

# Americas

## QUARTERLY

# WHAT THE ELECTION MEANS FOR LATIN AMERICA



NO. 3, 2024 AMERICASQUARTERLY.ORG \$9.95



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# Americas

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# An American Election

**In this issue, authors explore the impact another Donald Trump or Joe Biden term would have on the Americas.**



IT IS A COMMON LAMENT that Washington does not pay enough attention to Latin America and the Caribbean. But in many ways, the region is front and center for the U.S. election happening on November 5.

Immigration, drug trafficking, nearshoring and infrastructure investment are all important issues in this election — and they all touch on Latin America. So for this issue, we asked former advisers to both President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump to explain what another term for their onetime boss would mean for the region.

Their articles may surprise some readers. Mauricio Claver-Carone, the top White House official for Latin America under Trump, writes in his article of “the inextricable link between U.S. national security and mutual economic growth.” He is critical of the Biden administration for allegedly not focusing more on nearshoring opportunities in the Western Hemisphere, spelling out a vision that would pull countries closer while urging them not to do trade deals with China.

In the Biden-focused essay, former National Security Council officials Ricardo Zúniga and Nicholas Zimmerman write of how the incumbent has rebuilt the United States’ reputation in Latin America after the damage of the Trump years. They contend that Trump “empowered populists,” while Biden “actually defended democracy in Brazil and Guatemala against efforts to overturn the will of voters.”

Of course, it’s not just foreign policy issues that matter. An estimated 36 million Latino voters will be eligible to vote in November, up from 32 million in 2020. They will account for nearly 15% of the overall electorate, a record, at a time when some polls suggest this bloc is swinging toward Trump. It’s conceivable that people of Latin American descent will decide this election — and therefore what kind of U.S. policy toward the region prevails. [AQ](#)

# Four More Years

Joe Biden and Donald Trump are set to face off in the U.S. election. Each has a track record as president that can be mined for clues as to what four more years might mean for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Major question marks loom as well.

*Our special report starts on page 18.*

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Former National Security Council directors see stronger democracies, greater cooperation and a safer, more integrated hemisphere.

*By Ricardo Zúñiga and Nicholas Zimmerman*

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A former National Security Council director expects faster growth, tougher security and greater isolation for the region's dictatorships.

*By Mauricio Claver-Carone*

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Major moments and key decisions that shaped U.S. relations with the region during the two presidents' terms

*By Rich Brown and Emilie Sweigart*

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What is the single most important issue the next U.S. administration will face in Latin America?

*By Iván Duque, Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado and Samuel Pérez*

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The victor in November should pay more attention to Latin America and the Caribbean.

*By Susan Segal*

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A small group of Maya women restoring mangrove forests on Mexico's Yucatán coast have become a model for the region.

*Photos by Bénédicte Desrus*

*Reporting by Mark Viales*

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*By Robert Muggah and Katherine Aguirre*

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### **Ricardo Zúniga**

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Zúniga is a founding partner of Dinámica Americas and a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer. In his 30-year State Department career, he served in Mexico, Portugal, Cuba, Spain and Brazil and was National Security Council Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere in the Obama administration.



### **Nicholas Zimmerman**

---

Zimmerman is a founding partner of Dinámica Americas, a global fellow at the Brazil Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and a senior advisor at WestExec Advisors. He was Senior Policy Advisor to the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and National Security Council Director for Brazil and Southern Cone Affairs in the Obama administration.



### **Mauricio Claver-Carone**

---

Claver-Carone is a Miami-based private-equity investor focused on energy and infrastructure in the Americas. He was a U.S. Treasury and National Security Council senior official in the Trump administration and president of the Inter-American Development Bank from 2020-22.



### **Bénédicte Desrus**

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Desrus is a French documentary photographer based in Mexico City focused on social issues, human rights and the lives of marginalized people and their communities. Her recent work has explored the experiences of elderly sex workers in Mexico City, the persecution of gay people in Uganda and the global obesity epidemic.



### **Carlos A. Pérez Ricart**

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Pérez Ricart is an assistant professor of international relations at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE) in Mexico City. He is also a member of Mexico's truth commission investigating human rights violations committed from 1965 to 1990 (COVEH).

Tell us what you think. Please send letters to [Brian@as-coa.org](mailto:Brian@as-coa.org)



El Estrecho de Magallanes, vía marítima donde se sitúa Punta Arenas, ha sido testigo de un notable aumento en el tránsito de buques mercantes en los primeros meses de este año. *Americas Quarterly* señaló en un reciente reportaje, indicó un incremento del 25% en enero y febrero en comparación con el mismo período del año anterior, y un 83% en comparación con 2021. La Armada de Chile anticipa un posible aumento del 70% en el tránsito marítimo para 2024.

# SEMAFOR

Punta Arenas, a port city in southern Chile, has gained interest from both the US and China, highlighting the two nations' dueling interests in Latin America. The remote port, which sits on the Strait of Magellan between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, has become a hotspot for global shipping as traffic across the Panama Canal has plummeted amid a historic drought there. The fight for influence in Latin America comes as the US has awoken to what some see as a decades-long "incursion by its strategic rival into home turf," the *Financial Times* wrote. "We're in a part of the world that's increasingly strategic, and it transcends the country," the mayor of Punta Arenas told *Americas Quarterly*.

# GAZETA DO POVO



Mapa ilustrativo mostra o Estreito de Magalhães, que liga os oceanos Atlântico e Pacífico.  
Crédito: Revista Americas Quarterly

# LA NACION

## ¿Por qué Estados Unidos y China se agolpan sobre un puerto en el sur de Chile?

Punta Arenas es una parte clave en la cambiante esfera de rutas marítimas, nuevas industrias como el hidrógeno verde y la carrera por la Antártida  
24 de abril de 2024 • 11:20

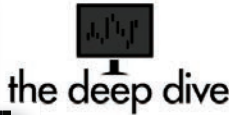
# EL PINGÜINO

## Medio estadounidense destacó interés de grandes potencias por Punta Arenas

*Americas Quarterly* destacó esta semana la creciente importancia estratégica internacional de la capital magallánica, debido al desarrollo de la industria de hidrógeno verde, el hecho de ser una puerta de entrada a la Antártica y su valor cada vez mayor ante la crisis de rutas marítimas clave como el Canal de Panamá y el Mar Rojo... todo lo cual ha atraído el interés de las superpotencias.

# Pledge Times

"We are in a part of the world that is increasingly strategic and that transcends the country," said the mayor of Punta Arenas, Claudio Radonich, to the magazine *Americas Quarterly*.



# La CUARTA EL DIARIO POP

Y junto con ello, Punta Arenas se ha posicionado como uno de los puertos que ha despertado mayor interés en el globo, según aseguraron analistas a *Americas Quarterly* (AQ).



News clippings from around the hemisphere feature content from AQ's previous issue on ports.





**Gonzalo Escudero Achondo**  
Socio Fundador Regionaliza.me  
Regionaliza.Me · MIT Sloan School of Management

Interesante artículo en [Americas Quarterly](#) sobre cómo el potencial del hidrógeno verde y la investigación de minerales en la Antártica está generando interés geopolítico 🌐🔬 sobre el extremo sur de Chile 🇨🇪. Sin duda es una oportunidad única para aprovechar la descentralización de Chile a través del desarrollo económico que se proyecta para Magallanes 📈.



**Andrew Baskin** · 3rd  
Vice President, Global Policy and Trade |  
General Counsel at HudsonAnalytix  
HudsonAnalytix · William & Mary

Great article about port security in Latin America in [Americas Quarterly](#) with reference to the [Organización de los Estados Americanos](#) Maritime Cybersecurity Guidelines that [Max Bobys](#) and I contributed to.



**Roberto Ampuero**  
@robertoampuero  
Escritor. Ex Canciller y ex ministro cultura de Chile, ex embajador ante España, Andorra y México. Académico USS y Prof Visitante UFT.

RECOMIENDO este artículo sobre Punta Arenas y China y EEUU: “Why the U.S. and China Suddenly Care About a Port in Southern Chile” | 🇺🇸🇨🇪🇨🇪🇺 @PuntaArenasCL @AKusanovicG @jorgeguzman



**Jorge Heine**  
@jorgeheinel  
Profesor de RRII, Pardee School of Global Studies, Universidad de Boston. Ex Embajador de Chile en China, en India y en Sudáfrica. Instagram @jorgeheine

#PuntaArenas aumentará en 70% ? Y q el interés en el #hidrogenoverde no para ? Qué hay tras el nuevo auge d la capital del fin del mundo ? Agudo artículo en @AmerQuarterly. @ernestsepulveda @dondavor @JorgeFlies tinyurl.com/22c8ccwe

**Ryan Berg, PhD**

**@RyanBergPhD** #Ecuador: Wondering who is driving Caso Metástasis in Ecuador? @AmerQuarterly has a solid profile of @DianaSalazarM2. Four hours of sleep a night, and the rest of her waking hours trying to clean up the country's corruption—a true public servant.

**Juan Nagel**

**@juannagel** I was in the region last February, and you can sense the enormous potential, almost breathe it. The piece captures that well. On-site, investigative journalism at its best. Congratulations @GaripPatricia @BrazilBrian @AmerQuarterly.

**Verónica Calderón** 

**@veronicalderon** Las consecuencias de un eventual conflicto China-Taiwán sobre América Latina. Una lectura interesante en @AmerQuarterly.

**Carlos Pérez**

**@caperex** Recomendando enfáticamente, especialmente a colegas y funcionarios de Gob. Nacional, Gobernaciones, Alcaldías y Cámaras de Comercio, esta nota en la que @LuisFerMejia explica por qué el mayor desafío de la economía nacional es impulsar la inversión privada en sectores estratégicos.

**Cindy Arnson**

**@CindyArnson** #Venezuela 7/28 election reflects an “existential conflict for both camps. Elections can only draw one winner and several losers. A defeat without a firmly previously negotiated settlement represents costs and risks...not worth taking.” @penfold\_michael @AmerQuarterly @LATAMProg

AQ

THE BIG  
PICTURE

A worker on a citrus farm in Brazil's Minas Gerais state harvests tangerines in June. The country's citrus industry is in the grip of a crisis, as a disease called "greening" affects trees. Production is set to drop by a quarter this year.

PHOTO BY PEDRO VILELA/GETTY







Mexico's President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum, left, and Mexico City Mayor-elect Clara Brugada wave to supporters after the capital's electoral institute certified Brugada's victory. The Morena party, to which both belong, secured a surprisingly large landslide victory in the June 2 elections.

PHOTO BY HECTOR VIVAS/GETTY

AQ

THE BIG  
PICTURE



A statue of Nobel Prize-winning Guatemalan poet and novelist Miguel Ángel Asturias stands on Guatemala City's Avenida Reforma. In June his family announced his remains would be repatriated from Paris to the nation's capital, 50 years after his death.

PHOTO BY JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP/GETTY







AQ

THE BIG  
PICTURE

Venezuelan opposition candidate Edmundo González Urrutia speaks at an event dubbed "Women with Edmundo" in Caracas. María Corina Machado, the leader of Venezuela's opposition, is backing González Urrutia in elections scheduled for July 28 after she was banned from running.

PHOTO BY JUAN BARRETO/AFP/GETTY







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## AS HEARD ON THE AMERICAS QUARTERLY PODCAST

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Experts and policymakers join AQ's Editor-in-Chief Brian Winter to discuss the issues currently shaping Latin American politics, economics and culture.



*“We have eight ports that are going to be inaugurated in Peru, all of them looking at the Pacific. This is a big opportunity to benefit from trade not only with China, but all of Asia. For some reason, we never explored that, and the Chinese have come and showed us that we do have a strategic position.”*

—Alfredo Thorne, former finance minister of Peru (2016-17)



*“Why is it that Argentines are sticking with Milei? People think that what is on the other side is significantly worse than whatever Milei has done until now. In order for them to cross the river into that awful country, the stakes have to be really high.”*

—Ana Iparraguirre, political strategy consultant at GBAO



*“What Latin America is perhaps angry about is that the counter-narcotics messages coming out of Washington are about interdicting and stopping the flow of drugs into the United States, and not so much about fighting organized crime groups at home and engaging in harm reduction at home.”*

—Jeremy McDermott, co-director and co-founder of InSight Crime

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**EUGENIO RENGIFO**

46 years old

Frutillar, Chile

Executive director of Chile's national environmental fund **Fondo Naturaleza Chile** (FNC), established in 2021

**What they do**

FNC raises and manages funds for nature conservation projects, working closely with the government, the private sector and local communities. According to FNC, Chile invests much less in conservation than a country of its wealth and biodiversity should.

