led to his party completely leaving the governing coalition, and the other one being with the Minister of Justice, Pavel Blažek, from the ODS, for having accepted a donation in Bitcoins from a drug trafficker, Tomáš Jiříkovský, considered by many to be an attempt at money laundering. The Minister resigned after the scandal.

But in addition to the controversies, the government was also highly criticized for its fiscal austerity, with an increase in the retirement age, cuts in the public sector and tax hikes, the exact opposite of what was promised to the electorate during the 2021 campaign. There was also the need for the government to react to international crisis, with a historic peak of inflation at 15.1%, not seen since the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 and the biggest rise in energy costs on the European continent, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, due to Czechia's dependence on Russian natural gas. The government tried to react to this crisis by subsidizing the energy sector but ended up increasing the public debt at the cost of the subsidies, which simultaneously led to the implementation of even more economic austerity measures, in a counterproductive way.

The 2025 election

In this context, the result of the election was not unexpected. ANO11 obtained its best result since 2013, without having achieved an absolute majority, Andrej Babiš's main ambition in this election campaign. Together SPOLU and STAN lost 30 seats in parliament, a result revealing popular discontent against the government. On the other hand Piráti grew with a 350% increase in its parliamentary representation, contrary to what was expected, especially after its results in the three elections that took place in 2024, namely the European Elections, the Senate Elections and the Regional Elections, where the party lost much of its representation.

The Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD) also had an unexpected result, losing 5 of its 20 representatives in the legislature, in addition to the rise of a new party, the Motorists for Themselves (AUTO), a right-wing populist movement that in its first legislative election won 14 seats in parliament and also the Stačilo! electoral list, between ČSSD, KSČM and other smaller parties, which failed to reach the 5%

threshold needed for parliamentary representation, similar to what happened earlier this year in Germany to BSW during the Bundestag election.

This was the first election in the history of Czechia in which Czech emigrants living abroad were able to vote by mail, but the number of voters was relatively lower than originally projected. During the campaign there were numerous accidents, from an attack on the physical integrity of Andrej Babiš, low confidence on the part of the electorate in the validity of the elections, with 1 in 4 Czechs not trusting the government's guarantee of fair elections, lawsuits against both the SPD and Stačilo! and other smaller scandals related to SPOLU and ANO11 candidates.

Babiš's return and what it means for Czechia in the international context

After his electoral loss against Petr Pavel, the leader of ANO11 claimed to be planning his retirement from political life, however only after one year, Andrej formed the Patriots for Europe and in 2025 he ran a successful campaign to become Prime-Minister again. In spite of that, without an absolute majority, Babiš will have to restrain himself with a minority government or a governing coalition, which necessarily implies concessions. Immediately after the result, all the parties of the previous government expressed their opposition to forming a government with ANO11, which implies one of two things: either Andrej negotiates with the radical right parties, with scandals of association of some of its members with the neo-nazi movement, particularly Fillip Turek, or he governs in the minority. Both SPD and AUTO leaders clarified that they would not support a minority government, which would possibly imply a motion of no confidence against the government, so Babiš will have to govern with the radical right. But the SPD has made the situation particularly complicated by demanding a national referendum on Czechia's exit from both the EU and NATO. Andrej told reporters: "We want to save Europe... We are clearly pro-Europe and pro-NATO," President Petr Pavel also said that he would not accept the appointment of anti-EU and anti-NATO ministers, again singling out the SPD. For the time being, Fiala's government will continue to exercise its functions of managing the country, until Babiš is able to organize a functioning executive.

For Europe, Babiš's return represents a change that goes beyond the national context of Czechia, as it is a phenomenon that is affecting a specific part of Central Europe, with a return of the eurosceptic conservatism traditionally associated with the member states of the Visegrad Group, which since the legislative elections in Czechia in 2021 and Poland in 2023, saw a growing division inside of the group, with these two states moving away from Orbán's Hungary and Fico's Slovakia. Andrej's return, together with Nawrocki's election to the presidency of Poland in the same year, indicates that the group will come closer again, something impactful especially for the European Union, due to the veto power of each member-state, which will possibly lead to the repeal of the individual veto, as has been previously discussed among the member-states.