## Q&A: THE FUND PROTECTING CHILE'S BIODIVERSITY

*by Emilie Sweigart*

**AQ:** Which FNC conservation projects would you highlight?

**ER:** We are working in the Juan Fernández archipelago with funding from Teck, a mining company, and we are evaluating what we will finance on the ground. Because of last summer's terrifying wildfires, the government and the private sector asked us to develop a fund for fire restoration and management. We are committed to restoring the National Botanical Garden in Viña del Mar, which was almost totally burned down.


**AQ:** How far is Chile from reaching adequate funding for conservation?

**ER:** The financing gap in marine protected areas is 96%. On land, we are investing \$1 to \$1.50 per hectare, and we know we need at least \$15 or more. Chile has 23% of its land and 43% of its maritime zone protected, but we need to move forward now to provide effective conservation, and we need money to do that.

**AQ:** How does FNC help to close this gap?

**ER:** Our role is to move resources from philanthropy, corporate funding, and international donations from the public and private sectors to accomplish Chile's national environmental goals. Chile is one of the last countries on our continent that decided to have a national conservation trust fund, and we are looking at the scope of long-term intervention. We have never had that kind of institution before.

**AQ:** What challenges does Chile face in protecting its biodiversity?

**ER:** Chile plays a planetary role, and it's the nursery of life in the Pacific Ocean. What we do here affects all countries with a Pacific coast. The role the ocean plays in the Chilean economy is very important. I think the environment is the only agenda where the country can be united under a common objective, and we have an opportunity to do it better. 



Torres del Paine National Park, southern Chile

.....  
*Sweigart is an editor at AQ*

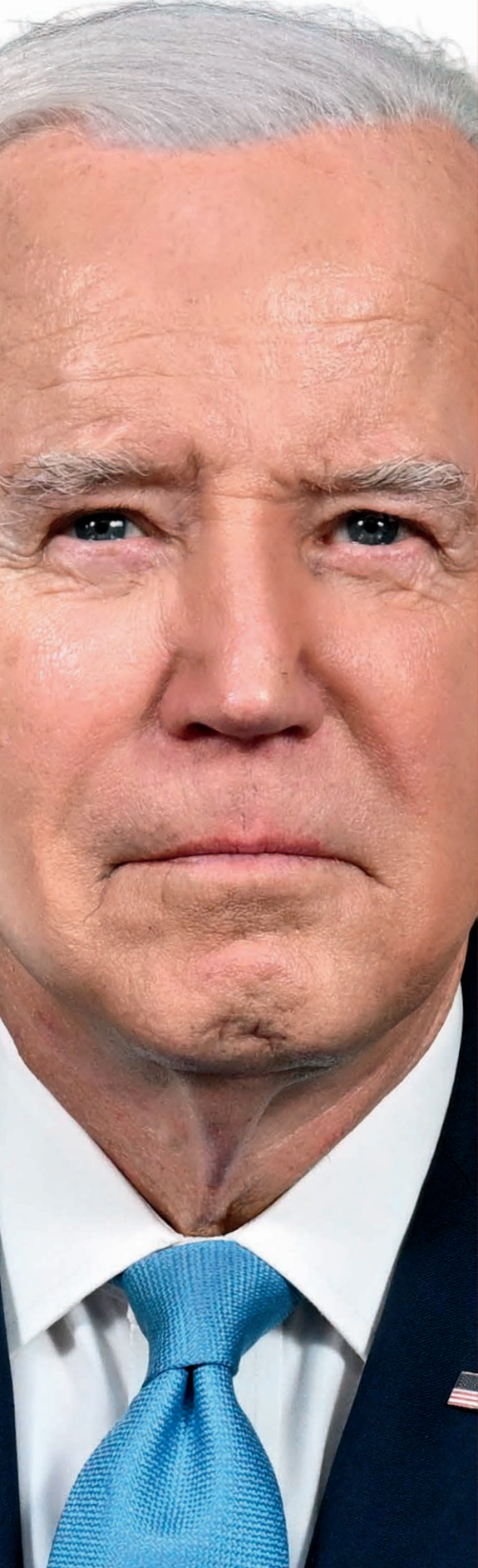
THIS INTERVIEW HAS BEEN EDITED FOR CLARITY AND LENGTH

SPECIAL SECTION

# WHAT THE ELECTION MEANS FOR LATIN AMERICA

**For this issue, *AQ* invited former foreign policy officials from both the Trump and Biden administrations to offer their analysis of what another term for their former bosses might look like.**







# IN THE AMERICAS, BIDEN'S "SOFT POWER MATTERS"

**A second Biden term would continue to promote democracy while addressing hotspots like Haiti and Venezuela, two former national security officials write.**

*By Ricardo Zúniga and Nicholas Zimmerman*

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**F**EW ELECTIONS WILL IMPACT LATIN AMERICA and the Caribbean as much as the upcoming contest between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Current trends in the region make the stakes especially high. The region has struggled in recent years with economic stagnation, widespread corruption, misinformation and COVID-19. Those challenges have, in turn, shaken faith in democracy, increased political polarization, and created a historic wave of migration — with 22 million people displaced across the hemisphere (7.7 million from Venezuela alone since 2015).

## If Biden Wins

Amid these challenges, the contrast between Biden and Trump's policy toward the Americas has been stark. Whereas Trump's presidency damaged Washington's standing in the region, Biden has worked to restore U.S. leadership and trust to partner on shared challenges. While Trump empowered populists who preferred a Washington that ignored concerns related to corruption or democracy as long as they claimed to curb migration, or made symbolic (but rarely substantive) gestures to side with him against China, Biden actually defended democracy in Brazil and Guatemala against efforts to overturn the will of voters.

The region has clearly taken note of the difference. According to Gallup polling, a record 58% of people in the Americas disapproved of U.S. leadership after Trump's first year in office in 2017, a number that remained above 50% throughout Trump's term. In comparison, regional disapproval dropped to 32% after Biden's first year in office in 2021 and it has remained below 40% since then. Put simply, soft power matters — and Trump's transactional foreign policy style undermined Washington's strategic operating space in the Americas because it weakened regional confidence in the United States as a reliable partner. Worse yet, Trump's ineffectiveness came at a time when Washington's global leadership has become increasingly challenged by China. The United States' foreign policy institutions and frameworks are still adapting to an evolving multipolar order that affords regions like Latin America more opportunities to pick and choose between big powers.

With that context upon taking office, Biden had to first focus on the global pandemic response and historic levels of irregular migration. He did so while also crafting a coherent policy agenda to buttress regional democracy. He also sought to restore trust in U.S.

leadership by working in partnership with the region rather than by fiat, including on persistent problems such as promoting a democratic opening in Venezuela and addressing increasingly sophisticated organized crime networks. Biden subsequently launched strategic initiatives that reflect that the Americas feed the world, increasingly fuel the world, and are essential to the clean energy transition that combating climate change requires.

Looking ahead, we should expect Biden to drive an agenda aimed at further capturing strategic opportunities while also investing in efforts to make democracies more resilient and responsive to the aspirations of their citizens. The challenges will not fade, but Biden has laid the groundwork to pursue durable solutions to these challenges with another four years.

## The Front-Burner Issues

### I. GETTING NORTH AMERICA RIGHT

In a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, North American competitiveness is essential to U.S. national security and prosperity. As such, the relationship with the next Mexican government will be central to Biden 2.0's success. Under President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum's leadership, Mexico's governing style will change; the substance of Morena governance probably less so. Migration grabs the headlines, but the most important phenomenon in U.S. relations with Mexico is the deepening integration between our economies. As Washington seeks to de-risk from China and boost domestic investment through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and CHIPS and Science Act, Mexico has become an essential component of the new U.S. industrial policy, as nearshoring has gone from talking point to growing reality.

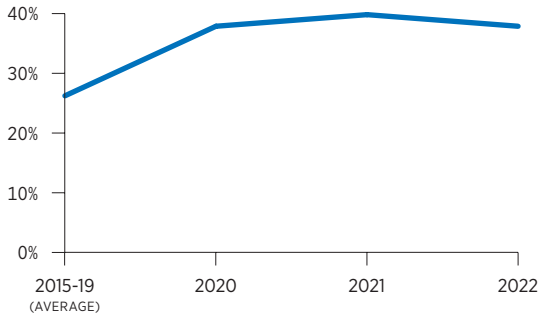


**Biden defended democracy in Brazil and Guatemala against efforts to overturn the will of voters.**



## U.S. FDI in the region remains high after a pandemic spike

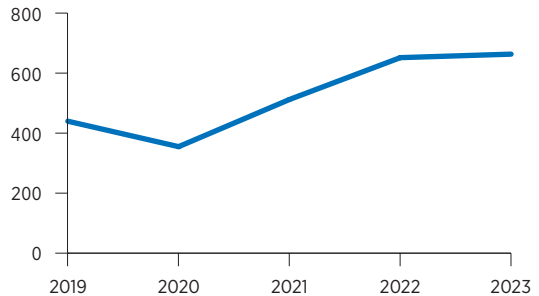
U.S. SHARE OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



NOTE: DATA REPRESENTS 11 COUNTRIES: BOLIVIA, BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA, THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, ECUADOR, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, MEXICO AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
SOURCE: ECLAC FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (2023)

## U.S. trade with the region has boomed

TOTAL TRADE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN USD (BILLIONS), FIRST SIX MONTHS OF EACH YEAR



SOURCE: ECLAC, U.S.-LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN TRADE DEVELOPMENTS REPORTS (2020-23)

This raises the stakes of the 2026 U.S.-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) review, which Biden would approach with care to avoid the uncertainty that surrounded the Trump administration’s grandstanding during initial negotiations. Biden will need to be sensitive to Mexican and Canadian concerns regarding his emphasis on boosting U.S.-origin products, while also seeking compromises with Sheinbaum over Mexican agricultural and energy policies that seemingly violate USMCA regulations and that have understandably concerned the U.S. Congress. Another likely priority for Biden would be closing the transshipment loophole that Trump’s negotiators failed to account for in the original deal, thereby enabling Chinese companies to bypass tariffs by establishing assembly operations in Mexico. China’s role in Mexico’s economy could easily become a lasting source of bilateral friction.

Looking forward, the two countries share increasingly convergent interests on migration, organized crime, and fentanyl — none of which can be addressed by GOP calls for unilateral military actions in Mexico against cartels. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has been a partner on migration, but hypersensitive on organized crime and fentanyl production. Biden will need to evaluate closely how much of

that sensitivity transfers to the Sheinbaum team and will need to assess how the recent attacks on Mexico’s democratic institutions could shape the future of this critical partner.

## 2. REGIONALIZING THE MIGRATION RESPONSE

Mass migration is now an entrenched phenomenon affecting most of the Americas. Though not the primary destination for the 22 million displaced or migrating people of the region, the United States is the country most politically affected by such movements. There are Republican and Democratic federal, state and local leaders around the country who could swiftly agree to support a modernized immigration system that would bring greater order, fairness and security to the process. Unfortunately, there is little hope for even modest immigration reform as long as “replacement theory” and racially infused Trump campaign promises to deport millions outweigh economic needs, rule of law and basic human rights in the minds of GOP legislators.

Without modernized laws, Biden will have to focus on making the broken U.S. immigration system work as well as possible — and look for progress beyond

## If Biden Wins

U.S. borders. One potentially far-reaching accomplishment in Biden's first term was the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, which enshrined the notion of regional migration as a shared responsibility rather than a contest between source and destination countries. Regional action to update temporary labor programs and promote circular migration would represent valuable progress, especially if accompanied by improved protections against labor abuses. Even more important would be advances in reducing political drivers of migration, such as the crisis in Venezuela.

### 3. PUTTING OUT FIRES: VENEZUELA AND HAITI

Venezuela remains a powerful drag on regional stability, security and development. It has become a bulwark for organized crime and the largest source of irregular migration in the history of South America, which, in turn, has strained communities and contributed to popular dissatisfaction throughout the region.

Biden inherited a Trump-era “Maximum Pressure” strategy that had failed. While U.S. sanctions were crippling, they were not fatal to Nicolás Maduro and were not used strategically by Trump to begin a viable process to break the political impasse and empower the Venezuelan opposition. Nor was the Trump team's initial success in winning international support for Juan Guaidó sustainable after the latter lost public support when he proved unable to chip away at Maduro's power.

Biden recognized the need to use sanctions as negotiating leverage in support of Venezuela's democratic actors to force Maduro into competitive elections. Biden's approach supported the emergence of a cohesive Venezuelan opposition determined to box the deeply unpopular Maduro into elections. The Barbados Agreement represented a major turning point, even with Maduro's efforts to not comply with free elections. Maduro must now either abide by a competitive election or undertake repressive measures no democracy in the region is likely to accept as legitimate.

If the opposition wins, Biden's focus on regional

diplomacy may prove decisive in pushing Maduro to recognize the results. Along with Brazil and Colombia, Biden will play a central role in promoting a forward-looking transition in Venezuela — or in holding Maduro accountable if he seeks to evade the popular will.

The grave situation in Haiti will also continue to demand attention. After months of behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts to assemble and deploy a UN stabilization force, there is hope that the Kenya-led security mission will reduce gang violence and provide some breathing space amidst a still-fragile political process and skeleton government. As painstaking as Biden's approach may appear, it reflects a recognition that no solution can be imposed from the outside, while also acknowledging that foreign actors must help enable conditions for a Haitian-led recovery. Trump, in contrast, would almost certainly turn his back on any U.S. effort to address the emergency in Haiti and suspend aid, as he did previously in Central America.

### 4. RETHINKING ORGANIZED CRIME

The breakdown of order in Ecuador and the expanding reach of criminal organizations underscore the need for an updated strategy for countering organized crime in the Americas. The cartels of the past have morphed into organized multinational businesses with global reach and resilient supply chains. Mexican organizations in particular have taken advantage not only of their penetration of the massive U.S. consumer market, but also of their ties to counterpart organizations throughout the region. South American prison-based gangs are now essential components of these global networks, especially as rival groups vie for control of ports on both coasts to service burgeoning cocaine markets in Europe and Asia. Mass irregular migration provided another important revenue source for criminal groups, both for migrant smugglers and those extorting vulnerable populations.

Increased criminal capacity, revenue and violence heighten citizen frustrations and pose as great a threat to democracy in the region as any authoritarian leader. Biden 2.0 will need to consider a regional



Leaders from across the Americas gathered at the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity summit in November.

response that improves information-sharing and judicial cooperation, while avoiding failed approaches focused on drug interdiction and pursuing high-level targets. More than ever, modern criminal enterprises are businesses and must be confronted accordingly.

## Turning Challenges into Strategic Opportunities

### I. THE ROLE OF CHINA IN THE AMERICAS

With President Xi Jinping's aggressive "wolf warrior" diplomacy and uncompromising economic nationalism ushering in a hardening bipartisan consensus against China in Washington, Beijing's role in the Americas represents a significant and emblematic challenge for U.S. policymakers. Most of the region neither understands nor sympathizes with Washington's perspective regarding China. Countries want good relations with both Beijing and Washington and do not want to return to a Cold War dynamic in which the region was valued only insofar as it was relevant to the broader struggle between Washington and Moscow. China is increasingly perceived as delivering the technology and investment needed, as well as already serving as the largest export market for South American commodities. Put simply,

countries seek more understanding from Washington regarding how they define their own strategic national interests.

This is why the Trump administration's "with us or against us" approach to China's presence in the Americas flopped. Pushing countries to exclude Chinese firms like Huawei without offering other cost-effective options is not a viable approach. Even Trump allies like former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro ultimately refused to preclude Huawei as a government provider out of necessity. These dynamics obscure the fact that the United States remains the largest trading partner and foreign investor for much of the region. But Washington still needs to make a more compelling case that it is the better partner and concretely define its concerns regarding China's role in the region, including how predatory Chinese policies and state subsidization threaten regional efforts to move up the value chain and away from dependence on commodities exports.

Biden's emphasis on unlocking the potential of the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and stimulating greater coordination between the DFC and multilateral banks like the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is a direct response

## Biden 2.0 must expand efforts to seize economic and commercial opportunity in the Americas.

to the need to compete with Chinese investment — especially in infrastructure. Highlights of this emerging policy framework include a DFC-IDB joint investment platform that has identified \$3 billion for possible infrastructure projects, a \$470 million DFC loan to support small business growth in Brazil, a \$30 million DFC investment in a Brazilian nickel and cobalt mine, and a \$1.2 billion investment from Intel to expand its semiconductor footprint in Costa Rica that was supported by the CHIPS Act.

### 2. EXPANDED CRITICAL MINERALS COOPERATION

The Americas is one of the world's most critical minerals-rich regions. Chile, Peru and Mexico have the second, third and fifth-largest copper reserves, respectively; Argentina, Bolivia and Chile are estimated to have roughly 60% of the global lithium supply; and Canada and Brazil are the fifth and eighth-largest nickel producers in the world, respectively. This makes the region essential to shoring up strategic U.S. supply chains, as well as a vital player in the clean energy transition.

Given the provisions of the IRA and CHIPS Act, Biden has positioned the United States to expand strategic investments and tighten critical minerals supply chains with free trade agreement (FTA) partners like Canada, Central America, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. The Biden administration should consider going further by using a Minerals Security Partnership-like platform for the Americas to move forward with Argentina and Brazil, which enjoy vast critical minerals reserves and do not have FTAs with Washington. A recent interview by the U.S. ambassador to Brazil foreshadowing the announcement of a purchase of Brazilian critical minerals to support U.S. electrical

vehicle and semiconductor production could point the way forward in a second term.

### 3. PROMOTING COMPETITIVENESS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Biden's commitment to provide \$4 billion in aid over four years and Vice President Kamala Harris' efforts to promote private sector investment in Central America reflected the administration's initial belief that addressing migration push factors in the sub-region would significantly reduce the flow of irregular migration to the U.S. southwest border. Though Central American migration was surpassed in 2021 and 2022 by arrivals from Mexico, Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, Colombia and Ecuador, a prioritized U.S. commitment to Central America still makes sense given the region's vulnerability, its proximity to the United States and Mexico, and its potential contributions to regional peace and prosperity.

Biden rightly focused on reducing the constraints to broad-based growth in Central America — such as weak governance, corruption and poor infrastructure — but also emphasized its advantages while pressing for increased investment. These strengths include existing trade agreements with the United States, proximity to North American markets, ample human resources and substantial domestic capital. Biden could help enable growth through a combination of technical assistance and special incentives connecting the region more directly to U.S. supply chains.

Increased trade and investment alone won't fix long-standing structural problems — Nicaragua's descent into authoritarianism is proof of that — but the success of Central American diaspora communities is evidence of what they can accomplish in enabling en-

vironments. Biden should also be wary of empowering authoritarians in Central America — such as President Nayib Bukele in El Salvador — for perceived short-term gains, and ignoring the lessons learned from such trade-offs in the past.

#### 4. EXPANDING COMMERCIAL & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OUTSIDE THE “FTA BOX”

Biden 2.0 should expand efforts to seize economic and commercial opportunity in the Americas. Biden’s centerpiece economic initiative in the Hemisphere — the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) — is evolving and could become a foundation for ambitious regional initiatives informed by input from partners, multilateral banks and the private sector. Importantly, it has an open architecture to facilitate growth beyond its initial 12 members, not all of which have FTAs with the United States. The effort is becoming more concrete — focused on fostering resilient supply chains, improving infrastructure and growing regional participation in the semiconductor industry.

To that end, the Biden administration is consulting on a bipartisan basis with Congress to enhance regional competitiveness in cooperation with the IDB and other multilateral banks. For similar reasons, Biden supports the \$3.5 billion capital increase for IDB Invest, which will hopefully overcome perplexing opposition by some members of Congress to funding a measure that would enhance private sector participation in regional development. Biden has also worked productively with Congress on the Americas Act by sharing ideas aimed at expanding regional trade. An expanded USMCA might not be the best vehicle for economic integration for the larger region, given the idiosyncrasies of North American trade — and Washington also needs to be careful that the bill’s China messaging does not alienate its partners — but this is a promising effort that shows growing awareness of a clear strategic need.

In a second term, Biden could press for further innovations, such as allowing the DFC to finance projects with any APEP partner regardless of income level, and overcoming the barrier to lending to middle and

high-level income countries that limits Washington’s ability to support high-income and well-performing countries like Uruguay. Biden could also work with Congress on sustainable development by moving forward on legislation to contribute to the Amazon Fund.

#### You Can’t Ignore the “What If”

We cannot write about potential second-term Biden policy in the Americas without touching on the implications of a second Trump term should he win in November; the consequences of such an outcome are simply too profound to ignore. After all, there is little doubt where most of the Americas fits on Trump’s personal spectrum of “nice” versus “shithole” countries.

While many in the region may assume Trump 2.0 would mirror his first term, this fails to account for the Trump team’s higher level of preparation and the growing radicalization of his followers and potential Cabinet members. The direct effects for the region would be substantial, especially for Central America, which would have to suddenly absorb hundreds of thousands of deportees and the subsequent loss of billions of dollars in remittances. Mexico and Canada would face a far more volatile renegotiation of the USMCA in 2026. And ideological divisions with left-leaning governments in Brazil and Colombia could lead to tariffs and other trade tensions.

Whereas Biden would continue working pragmatically across the political spectrum to support more effective democracies, Trump 2.0 would embolden authoritarian undercurrents already percolating through the hemisphere. Less predictable would be the regional impact of geopolitical instability should Trump proceed with the de facto U.S. withdrawal from NATO and/or back away from security commitments to Taiwan. There could be some regional victors in such scenarios, but a more turbulent global environment, combined with an unstable and inward-looking United States, will not be a winning formula for most. **AQ**

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*Zúñiga is a former National Security Council Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere and Zimmerman is a former NSC Director for Brazil and Southern Cone Affairs. Both are founding partners of Dinámica Americas.*



# MAKING THE AMERICAS GROW AGAIN

**A second Trump term would focus on reviving hemispheric economic growth through nearshoring and other policies, a former adviser writes.**

*by Mauricio Claver-Carone*

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**O**N FEBRUARY 4, 2020, IN THE FINAL State of the Union of his first term, U.S. President Donald Trump delivered the most Americas-centric address of any modern-day presidency. Sadly, those remarks stand in stark contrast to President Joe Biden, whose recent, and perhaps final, State of the Union in 2024 did not contain a single direct reference to Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2020, Trump celebrated the success of the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), a gold standard for 21st-century trade deals based on the principles of fairness and reciprocity, and the protection of intellectual property. He also lauded the “historic (migration and asylum) cooperation agreements with the governments of Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala,” which had contributed to a 75% decline in people apprehended illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border over the previous eight months.

Trump expressed unequivocal support for “the hopes of Cubans, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans to restore democracy,” and heralded how the U.S. was “leading a 59-nation diplomatic coalition against the socialist dictator of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro.” That was the largest such coalition of like-minded countries in sup-

**If Trump Wins**

port of democracy in Latin America's history. Meanwhile, in the gallery, to the surprise of all, Trump directed attention to the presence of then-President Juan Guaidó, head of Venezuela's National Assembly and its constitutional leader, who was welcomed by the U.S. Congress, with the biggest bipartisan applause of the night.

And we were just getting started.

The core of Trump's approach to Latin America and the Caribbean was the inextricable link between U.S. national security and mutual economic growth. In December 2019, he approved a whole-of-government initiative called *América Crece* (Growth in the Americas), focused on the design and implementation of energy and infrastructure investment frameworks, which would identify new markets, create a tangible pipeline of deals, and harness private capital from the U.S., while weaning countries from their dependence on multilaterals and Chinese state-owned entities. One year later, nearly half the countries in the region had signed *América Crece* investment frameworks, while the last Belt and Road agreement with China was inked in 2019. For the first time in a decade, the U.S. gained ground and boxed China out of the region by a score of 15-0 — not including two fully negotiated frameworks that were left signature-ready — and identified nearly \$174 billion in investment opportunities.