Babiš has also said that he intends to abandon the international Czech initiative started by the previous government to arm Ukraine, by saying that the scheme costs a lot of money and that there was a lot of corruption among the arms producers involved, a narrative refuted by Czech arms producers. However, Andrej says he will not withdraw all support for Ukraine, nor will he support the expulsion of Ukrainian refugees as suggested by the SPD, having even spoken with Volodymyr Zelensky in an attempt to reach a compromise that both sides may agree with, an effort that the Ukrainian president thanked him for.



Andrej Babiš, leader of the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO11) and Prime-Minister of the Czech Republic, together with Herbert Kickl, leader of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and Viktor Orbán, leader of the Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz), current Prime-Minister of Hungary, shake hands together during a press conference in Vienna, Austria, on 30 June 2024. (Photo by TOBIAS STEINMAURER/APA/AFP via Getty Images)

Change of Leadership in Japan

By João Confraria

“Japan seems to be no exception” despite being one of the most stable political systems in the world. This has been the recurring phrase among analysts since October 4, when the leadership change within Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) became known. The issue at hand is the election of the new leader of the LDP, who is also the first woman with a real chance of becoming prime minister. To understand the election of the strongly conservative Sanae Takaichi, it is necessary to grasp the almost unprecedented instability that Japan is currently experiencing in its post-war period.

Firstly, over the past five years, Japan has had four prime ministers, all from the LDP, which has governed almost continuously for the past 30 years. Secondly, a driving force behind this governmental instability was the financial scandal that hit the LDP in 2023, when it was revealed that the party had received large amounts of undocumented funding, generating significant public discontent. Thirdly, rising inflation and the deterioration of living conditions appear to have been another source of discontent, especially as they have brought back memories of the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. It is worth remembering that Japanese society and economic policy have traditionally been guided by strict fiscal discipline and tight control of inflation. Fourthly, instability also stems from the significant growth of the far right in the last legislative elections, particularly the Sanseito Party and its charismatic leader, whose style resembles that of figures such as Javier Milei — being, for example, extremely active and well known on social media and YouTube. With the increasing digitalization of Japanese society, the deterioration and trivialization of politics seems to have reached a society once regarded as one of the most stable in the world. Fifthly, the growing wave of immigration in Japan has provoked mounting public indignation, leading the otherwise moderate LDP to increasingly yield to the far-right narrative, which has been notably xenophobic and aggressive, reflecting a society still highly resistant to multiculturalism.

It is within this context — and amid the urgent need to renew the LDP’s leadership and image — that Sanae Takaichi, a staunch conservative, steps in. Takaichi was chosen as the new leader of the LDP primarily for two reasons. First, she symbolizes a transformation within the party by being the first woman to lead it — an important gesture in a society that, over the past 20 years, has seen growing demands for greater gender equality. This move is also expected to help the LDP attract female voters. Second, Takaichi is crucial for the LDP because she stands among its most conservative figures, at a time when an increasing share of votes has been going to new parties further to the right — that is, toward Japan’s far right.



Sanae Takaichi, new leader of the LDP and Prime-Minister of Japan (Source: NPR)

To appeal to that electorate, Takaichi has emphasized her hardline positions, pledging to tighten immigration controls and restrict current policies even further. In doing so, she aims to retain the votes of right-wing voters who view Japan's recent openness to immigration with suspicion and discomfort. Beyond immigration, Takaichi has also vowed to revise the Constitution, particularly regarding the restrictions on Japan's rearmament — a matter

that had long been consensual across the political spectrum, but which now faces renewed debate amid the perceived Chinese threat and the rise of nationalism in Japan.

It seems the constitutional “red lines” are on the verge of being crossed. Another distinctive trait of Takaichi's platform is her willingness to break with Japan's long-standing economic orthodoxy, established after the 1990s financial crisis. She promises an expansionary monetary policy, a possible increase in the budget deficit, and significant tax cuts. In response, the markets have already reacted — with 30-year Japanese government bond yields rising and the yen slightly depreciating against the euro and the dollar. Comparisons are already being made between Takaichi and Liz Truss. Such an expansionary policy would have to be financed through additional debt, bearing in mind that Japan already has the highest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Combined with a more protectionist environment and reduced trade and financial flows, political instability and a potential fiscal shock could push Japan into a difficult situation, even though its industrial sector has so far been able to sustain rising levels of public debt. Moreover, the prospect of Takaichi's election has already raised alarms in Beijing and Seoul, as the more assertive stance expected from a new Tokyo government threatens to heighten tensions in the Pacific and revive memories — among Chinese and Koreans — of Japan's militarist past. However, Takaichi still faces political hurdles before she can become prime minister, especially after the withdrawal of the coalition partner Komeito. She is now seeking the support of the Japan Innovation Party to form a governing majority, countering a new right-wing coalition emerging as an alternative to the LDP's long rule, led by Yuichiro Tamaki, head of the Constitutional Democratic Party. This opposing coalition — which would include the Democratic Party for the People and Komeito — would hold more seats than the LDP alone, but would lose if the Innovation Party joined forces with the LDP, as is currently expected. According to analysts at the time of this article's writing, there was a 75% probability that Takaichi will become Japan's next prime minister, which ended up occurring on the 21st of October. Sanae Takaichi — a woman who idolizes Margaret Thatcher, and who has been a minister, TV presenter, and even a heavy metal drummer — now appears to have the red carpet rolled out to bring about profound changes in Japanese politics and respond to the growing demands of Japanese society.

Perhaps, then, this truly is an era of strong men and women.

Impeachment of Peru's President

By Maria Neves

Dina Boluarte, the President of Peru, was removed from office in the early hours of October 10 by the Congress of the Republic in the nation's capital. This removal followed several weeks of political turmoil (including protests and corruption allegations) linked to the so-called Rolex watches scandal.



Dina Boluarte, former president of Peru (Source: Expresso)

Boluarte had appeared at public events wearing Rolex watches valued between \$14,000 and \$18,800 each. The possession of such luxury items was deemed incompatible with her official salary and the assets she had declared to the authorities.

The irregularity of the situation prompted action from the Peruvian Public Prosecutor's Office, which opened an investigation into illicit enrichment and ordered searches of the presidential residence and office. During the operation, conducted on March 30, 2024, several luxury watches and pieces of jewelry were discovered, further intensifying suspicions about their origin.

Political and Institucional Context

At the time of her removal, Dina Boluarte held the lowest approval rating in Peru's history, merely 2%. This unpopularity stemmed, among other factors, from the so-called *Rolexgate* scandal, which ultimately led to her dismissal.

This political and judicial scandal was first exposed in March 2024 by the Peruvian press, which reported that



Protests against the President (Source: RFI)

President Dina Boluarte stated that the watches were “loans from a personal friend” and that she wore them only on “special occasions.” She also claimed to be the victim of “political persecution.” However, the lack of transparency, initial non-cooperation with the Public Prosecutor’s Office, and the inconsistencies in Boluarte’s statements further deepened public mistrust.

In this context, the Congress of the Republic initiated a political process to assess the president’s *“moral capacity”* to perform her duties. This constitutional mechanism, established under *Article 113 of the Political Constitution of Peru (1933)*, outlines the grounds on which Congress may declare the office of the Presidency vacant. The specific clause used to justify Dina Boluarte’s removal was Article 113, paragraph 2: *“Permanent moral or physical incapacity, declared by Congress.”* This article, which is broadly applicable due to the constitution’s failure to define the concept of *moral incapacity*, has been highly controversial, though frequently invoked. Following weeks of protests and widespread popular mobilization, Congress voted with 122 votes in favor of the president’s removal out of a total of 130 members.