Trump further believed that peace through strength should be prioritized in the Western Hemisphere, as doing so would save more American lives than anywhere else in the world. As an example, on April 1, 2020, he proceeded to announce the most powerful U.S. military law enforcement operation in the Americas since the 1980s to combat the flow of illegal drugs and degrade transnational criminal

organizations across the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific coasts. In the first three months of this enhanced counter-narcotics operation alone, the result would be more than 1,000 arrests and the interdiction of 120 metric tons of narcotics.

In fairness to Biden, he had little to tout regarding the Americas in the 2024 State of the Union due to his misguided policies. Furthermore, under his watch, the world is once again consumed by global crises in Ukraine, the Middle East and the South China Sea. Foes of the U.S. in Russia, China, Iran and North Korea have seized on the distractions and joined forces to dilute the capacity of the U.S. to respond to simultaneous global conflicts.

In his first 100 days, Biden signed 12 executive orders on immigration and the border — 10 of which were direct reversals of Trump's successful policies. These were heralded as a "new era" for immigration policy in which Biden proudly proclaimed, "I'm not making new law; I'm eliminating bad policy." If the goal was to eliminate the significant drops in illegal crossings and the ability to secure our border, Biden surpassed all expectations.

Predictably, illegal border crossings have shattered every possible record under the Biden administration. According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Border Patrol had nearly 10 million "encounters" with immigrants crossing the border illegally from fiscal 2021 through May 2024. This has grown into a full-scale crisis, affecting countries across the hemisphere, with major security implications, including terrorism, narcotics and human trafficking, and the regional expansion of new criminal networks, such as Venezuela's dangerous Tren de Aragua.

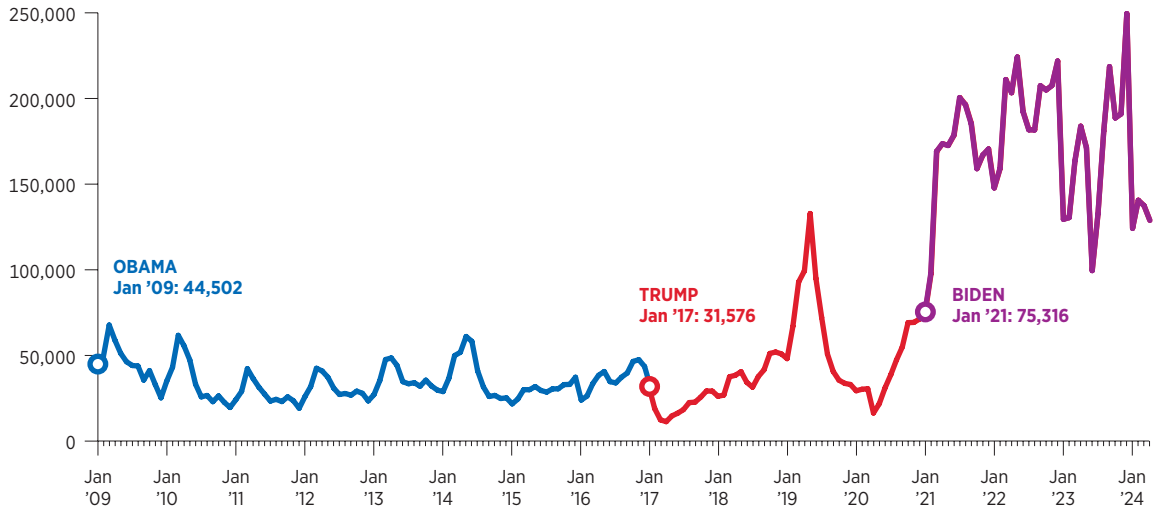
Meanwhile, the cornerstone Latin American policy



**Illegal border crossings have shattered every possible record under the Biden administration.**



## Border Patrol apprehensions and encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border



SOURCE: U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

of the Biden administration has been the normalization of the authoritarian regime of Maduro in Venezuela, a step akin to the sloppy abandonment of our allies inside Afghanistan. It began by sidelining National Assembly leader Guaidó and leaving his wife and two young daughters forced to flee on foot for their safety without protection across the border to Colombia. Biden commuted the U.S. prison sentences of Maduro family narco-traffickers, and inexplicably pardoned and enabled the return to Venezuela of his most able henchman and proxy with Iran. Venezuela's fate is now left to a failed U.S.-sponsored deal in Barbados and — yet again — sham elections with an opposition undermined from the start.

The latest crisis near our shores in Haiti is the result of further policy malpractice. Since the assassination in 2021 of President Jovenel Moïse, the political and security crisis has spiraled as violent gangs hold grip over Port-au-Prince, destroying any remaining semblance of institutionality and now murdering U.S. missionaries. In response, the Biden administration has relegated policy to rhetoric in support of a flawed provisional electoral process and a Kenyan-led secu-

rity force that will further inflame tensions. Clearly, the domestic backlash to foreign-led security forces following the disaster of the 2010 Nepalese-led security force has been forgotten.

And Nicaragua has now transitioned to a full-fledged totalitarian dictatorship, the only one in history with a free-trade agreement with the U.S. The absolute clampdown and forced exile of civil society and clergy leaders signals the complete impunity from which Daniel Ortega's regime benefits. Managua has become the political epicenter of Russia in the Americas, and a lucrative air bridge for over 1 million Haitians, Cubans, Chinese and Africans to begin their illegal land journey to the U.S. southern border. To think that bad actors pay no attention to U.S. engagement in the region is a blind spot for the Biden administration. As it sought normalization with Maduro, Ortega adjusted his playbook.

By contrast, Trump's first term created a blueprint on how to effectively secure our border, address crises in the region by empowering allies, and combat narcotics trafficking and transnational criminal organizations with smart and strategic deployment

**If Trump Wins**

of resources. Moreover, he knew how to effectively contain our foes, whether in Havana and Caracas, or Tehran and Beijing. We did it once and it can be done again. However, where progress was just gaining momentum after decades of abandonment, and where opportunities still abound, are in the investment and trade policies that can mutually grow the economies of the Americas.

Unfortunately, the contrarianism of the Biden administration has turned the fundamental tenets of *América Crece* into performance art, sacrificing regional allies and touting endless dialogue rather than strong policy actions that support economic growth. Bolstering U.S. economic ties through the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity is more about photo opportunities and speeches with little follow-through on U.S. investment. The Biden administration's shift from prioritizing regional near-shoring to global friend-shoring has further ensured that the greatest beneficiaries of a post-COVID decoupling from China would become faraway countries like Vietnam, India and Thailand, rather than our southern neighbors in the Americas. As a result, the U.S. Congress has desperately sought a course correction through a comprehensive legislative framework with bipartisan support called the Americas Trade and Investment Act (Americas Act).

We need to get back on track with concrete initiatives, whether by resurrecting *América Crece*, or rebranding it under a new and updated rubric. Such policy priorities that could "Make the Americas Grow Again" should have three overarching tenets.

## 1 **Energy is our comparative advantage.**

IN 2019, THE U.S. BECAME a net exporter of both refined petroleum products and crude oil. Eight years earlier, in 2011, the U.S. had become a net exporter of refined petroleum products alone. These developments gave the U.S. important leverage in its foreign policy and eliminated dependencies to countries as far as the Middle East and Russia, and as close as Venezuela.

Replacing Venezuela's heavy and dirty crude with clean U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG), and building the supporting infrastructure for its transport, storage, and conversion, was at the heart of the *América Crece* energy and infrastructure investment frameworks. Plus, it's good for the environment. Clean natural gas is a major reason why the U.S. has reduced emissions more than any other nation in the world. Even green Europe recognizes natural gas as sustainable.

Despite this, not only did the Biden administration scrap *América Crece*, but it added insult to injury in January 2024 by pausing new U.S. Department of Energy approvals of proposed LNG export projects. Compounding this misstep, the U.S. Department of the Treasury previously published a guidance to oppose any projects at international financial institutions that directly or indirectly support the oil and gas industry. This (mis)guidance was infamously used by the Biden administration in 2021 to scrap project finance support for port and shore-base logistics facilities in Guyana, a U.S. ally that has become the fastest-growing economy in the world, and has recently sur-

**We need to get back on track with concrete initiatives, whether by resurrecting *América Crece*, or rebranding it under a new and updated rubric.**



Then-U.S. President Donald Trump and Juan Guaidó, whom the U.S. and more than 50 countries then recognized as Venezuela's interim president, outside the White House in 2020.

passed Venezuela's exports with the support of U.S. energy companies.

Ironically, while the Biden administration punishes U.S. ally Guyana for its hydrocarbon development, it has simultaneously rewarded the neighboring Maduro regime in Venezuela by easing sanctions on its state-owned oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)*, losing valuable political leverage by making the Maduro regime believe — once again — that the U.S. needs its products.

While most (correctly) assume China is the biggest beneficiary of such missteps, another major winner has been Vladimir Putin's Russia. Last year, Russia stunningly overtook the U.S. as Brazil's largest supplier of fuel. Brazilian imports of Russian diesel soared 4,600%, while purchases of fuel oil rose by almost 400%, resulting in over \$8.6 billion of de facto sanctions relief for Russia. If this has been the impact on the biggest economy in Latin America, which also happens to be a major oil producer and net exporter, imagine the susceptibility of smaller nations.

## 2 Small countries present big opportunities.

U.S. POLICYMAKERS HAVE GENERALLY had a hard time focusing on opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean beyond the large countries of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. Even when they are forced to think about the smaller countries, they tend to lump them into sub-regional groupings, so they can “matter” more together. The same logic exists among investors, perhaps as a direct consequence of policymakers, which has proven to be lazy and counterproductive.

Whether as a policymaker or investor, some of the best opportunities — for both policy and investment returns — are in the smaller countries of the region. Not only are they the fastest-growing economies — i.e., Guyana, Panama, Paraguay, Dominican Republic — but they are strategically located and present unique dynamics that further our national interests. These markets outpace regional neighbors because of higher-growth trajectories, while posing a lower relative investment risk than Argentina,

## If Trump Wins

Brazil and Mexico. However, they remain grossly undercapitalized and need to attract investors with opportunistic deals.

Pointedly, some of the early successes of *América Crece* were in smaller countries. In Panama, the investment program catalyzed over \$2 billion in financing for energy projects that included gas to power, mini-grid portfolios, and a tender for a new transmission line; in El Salvador, over \$1 billion was committed for the country's first integrated LNG import terminal and gas power plant; and in Ecuador, the program secured \$3.5 billion in a bridge financing facility focused on private capital solutions for state-owned enterprises.

On trade policy, similar to the successful termination and renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) during Trump's first term, the next trade agreement that needs to be terminated and reimagined altogether is the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). This would serve two purposes: It would remove the unmerited U.S. market access that the Ortega dictatorship in Nicaragua currently receives, and it would allow us to focus on the comparative advantage and opportunities that each country in Central America presents, rather than the perpetual bunching and pigeon-holing that restrains their growth. After all, CAFTA's narrowly defined manufacturing thread-lines did little to protect market access, as investors pivoted to China and Vietnam in pursuit of cheaper labor and production.

Fortunately, the Americas Act seeks to recreate the efforts that we began in the first Trump administration regarding *nearshoring* and *reshoring*, including financing and tax incentives, and a new approach that would expand access to the USMCA and the Caribbean Basin Trade Preference Area (CBTPA). It proposes a set of strict criteria to allow smaller countries to join a docking mechanism within the USMCA. Much of the chatter about this approach has focused on Costa Rica and Uruguay as early contenders. Unfortunately, while Costa Rica's current leadership deserves great credit, the short-sightedness of a president, Laura Chinchilla, to pursue and enact the region's second free trade agreement with China in 2010, may ham-

per Costa Rica's compliance with the "non-market economies" clause in the USMCA. It's a mistake recently replicated by Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso before leaving office in 2023, and which Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou and his successor should seek to avoid.

The legislation further envisions the CBTPA as a temporary step until a country can meet the strict criteria for USMCA membership. This fallback provision can also become an attractive alternative for regional allies that don't have trade agreements with the U.S., including Paraguay, which is one of the strongest allies in the region. It is also the only country in South America that diplomatically recognizes Taiwan, and that has resisted extraordinary pressure and extortion from China.

### 3 Prioritize U.S. agencies and bilateral initiatives.

THE AMERICAS ACT ALSO ENVISIONS the creation of an Americas Investment Corporation (AIC), to provide preferential loans, equity, lines of credit, and insurance/reinsurance for investments that are consistent with U.S. foreign policy goals and interests in the region. It would be akin to a standalone U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) for the Americas. Ultimately, if passed, a final structure could take various iterations, but most importantly, this bilateral approach is the way to go. It is a much better investment for U.S. taxpayers than any of the multilateral institutions, which lack speed, impact, transparency and accountability.

Think about it. Latin America and the Caribbean has at its behest: the largest regional multilateral development bank in the world (the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB); the largest subregional development bank in the world (the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the CAF); plus three other peripheral subregional development banks: the Central American Development Bank (CABEI), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and FONPLATA (the Southern Cone's development bank). Add the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which have some of their larg-



# U.S. POLICY ON LATIN AMERICA

AQ tracks major moments in U.S. relations with the region under the Trump and Biden administrations.

NOTE: TIMELINE COVERS EVENTS FROM 2017 TO JUNE 2024, WHEN THIS ISSUE WENT TO PRINT.

by Rich Brown and Emilie Sweigart

## TRUMP Jan 2017-Jan 2021



**JUNE 2017**  
**TRUMP REVERSES OBAMA POLICY ON CUBA**  
The U.S. reinstated some travel and commercial restrictions that the Obama administration had loosened. Later, in Trump's final weeks in office, the U.S. tightened sanctions on Cuba and put it on the State Department's four-country list of state sponsors of terrorism.

**JAN 2017**  
**U.S. WITHDRAWS FROM THE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP)**  
In his first week in office, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 12-nation TPP trade deal that included Mexico, Peru and Chile.

**MAY-OCT 2018**  
**U.S. INTRODUCES "ZERO TOLERANCE" BORDER POLICY**  
The U.S. cracked down on illegal border crossings with a deterrence-first approach. After Trump threatened tariffs on all Mexican goods, Mexico agreed to increase enforcement and detentions on its soil. The U.S. expanded controversial policies, including family separation.



**JAN 2019**  
**U.S. RECOGNIZES GUAIDÓ**  
The U.S., Canada, many Latin American and some European governments recognized Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president.

**JULY-SEPT 2019**  
**SAFE THIRD COUNTRY AGREEMENTS SIGNED**  
The U.S. signed deals with El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras that required these nations to receive asylum applicants who would have to first seek protection in these countries. The U.S. began immediately to deport asylum seekers to the so-called Northern Triangle countries.

2017

2018

2019

2020

**FEB 2017**  
**SANCTIONS AGAINST VENEZUELA**  
New U.S. sanctions on the Nicolás Maduro regime designated then-Vice President Tareck El Aissami under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. Many more sanctions would follow.



**JUNE 2018**  
**U.S. BACKS HISTORIC IMF ARGENTINA BAILOUT**  
Argentina became the IMF's biggest debtor after receiving an emergency \$57 billion loan, in a deal sought by then-President Mauricio Macri and supported by the U.S.



**NOV 2018**  
**USMCA SIGNED**  
After the U.S. imposed new tariffs on Mexico and Canada, the three nations signed a trade deal replacing NAFTA. It includes stricter intellectual property, labor and environmental protections and raised minimum limits for cars to qualify as North American-made.

**JAN-FEB 2019**  
**BORDER WALL DISPUTE CAUSES U.S. GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN, REMAIN IN MEXICO PROGRAM TAKES EFFECT**  
Trump and Congress failed to pass a budget after the White House demanded \$5 billion for a border wall. The ensuing 35-day government shutdown, the longest in U.S. history, slowed federal agencies until Trump dropped the demand. The Remain in Mexico program took effect, immediately sending tens of thousands of migrants to Mexico to await U.S. court hearings.

**SEPT 2019**  
**GUATEMALA EXPELS ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION**  
The White House did not contest President Jimmy Morales' campaign to oust the Commission Against Corruption and Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which was funded in part by the U.S., after striking deals on migration and international policy.





# BIDEN

Jan 2021-Present

## JAN 2021 U.S. STOPS BORDER WALL CONSTRUCTION

Just after taking office, Biden paused the construction of walls along the southern border. In 2023, as migration levels soared, the administration waived federal laws to allow border wall construction in Texas.



## JULY 2021 U.S. RELEASES ROOT CAUSES STRATEGY

The initiative committed to investing \$4 billion in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras over four years to improve conditions and stem migration from the Northern Triangle.



## JUNE 2022 SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS HELD IN LOS ANGELES

While the summit saw several absences, the U.S. and 20 other countries in the hemisphere endorsed the Los Angeles Declaration for Migration and Protection. Biden announced the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity, a 12-country initiative aimed at bolstering investment and growth.

## OCT 2023 U.S. LIFTS SOME VENEZUELA SANCTIONS

The Venezuelan government and the opposition signed the Barbados Agreement to carry out free and fair elections in 2024. The next day, the U.S. lifted most sanctions on Venezuela's oil and gold mining industries for a six-month period.

## APR 2024 U.S. REINSTATES SOME VENEZUELA SANCTIONS

Amid the Maduro government's crackdown on opponents and noncompliance with the Barbados Agreement, the U.S. reimposed some sanctions lifted in October 2023.



2021

2022

2023

2024

## MAY 2021 U.S. STARTS DONATING COVID-19 VACCINES TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Between 2021 and 2024 the U.S. donated approximately 75 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to 30 nations in LAC, although many countries were frustrated with the amount and timing.



## APR 2022 JUAN ORLANDO HERNÁNDEZ IS EXTRADITED TO THE U.S.

Hernández, Honduras' former president and a U.S. ally while in office from 2014-22, was extradited on drug and weapons trafficking charges. He was found guilty in a U.S. court in March 2024.



## OCT 2022 U.S. DEFENDS BRAZIL ELECTION RESULTS

The Biden administration played a key role in dissuading former President Jair Bolsonaro and parts of the Brazilian military from trying to overturn President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidential election victory.



## JAN 2024 U.S. SUPPORTS BERNARDO ARÉVALO IN GUATEMALA

The U.S. took potentially decisive diplomatic action to support the transfer of power as the president-elect's opponents attempted to derail his inauguration.

## JUNE 2024 BIDEN CRACKS DOWN ON BORDER

Biden signed an executive action that deports asylum seekers when 2,500 or more people illegally cross the U.S.-Mexico border per day, with some exceptions. The move came after encounters neared 180,000 in April. This represented a dramatic decline from December 2023, when they topped 300,000 and Mexico agreed to increase migrant detentions.

TOP: ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN/CORBIS/GETTY; ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY; GABY ORÁA/BLOOMBERG/GETTY. BOTTOM: JOHAN ORDONEZ/AFP/GETTY; JORGE CABRERA/GETTY; SANDRA SEBASTIAN/PICTURE ALLIANCE/GETTY.



**“ What is the single most important Latin America-related issue the next U.S. president should focus on, regardless of who wins? ”**





# Build sustainable growth

by Iván Duque

The most important issue between Latin America and the U.S. is to build a sustainable economic growth and social gaps reduction program for the whole region — and to build it in a bipartisan and bicameral way that guarantees its long-term nature as a policy of state.

Such a program requires more trade and investment agreements; the acceleration of friend-shoring; a strategic participation of U.S. companies in infrastructure that includes the energy transition; and a stronger participation of U.S. companies in the deployment of 5G networks and the expansion of critical technologies such as applied AI, cybersecurity, blockchain and cloud computing, among others.

Such a policy, involving U.S. agencies from USAID, to the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and

the Export-Import Bank, among others, will allow Latin American countries to stimulate investment, accelerate growth, expand the middle class, and reduce the temptation of illegal migration to seek opportunities.

This policy also requires more intelligent support for security in order to dismantle transnational organized crime groups and consider law enforcement as a public good. <sup>AG</sup>



*Duque is a distinguished fellow at the Oxford School of Government, FIV Adam Smith Center and Cornell University Emerging Market Institute. He chairs the Iván Duque Center for Freedom and Prosperity at the Woodrow Wilson Center. He was president of Colombia from 2018 to 2022.*



# Address opportunity

by Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado

For decades the United States-Latin America relationship has been impacted by irregular migration, drug trafficking, organized crime and a lack of security. Billions have been spent on addressing them, without concrete results. These are all interconnected with a lack of opportunities and inadequate living conditions for many.

Latin American citizens are not looking for a free ride; they are looking for paths to improve their livelihoods and that of their families. This should be at the core of U.S. foreign policy toward the Americas. The root causes of the problems have not really been adequately addressed, and the U.S. can certainly help.

The economies of the region face low productiv-



ity, low participation in value chains, low investment in research and development, fiscal challenges and informality. For a region where more than 170 million people do not have enough income for their basic needs, the situation is tragic.

Further, pessimism is present, with many having lost faith to expect that opportunities for a better life will ever arise.

The next U.S. administration needs to understand the relationship between development and democracy as between development and the fight against crime. The battle to be fought is against inequality and exclusion, and for opportunities and well-being.

This path is valid for most Latin American coun-

tries where democracy reigns and collaboration is possible. Regarding the three countries in the region where dictatorships have taken a strong hold — Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela — the only avenue is to increase pressure through stronger sanctions, in an effort to force a return to democratic values and the respect for human rights, for the sake of their weakened populations.

Easier said than done? Yes, but that must be the objective with a concrete, holistic approach. AQ

De Saint Malo de Alvarado *was the vice president and foreign affairs minister of Panama from 2014 to 2019 and is a member of AQ's editorial board.*



## Counter authoritarianism

*by Samuel Pérez*

**T**he gravest challenge the next administration will face is that of radical authoritarian groups capturing public institutions, with the goal of doing away with democracy as a system. They are increasingly coordinating across borders and supporting each other. Governments throughout the hemisphere, including the U.S., have the responsibility to strengthen democracies and cooperate to prevent radical authoritarianism from seizing more power.

These groups are seeking not just to gain power through the democratic system. Rather, they seek to dominate democracies and then dismantle them. They sow doubt about whether democracy can deliver results, and insist that only an authoritarian system can get the job done. This is a profound regional threat.

This threat grows out of popular frustration with deepening inequality. Too many people see elites un-

willing to cede privileges and leaders unable to meet expectations of opportunity and improved material conditions. Our community of nations therefore needs to ensure that democracy can deliver by using the tools of multilateralism and taking astute political action.

We need to help Latin American democracies scale up investment, achieve inclusive growth, and improve environmental conditions, given the devastating effects of climate change. This is the best way to improve insecurity and reduce migration. It is also the best way to ensure that people continue to believe in democracy as the right path forward. AQ

*Pérez is an economist who has served in Guatemala's Congress as a member of the Semilla party since 2020. He is also the president of Semilla's congressional bloc and its national director of political organizing.*

# Regardless of Who Wins...

**...the victor in November should pay more attention to Latin America and the Caribbean.**

*by Susan Segal*



Susan Segal is the CEO of Americas Society/Council of the Americas

**I**N AT LEAST ONE WAY, it does not matter who wins the U.S. election: Latin America and the Caribbean require greater care and partnership with their northern neighbor.

Latin America and the Caribbean can be the U.S.'s greatest partner and ally — but the U.S. can also be Latin America's greatest partner and ally. We share the hemisphere, but of equal importance, we have a shared culture. This can be built upon to cement a deep and reliable friendship that transcends administrations in the U.S. and Latin America.

Both the national security rationale and the business case are irrefutable.

The continent is home to so many resources, from strategic minerals to energy resources both traditional and alternative, as well as vast agricultural lands.

The human resource pool (both skilled and unskilled) is huge, including an extraordinary and innovative entrepreneurial sector. There is already interest from many Latin American and industry leaders to create technology hubs and service centers in the region. And as we look to consolidate the supply chain based on security rather than just cost, the Western Hemisphere should be viewed as the strategic location not only for the minerals, but also inserted into the manufacturing supply chain for the finished product.