This scandal fits within a broader regional trend of eroding public trust in presidential and democratic systems. Since 2016 ,beginning with President Pedro Kuczynski, Peru has experienced a profound period of institutional instability, as no president has completed their term in office since then. According to the OECD report *“Towards a National Integrity and Transparency System in Peru: Ensuring Impact through Greater Coherence and Coordination”*, approximately 90.3% of Peruvians believe that the country is *“governed for the benefit of a few powerful groups rather than in the public interest.”* The same report indicates that 70.5% of Peruvians say they do not trust either Congress or the Government. These findings reveal a deep and persistent institutional mistrust between citizens and the institutions meant to represent them.

The future of Peru

The previously described circumstances led José Jerí (formerly President of Congress) to assume the interim presidency through institutional succession. This transition has been accompanied by continued political instability, as Jerí was not directly elected and therefore possesses lower democratic legitimacy and reduced public trust. The political situation is further compounded by Peru’s social reality, in which civil society demands more effective government action in response to rising crime and violence, alongside growing dissatisfaction with the functioning of institutions. The next presidential election cycle is scheduled for April 2026.



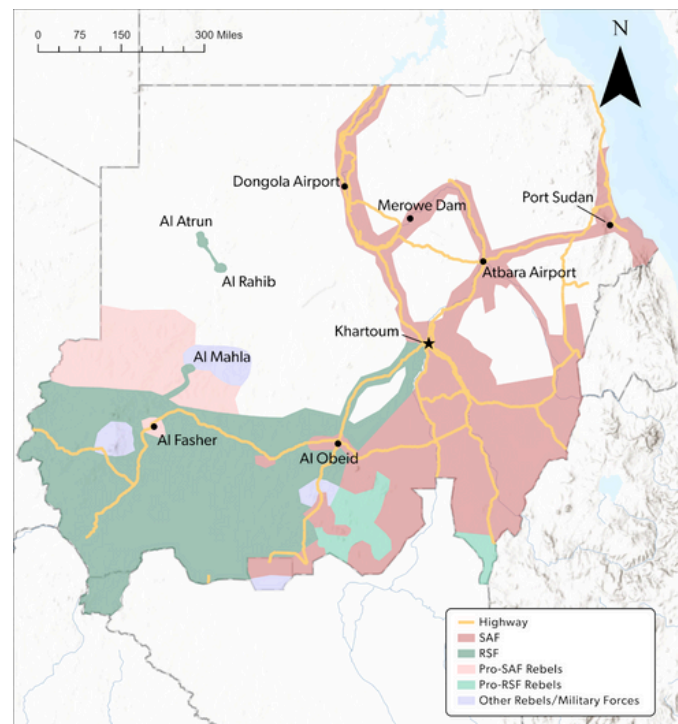
José Jerí assumes the presidency (Source: TVPerú)

Conflict Clarified: Sudanese Civil War

By Dario Vargas

What conflict is this?

On April 15, 2023, a civil war broke out in Sudan, fought between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a militia created in 2013 to fight in the Darfur War, with the external intervention of several states—particularly Egypt, which supports the SAF, and the United Arab Emirates, a benefactor of the RSF. This conflict is the latest episode in a long history of instability since the country's independence.



Map of Sudan showing territory under SAF control (red) and RSF control (green) in April 2025 (Source: Institute for the Study of War / Kathryn Tyson)

How did it begin?

The origins of the Sudanese civil war lie in a struggle for power between the SAF and the RSF, which were once allies, that escalated into armed conflict in 2023. However, to understand this, it is necessary to look at the context behind the rise of these two main military forces in the country.