Whoever wins the U.S. election, together with our partners in the region, needs to rethink the meaning of “hemispheric security.” Every country (even Chile) is dealing with security issues. We need a shared strategy based on trust and technology to deal with these enormous transcontinental risks. This includes working as partners to ensure a democratic continent because, without this, immigration will only rise further both in the U.S. and across Latin America. Cooperation, coordination and leadership are urgently required.

So, for whoever triumphs in November, both challenge and enormous opportunity await on the horizon to consolidate shared economic prosperity, security and democracy in our hemisphere. **AQ**



# VOTO LATINO 2024



**Ione  
Molinares**



**Gustavo  
Valdés**



**Jorge  
Dávila**



**Gonzalo  
Alvarado**



**Al  
Cárdenas**



**María  
Cardona**

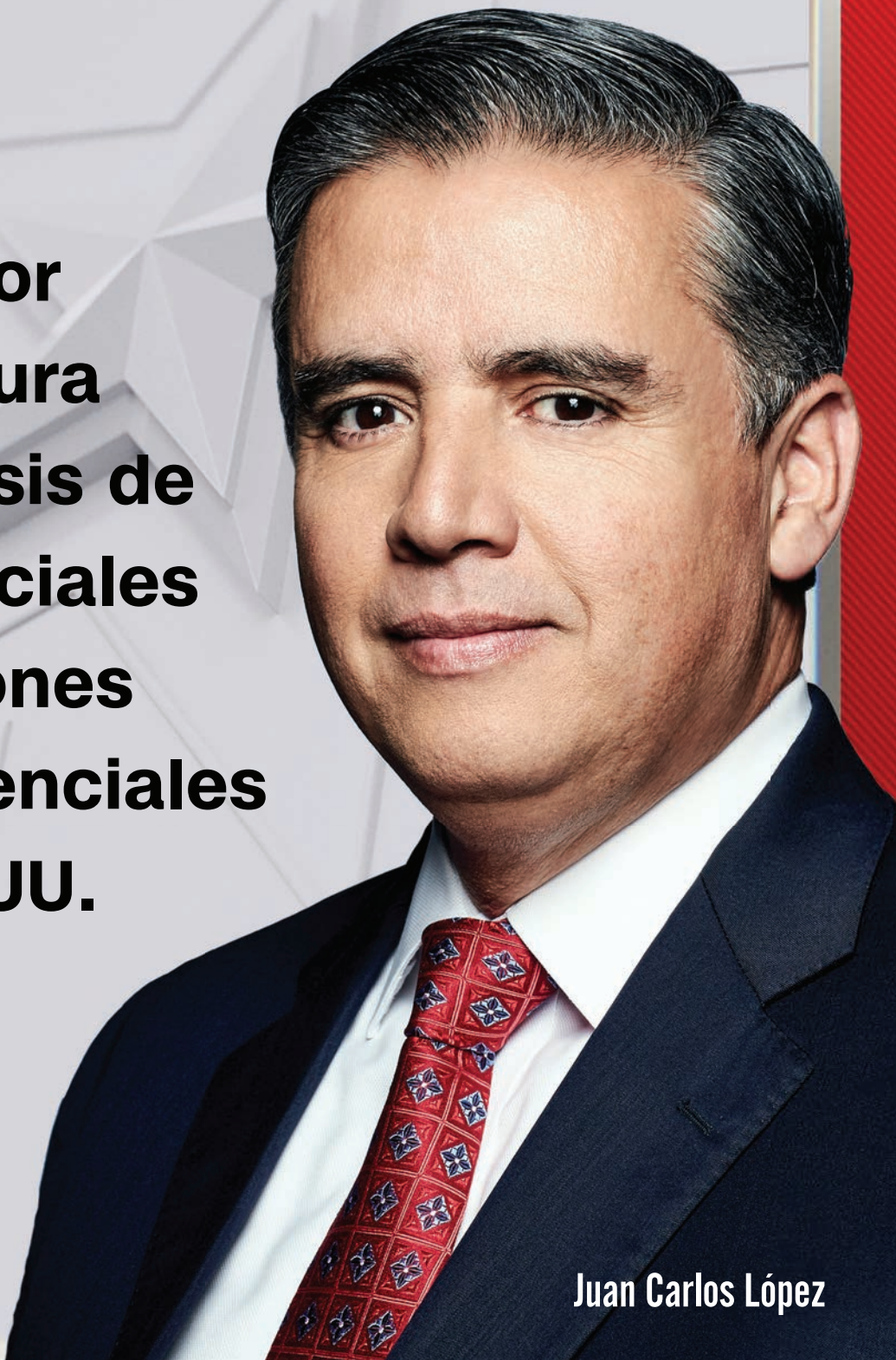


**Octavio  
Pescador**



**Rocío  
Vélez**

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y análisis de  
las cruciales  
elecciones  
presidenciales  
de EE.UU.**



**Juan Carlos López**

Claudia Maribel Vera Pech, left, 38, and Regina Laudalina Valle Chim, 47, of the award-winning *Chelemeras* group trek through a wetland toward the beginnings of a new forest, planted by hand.



PHOTO ESSAY

# THE MAYA WOMEN RESTORING A SANCTUARY

*In Mexico's Yucatán, 14 women are running a mangrove reforestation project recognized internationally as a model for the region.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BÉNÉDICTE DESRUS

*with reporting by Mark Viales*





**T**he mangrove forests of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula bridge sea with land, stabilizing shorelines, storing carbon and sheltering an abundance of life. In the waters they calm, endangered species like the hawksbill turtle lay eggs, and the crabs and fish that support local livelihoods reproduce. Monkeys, tapirs and jaguars cross the tangles of their exposed roots and the sediment they trap and turn into land. Flamingos, ibises and rare songbirds nest among their branches. Corals grow and crocodiles lurk in their shadows.

But in many places, urban sprawl is destroying them. This leaves communities more vulnerable to the storm surges that mangroves blunt. Mangroves also sequester four times more carbon dioxide per square meter than tropical rainforests. Near the town of Chelem, 32 miles north of Mérida, a group of Maya women called the *Chelemeras* are protecting their communities and preserving biodiversity by restoring mangroves. They began in 2010, when a government-funded project searched for volunteers. After two years, the funding was cut, but the women persisted. They have since restored over 50 hectares — roughly the equivalent of 71 soccer fields — and won international acclaim from UNESCO, the Blue Marine Foundation and beyond as a model for the region.

Above: Illegal construction and the remains of a mangrove stand in the Ría Lagartos Biosphere Reserve, in San Felipe, Yucatán, in August.

Right: Biologist Claudia Teutli Hernández, left, from the University of Barcelona, discusses a restoration site with *Chelemeras* Keila Vásquez Lira, center, 42, and Angie Alejandra Martínez Castillo, 49, in October.









Vázquez Lira is the president of the *Chelemeras*, whose ages span from 33 to 82. Through years of work, they have mastered the biological and hydrological subtleties that can make or break mangrove growth.

Dr. Jorge Herrera Silveira, left, a researcher, and Eunice Pech, a laboratory assistant, prepare a mangrove chemical monitoring report at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies at the National Polytechnic Institute in Mérida in November. Herrera advises the *Chelemeras'* restoration project, which he helped to found.







The work in waist-deep water is hard. Here, the *Chelemeras* pile mud high enough to redirect water flows. The original program had men in mind, but none accepted the \$3 per day pay rate. The women volunteered, and now they often bring home more income than their spouses, between intermittent grant funding and the crabs and snails they collect from the ecosystems they are restoring.






Angie Alejandra Martínez Castillo, left, 49, receives clients every afternoon in her beauty salon after long mornings of work with the *Chelemeras*. Here, Ek Lira gets a pedicure. Her daily treks through mud and marsh in tough boots make foot care much more than an aesthetic concern. Her fingernails, on the other hand, are pure style.







Ek Lira prepares to plant saplings in *tarquinas*, shelters made of wooden posts and hand-woven mesh that the women build after painstakingly scouting the right locations for them. This bay may well be forested in a few years. Mangroves are known for being highly adaptable, thriving in harsh environments, and creating sanctuaries for a vast array of life. So are the *Chelemeras*.





Desrus is a French documentary  
photographer based in Mexico City.  
Viales is a freelance investigative  
reporter based in southern Mexico.

# Latin America's Murder Rates Reveal Surprising New Trends

**Homicide data from the region's cities show signs of progress in some places and cause for concern in others.**

*by Robert Muggah and Katherine Aguirre*

**RIO DE JANEIRO** — Cities are bellwethers of nations' progress. When they thrive, so do their countries. And when they are fragile, their nations are more likely to suffer a wide variety of ills, from deteriorating quality of life to declining foreign direct investment. Crime rates are especially useful measures of urban fragility. Homicide is a particularly convenient early warning indicator precisely because it is the most serious and carefully tracked category of crime.

However, the limited availability of standardized city-level data on criminal violence makes lethal and non-lethal crime surprisingly challenging to track. Fortunately, the Homicide Monitor, one of the world's largest public repositories of this data, takes the pulse of cities with at least 250,000 inhabitants. Its 2023 findings show that Latin American and Ca-

ribbean (LAC) cities continue to register especially high murder rates. They also reveal signs of progress in some places and new cause for concern in others.

As in previous years, LAC was home to over 40 of the world's 50 most murderous cities in 2023. The countries with the most cities on this list are Brazil (13), Mexico (11), the U.S. (7), South Africa (6), Ecuador (5) and Colombia (3), followed by Venezuela, Guatemala, Jamaica, Haiti and Lesotho with one apiece. LAC cities dominate the ranking, but notable shifts are underway in the region due to evolving organized crime dynamics and controversial public security interventions.

The city with the highest homicide rate in the world in 2023 was Durán, Ecuador. In 2020, it ranked 453rd, and last year registered a homicide rate of



Police officers stand guard in Guayaquil in April after an armed attack left eight victims dead.

148 per 100,000 inhabitants. The explosion of organized violence in Durán and other Ecuadorian cities like Manta, Guayaquil, Machala and Portoviejo is a tragedy foretold. They have borne the brunt of the country's rapidly escalating drug war between rival Ecuadorian gangs alongside Colombian, Mexican and Albanian criminal groups for control of the cocaine trade.

Ecuador's national homicide rate surged from 5–7 per 100,000 in 2018 to 45.1 in 2023, making it the most violent country in South America. Early this year, President Daniel Noboa declared an "internal armed conflict." In an April referendum, Ecuadorians voted overwhelmingly for a militarized response to crime that has embraced longer prison sentences for serious crimes ranging from drug trafficking to money laundering and the use of the armed forces for policing.

The flip side of Ecuador's surge of violence can be found in El Salvador, Honduras and Venezuela, where homicide rates have reportedly fallen sharply across multiple cities. San Salvador, San Miguel and Soyapango in El Salvador were among the most homicidal cities in recent years, but in the wake of controversial tough-on-crime crackdowns, lethal violence dropped by over 70% nationally in 2023 alone, according to government figures.

## Trouble elsewhere

**S**AN PEDRO SULA IN HONDURAS ranked as the most violent city in the world in 2014, with a murder rate of 142 per 100,000, but by 2023, the city had fallen outside the top 100 and registered a rate of just 25.8. Other cities, such as Tegucigalpa and Choloma, also slipped out of the top 50. Venezuela's homicide rates have also declined. Only Caracas was included in the top 50 in 2023, a sharp contrast from 2021, when 11 Venezuelan cities made that list.

Even though Brazil had the most cities (13) in the top 50 in 2023, that pales compared to the 30 it registered in 2015. Despite this improvement, Brazil still reported the highest absolute number of murders in the world in 2023, with 47,052 and a national homicide rate of 23.1 per 100,000. Cities such as Camaçari, Feira de Santana and Salvador (all in Bahia); Macapá

(Amapá); and Caucaia (Ceará) are particularly violent, with murder rates over 65 per 100,000 inhabitants.

While Brazil's national murder rate has been declining since 2017, it is climbing in parts of the northeast and in the nine Amazonian states, where rates far exceed the national average. An explosion in cocaine trafficking from neighboring Colombia, Bolivia and Peru — along with violent disputes between the region's many gangs — are primarily to blame. Brazilians are more preoccupied with crime than ever.