In 1956, Sudan gained independence from the United Kingdom and Egypt, which had jointly ruled the country since 1899. However, the new nation suffered from deep

ethnic tensions between the north, a more developed, Muslim Arab-majority region where the country's political elites came from, and the south (now South Sudan), which was mostly non-Muslim and less developed. These tensions led to a series of armed conflicts from the 1960s to the 1980s, particularly the First Sudanese Civil War (1955–1972), fought between southern militias and the Sudanese government.

Alongside this southern conflict, Sudan also faced a series of coups d'état between the 1960s and 1980s, resulting in the rise of various military regimes interrupted by short periods of civilian rule. Tensions between left- and right-wing groups contributed to political instability, particularly during democratic governments. Additionally, starting in 1965, the fundamentalist National Islamic Front (NIF), aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, an international Islamist organization founded in 1928, began infiltrating the civil administration and armed forces, seeking influence over education as well.

In 1972, the First Sudanese Civil War ended with the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement, which halted hostilities in exchange for the creation of an autonomous southern region. This began a period of economic expansion that was later followed by a crisis in the 1980s, caused by mismanagement, rising oil prices, and a brain drain that deprived the country of skilled workers. This, combined with the outbreak of the Second Sudanese Civil War in 1983, triggered by the government's violation of southern autonomy and the imposition of an Islamic government, led to a military coup that temporarily restored democracy.

This new regime, however, proved unstable and unable to solve the country's deep-seated problems. In 1989, Colonel Omar al-Bashir, supported by the SAF, led a military coup and established a dictatorial regime backed by fundamentalist Islamist groups.

Al-Bashir's government, marked by numerous human rights violations, negotiated an end to the Second Sudanese Civil War in 2005. The peace agreement allowed for a referendum on southern independence after a six-year period. In 2011, this referendum resulted in an overwhelming vote for independence, and on July 9, 2011, South Sudan became an independent nation.

At the same time as the war in the south was ending, rebel forces in Darfur, a region in western Sudan, rose up against the government in 2003, accusing it of discriminating against non-Arab populations. The government responded by supporting Arab militias known as the Janjaweed to fight the rebels. During this conflict, both the government and the Janjaweed, who would evolve into the RSF in 2013, were accused of crimes against humanity and genocide, leading to an international arrest warrant against al-Bashir.

Widespread discontent with the regime led to mass protests between 2018 and 2019 and eventually to al-Bashir's ousting by the SAF and RSF, previously pillars of his government. In the aftermath of the coup, the two forces formed a transitional government that initially included figures from civil society. However, in 2021, the two military groups staged another coup against the civilian government, suspended the constitution, and established a military-led transitional regime.

A new agreement between civil society, the SAF, and the RSF later attempted to lay the groundwork for a democratic transition. Among other provisions, the agreement called for the integration of the RSF into the national armed forces, a measure that became a major point of contention between the two sides and ultimately derailed the plan.

With no agreement reached and no move toward civilian rule, tensions between the SAF and RSF escalated, culminating in 2023 with a series of attacks in Khartoum, Sudan's capital. This forced the military government to flee, thus sparking the current civil war. Throughout the conflict, which has seen the involvement of various foreign actors, the frontlines have remained fluid. After the SAF recaptured Khartoum and the RSF consolidated its control over Darfur, the war settled into a west-east division.

What is its significance for Portugal?

Portugal maintains diplomatic relations with Sudan, represented through its embassy in Cairo and an Honorary Consulate in Port Sudan, the current seat of the Sudanese government.

Due to Portugal's limited diplomatic presence in Sudan, the conflict's emergence alongside the Gaza War and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the marginal impact of the war on national and global economies, the Portuguese government's response has been limited. Its involvement has focused mainly on rescue missions for Portuguese citizens at the outbreak of hostilities and participation in European Union-led actions.

In addition, several humanitarian organizations operating in Portugal have sought donations to provide aid to the Sudanese population.

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