In Mexico, the trends of political and criminal violence are bleaker still. The country featured 11 cities in the top 50 in 2023, compared to just three in 2015. Before 2017, the country had only one city, Acapulco, among the top 10, but now, Cajeme (Sonora), Tijuana (Baja California), and Celaya (Guanajuato) regularly make that list. For the past six years Mexico has registered over 30,000 homicides. The country's last election cycle recorded the highest tally of political assassinations in modern history. It is no surprise that in a recent public safety survey, over 61% of respondents said it is unsafe to live in their city.

## Colombia and the Caribbean

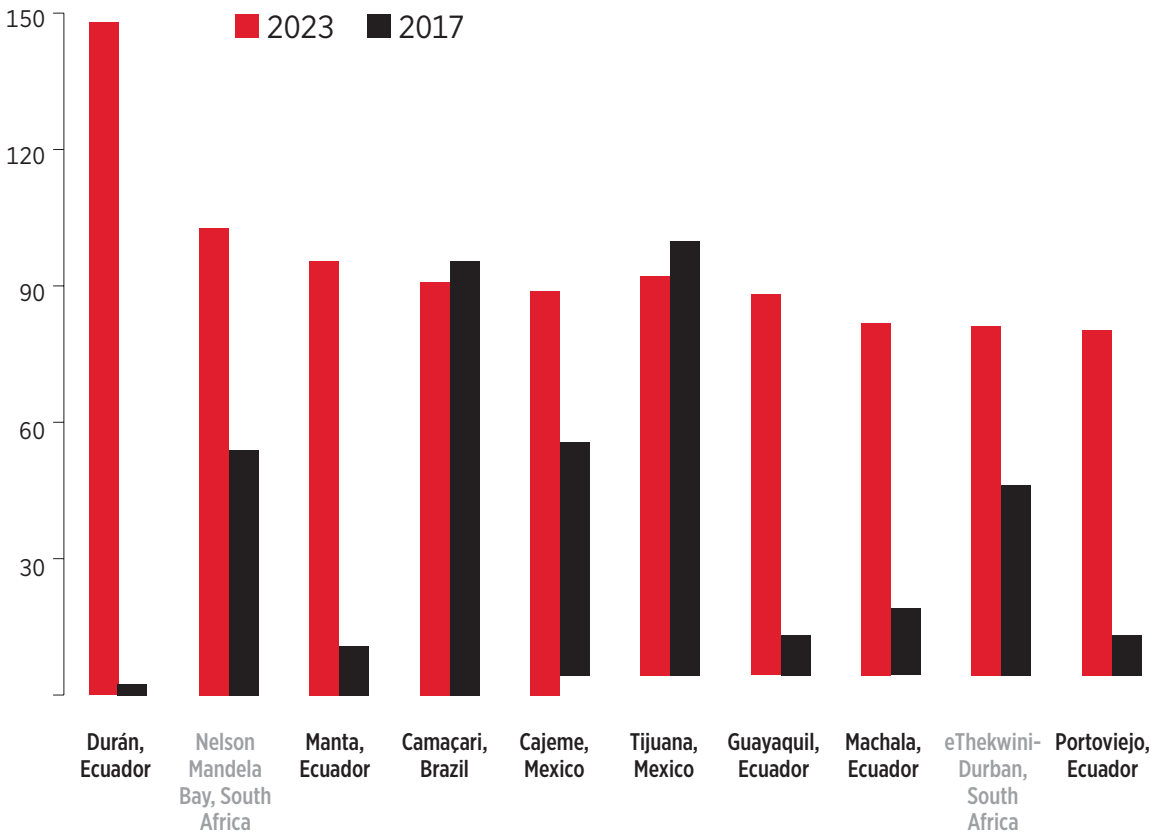
**F**OR ITS PART, COLOMBIA has experienced unprecedented declines in homicide over the past decade. Cities such as Medellín (Antioquia) and Cali (Valle del Cauca), once considered among the most violent in the world, have improved markedly. Colombia's approach to violent crime has oscillated between militarized and prevention interventions, with the current administration seeking to focus more on so-called "root causes" of crime, including poverty, inequality, education, substance use and other factors.

Despite meaningful progress, Colombia has registered between two and four cities in the top 50 every year since 2017, and the security situation has deteriorated in certain small cities like Sincelejo, the country's most murderous city in 2023, ranked at 29. The Pacific Coast is also becoming a particular concern due to increased clashes between drug trafficking organizations.

Meanwhile, the expansion of heavily armed crim-

## Latin American cities register among the world's highest homicide rates

HOMICIDE RATES PER 100,000 PEOPLE



SOURCE: IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE HOMICIDE MONITOR (MAY 2024)

inal gangs and drug trafficking networks across the Caribbean has coincided with an explosion in homicidal violence. The region's murder rate is three times the global average, with most killings perpetrated with firearms trafficked from the U.S. Larger cities such as Kingston in Jamaica and Port-au-Prince in Haiti ranked as the 12th and 15th most murderous cities in 2023.

Cities with increasing homicides in countries that have historically not reported high rates of violent crime are canaries in the mine. Examples include San José in Costa Rica, which saw homicide rates jump from 15.1 per 100,000 in 2022 to a record-breaking 23 per 100,000 in 2023. Similarly, alarming patterns are

evident in smaller cities such as Iquique in Chile and Rosario in Argentina.

The ups and downs of murder rates in the region's cities show that no condition is permanent: Seemingly hopeless situations can improve, and sound policy can generate positive outcomes. <sup>AG</sup>

Muggah is a co-founder and research director of the Igarapé Institute, a leading think and do tank in Brazil. He is also co-founder of the SecDev Group and SecDev Foundation, digital security and risk analysis groups with global reach.

Aguirre is a senior researcher at the Igarapé Institute.



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ONE YEAR LATER



# The U.S.'s Cybersecurity Diplomacy Is Helping Counter China

**A year after AQ's special report on cybersecurity in Latin America, U.S. aid and collaboration are making some headway counterbalancing China's major technology investments.**

*by Randy Pestana*

**N**EARLY A YEAR AGO, I wrote about the “critical moment” facing the United States and other leading democratic countries as they support partner nations across the Americas in building digital resilience against cyberattacks. Continued and growing support for U.S. partners in the Americas serves two connected purposes: First, it reinforces the shared historical, cultural and economic ties that bind the hemisphere together; and second, it aims to counter Chinese efforts to bring Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries into its sphere of influence.

Since then, the U.S. has made progress toward meeting the challenges of the present moment and seems well positioned to work in lockstep with partner nations as they advance their digital resilience. In March, President Joe Biden signed a law creating a cyber aid fund aimed at fortifying global cyber resilience and stability and responding to the emerging needs of partner nations, with an initial commitment of \$50 million.



At a major cybersecurity conference in May, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced a new international digital policy strategy, highlighting the importance of collaboration and international coalitions — and cautioning about the risks that cyberattacks can pose to emerging economies’ development goals.

The new strategy specifically called attention to China, which it referred to as the “broadest, most active, and most persistent cyber threat to government and private-sector networks in the United States.” It highlighted how China, as well as Russia, was promoting a vision of global internet governance antithetical to the values of democratic nations — and drew a contrast between China’s approach to international cybersecurity and the U.S.’s own, arguing that while the U.S. is committed to respecting nations’ sovereignty, China “distorts markets to advance PRC-based hardware, software and service suppliers,” ultimately harming emerging and developing nations.

It is too soon to determine whether that rhetoric will resonate with partner nations in LAC countries, but the U.S. appears to be taking a steady, long-term approach to supporting countries in the Americas.

Costa Rica is a good example. To help the country build resilience after a crippling cyberattack in April 2022 brought the government’s payment collection and customs systems to a halt, in March 2023 the U.S. provided an initial investment of \$25 million to ensure a similar ransomware attack does not occur again. Costa Rica immediately began reconstituting its capabilities, increasing cybersecurity hygiene efforts across their government enterprise. In June 2023, the government released a draft strategy for digital transformation, emphasizing the importance of protecting both citizen and noncitizen data and the need to consider cybersecurity vulnerabilities in digital transformation efforts. This was followed by a push for a national code of digital technologies (October 2023), a partial reform of telecom regulations, and a draft AI strategy.

U.S. Ambassador at Large for Cyberspace and Digital Policy Nathaniel Fick describes U.S. cybersecurity aid as setting into motion a series of “bouncing balls”: the first bounce denoting relationship-building through the initial response in support of the partner nation, the second bounce centering on

strengthening and building joint infrastructure and response mechanisms.

In Costa Rica, government officials raised concerns over cybersecurity threats posed by Chinese vendors in the development of 5G networks. This led to the government excluding untrusted vendors — a decision that was ultimately upheld by the Costa Rican Supreme Court. This was followed by an April regional meeting in San José, which brought together dozens of nations to discuss trusted digital infrastructure.

The “third bounce,” which Fick described as ongoing, pertains to the more significant and sustained commitment to partnership by Costa Rica, which has increased interest and investment from global tech companies, especially in relation to microelectronics supply chains.

As the U.S. continues to advance its initiatives and support for digital resilience in the Americas, significant strides have been made. The establishment of a cybersecurity fund and international cyber strategy mark important steps toward building a robust cyber defense framework in collaboration with partner nations. The case of Costa Rica serves as a compelling example of how U.S. investment can foster meaningful changes, from enhancing national cybersecurity to attracting global tech investments.

However, the journey is far from complete. While the U.S. has made commendable progress, it must continue to strengthen its efforts to counter the extensive investments and influence of China in the region. The competition is fierce, and the stakes are high. To truly displace substantial Chinese investment, the U.S. needs to maintain a consistent and comprehensive approach, ensuring that it not only responds to immediate needs but also builds long-term, sustainable relationships.

Ultimately, the success of these efforts will depend on the continued commitment to fostering trust, collaboration and shared values among the nations of the Americas. By doing so, the U.S. can solidify its role as a key partner in promoting digital resilience and stability, ensuring that the hemisphere remains united against common cyber threats and challenges. **AG**

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*Pestana is director for cybersecurity policy at Florida International University’s Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy*

# When the Marching Band Played at the Morphine Dispensary

In Mexico in 1940, a major reform envisioned treating drug addiction with regulated dispensaries — until the U.S. helped put a stop to it.

*by Carlos A. Pérez Ricart*



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Director:  
JOSE GOMEZ UGARTE

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# TOXICOMANOS, LOCOS

## Final de un Idilio

UN MILITAR,  
AMOROSA

### ESPOSO QUE FUE BURLADO

### Formidable Escándalo en las Cercanías del "Lirico"

Ayer tarde, en la Avenida Cuba, cerca del Teatro Lirico, se registró un suceso escandaloso, en la cantina "La Perla", habiendo intervenido los motociclistas de patrullas números 8 y 33, Miguel Blanco, quienes se encontraron con que habían sido disparados varios balazos, parecidos ser que al aire, pues no hubo ninguna persona herida. Con este motivo se congregaron numerosas personas, las cuales trataban de agredir al que acababa de hacer fuego y que resultó ser el senador J. Jesús Marmolejo, al que desde luego dieron auxilio, evitándole daños mayores, y al presentarle su credencial, se le dejó en libertad.

Fue rendido el informe correspondiente, haciéndose constar que el senador no recibió golpes ni ninguno de los que le atacaban.

### NI MORFINA, NI COCAINA, ETC.

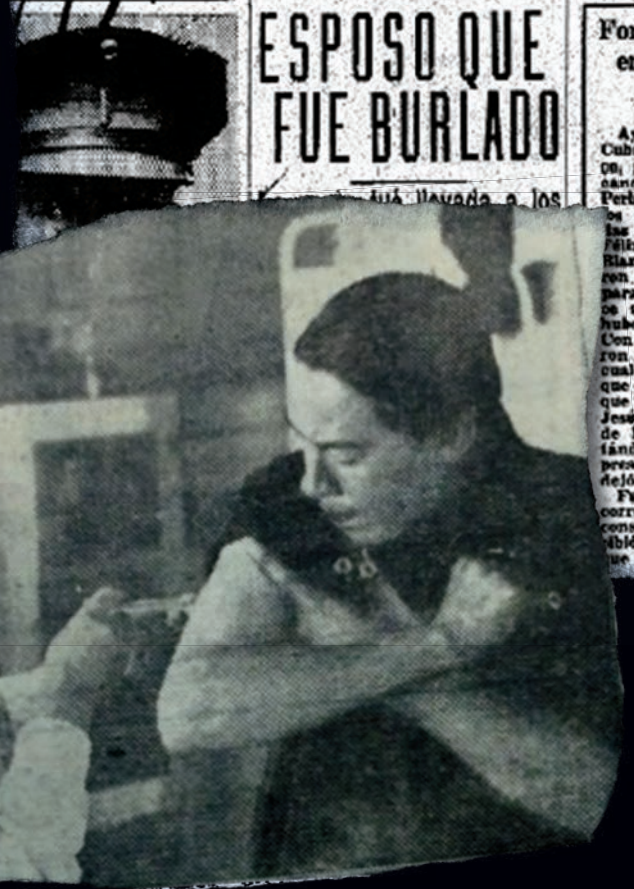
La guerra desencadenada en Europa ha hecho que las drogas enervantes escaseen en México.—Serio problema para las autoridades

La suspensión de los efectos del nuevo reglamento para el tratamiento de los toxicómanos, según informes autorizados que ayer hemos podido obtener, ha creado un gravísimo problema para el Gobierno, pues todos los enfermos que acudían al Dispensario de la calle de Sevilla, y a quienes no se les puede atender, andan sueltos por las calles y han vuelto a caer en manos de los traficantes de drogas.

Las autoridades políticas, por su parte, han recurrido a las autoridades sanitarias, en términos casi angustiosos, porque la situación

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A 1940 front page of *El Universal* reports shortages of morphine and other drugs due to war in Europe.

**O**N SATURDAY MORNING, March 9, 1940, the Mexican army's marching band was playing joyful songs. Cameramen and journalists gathered in the courtyard of 33 Calle Sevilla in Mexico City, trying to get a good photograph of the protagonists of the day: the doctors opening the first state-run morphine dispensary for drug addicts in Mexico City.

That dispensary, the first of many planned for the entire country, was the spearhead of a broad national program that foresaw the creation of a state monopoly to supply morphine, at nominal prices and as prescribed by doctors, to Mexicans suffering from drug addiction.

The objective was to alleviate addicts' demand for morphine. As the government-employed doctors explained that morning, the dispensaries would reduce their dosage, bit by bit, taking them through a process of gradual detoxification. Those who signed up for the program would be allowed to continue their normal lives if the doctor assigned to them thought they would not represent a danger to society. And even for incurable cases of addiction, the dispensaries would at least allow them to stop depending on the illegal drug market. That, it was thought, would help weaken the drug trafficking networks already beginning, at that moment, to proliferate in the country. By offering a safe place to inject morphine, the dispensary promised to reduce the spread of sexually transmitted infection and combat the tendency among some addicts to resort to criminality to fund their drug consumption.

This program, adhering to an approach that today would be called addiction "maintenance," was new in Mexico — and in large part its implementation

was due to the efforts of physician Leopoldo Salazar Viniegra, who had headed a government directorate on drug addiction in the late 1930s. Although unprecedented and highly original in the Mexican context, the program was very similar to others proposed by progressive physicians in other countries. Beginning in the late 1910s, dozens of clinics and dispensaries had been established in several U.S. cities to provide morphine to drug addicts at low prices, as well as addiction treatment programs that were radical for their time.

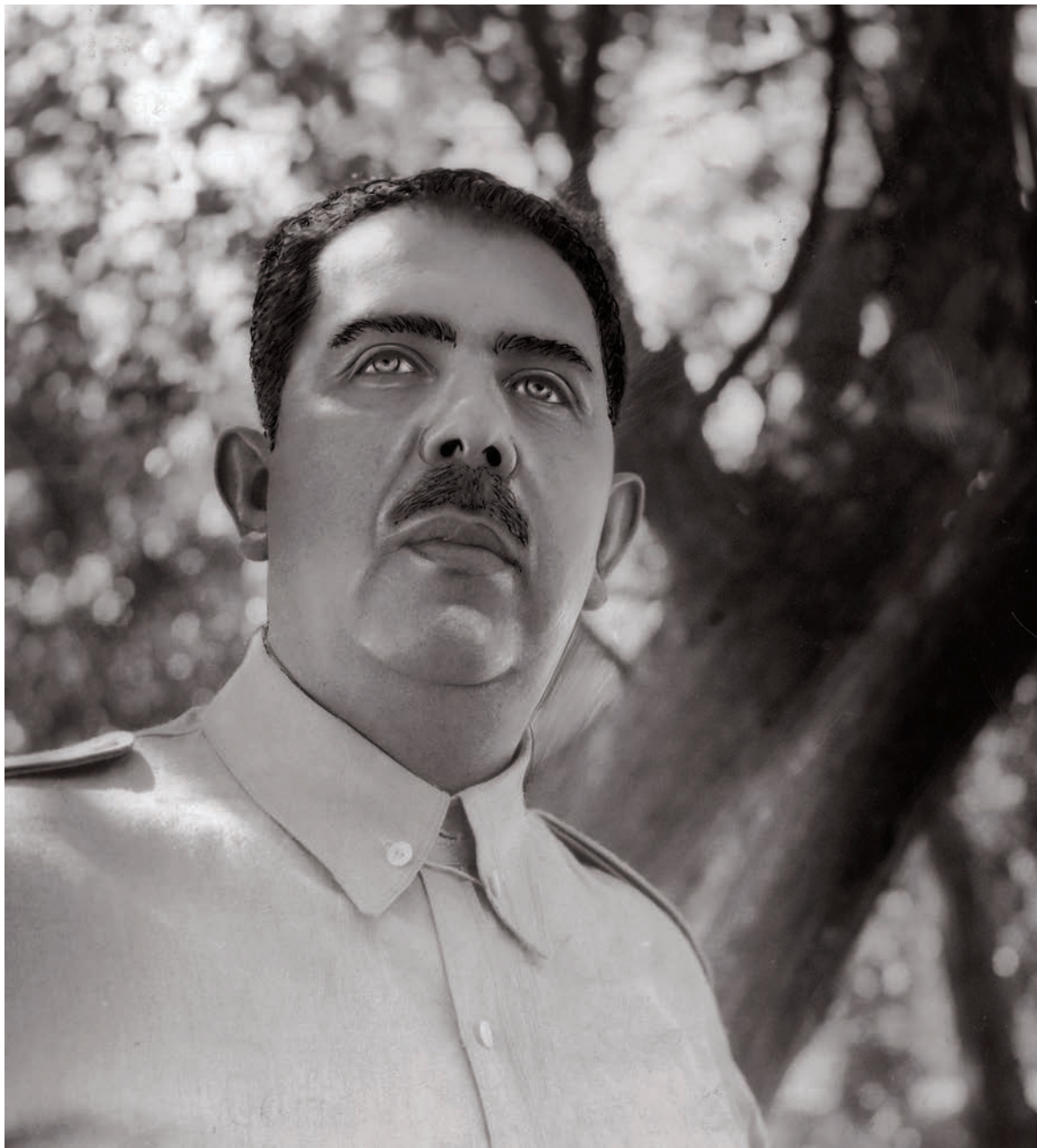
The program was made possible by an important reform to federal drug laws, which had previously required all drug addicts to be confined to hospitals, that Salazar Viniegra had managed to secure just a few weeks before the opening of the dispensary on that cold morning of March 9. It looked like the beginning of a new paradigm for drug policy in Mexico.

### **U.S. pressure against the drug reform**

**B**UT THE HIGH HOPES quickly faded. The dispensary on Calle Sevilla operated for only a couple of months. On July 3, the federal government officially suspended "for an indefinite period of time" the reform to the drug law that had been approved earlier that year. Although the motivation was never formally clarified, the suspension was a direct consequence of pressure from the U.S. government.

That pressure began as early as April 1938, when longtime U.S. anti-drug official Harry J. Anslinger, then at the helm of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, first caught wind of Salazar Viniegra's project. Anslinger's response — and its consequences — can be

**It looked like the beginning of a new paradigm for drug policy in Mexico.**



**Former Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) oversaw Mexico's brief venture into drug addiction "maintenance" policy.**



reconstructed from his correspondence with officials in the U.S. and Mexico, preserved in the U.S. National Archives.

From that point on, Anslinger sought to put a stop to the Mexican plans, which differed from the prohibitionist logic the U.S. government had been promoting at the international level since the beginning of the century, particularly since the Shanghai Convention of 1909, which set in motion the global regime of drug prohibition that has persisted to the present day.

Between spring 1938 and early 1940, U.S. diplomats put strong pressure on the government of President Lázaro Cárdenas to replace Salazar Viniegra as health secretary. The doctor was seen as a danger. Besides his efforts to move toward an “addiction maintenance” policy, the U.S. was scandalized by his other views. Salazar Viniegra argued that marijuana was not harmful to health — a view he had derived based on his own experiences sampling the herb, which he talked about at several conferences and in public writings. Some doctors even accused him of offering marijuana cigarettes to his patients and smoking them during work meetings. But Salazar Viniegra failed to grasp the gravity of the situation. He saw marijuana as a less harmful substance than tobacco.

Salazar Viniegra’s positions were intolerable to conservative groups in Mexico and to U.S. diplomats. Anslinger suspected that once the “addiction maintenance” program was in place, the Mexican doctor would seek to move toward a process of marijuana legalization. The U.S. pressure was on. Salazar Viniegra had to be stopped.

## The threat of a medical embargo

**T**HE U.S. GOVERNMENT had several methods available to put pressure on Mexico. But the main one was threatening an embargo on Mexico until its new drug regulations were repealed. In this regard, Anslinger had an ace up his sleeve: the U.S. Narcotic Drug Import and Export Act of 1922. That act prohibited persons or companies subject to U.S. jurisdiction from exporting narcotic drugs, primarily morphine and codeine, to countries

that, in the narcotics commissioner’s judgment, did not maintain an adequate system of control under the 1912 International Opium Convention.

In practice, this allowed Anslinger to deny licenses for U.S. shipments of narcotics to Mexico — representing the bulk of Mexico’s supply — as long as he could claim the country could not guarantee they would be used for medical purposes. Panic spread in Mexico. Anslinger’s threat reached the ears of Mexico’s health secretary just hours after the opening of the medical clinic in Colonia Juárez. Alarm bells sounded, and Mexico’s health council held an emergency session on March 12. For a few days, the Mexican government tried to negotiate, but Anslinger’s position was immovable: He would deny any shipment of medicines to Mexico if the reform was not repealed.

The war then engulfing the world worked in Anslinger’s favor. A large percentage of the narcotics shipments coming from Europe and destined for other countries in the Americas now passed through the port of New York. Thus, the supply of chemical precursors needed for Mexico’s nascent pharmaceutical industry lay in Anslinger’s hands. And as if that were not enough, the pharmaceutical industries in Germany, France and Spain had also entered into crisis, leaving Mexico dependent on U.S. production.

Time was on Anslinger’s side — and he knew it. In a confession to a high-level official, he boasted that his plan was foolproof. According to him, the health authorities would begin to back down as they ran out of drugs to “attend to the wounded and sick.”

On July 3, 1940, Mexico’s federal government published the “indefinite” suspension of the Drug Addiction Regulation. Ten days later, the dispensary on Sevilla Street was closed. The band stopped playing.

## A century of drug prohibition

**T**HE BRIEF HISTORY of Mexico’s Drug Addiction Regulation was the beginning and the end of the country’s attempt to build an alternative drug policy to the prohibition-based approach already prevailing in the U.S. Paradoxically, the suspension provoked a radicalization of the drug prohibition-based paradigm in Mexico. Going forward, institutions responsible for controlling drug



Former President of Mexico Manuel Ávila Camacho, left, with U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Under Ávila Camacho, Mexico's drug policy became even more punitive than the U.S.'s.


---

flows were fearful of Anslinger's reaction. In the fall of 1942, for example, the Bureau of Narcotics and the State Department threatened again to embargo Mexico if its authorities did not put an end to poppy planting in the Sinaloa highlands. The threat was serious: That same year, Anslinger put a medical embargo on Chile for starting an addiction treatment program similar to the one proposed by Salazar Viniegra a couple of years earlier.

For the rest of the century, Mexico maintained a drug policy that was even more punitive than that of the United States. In 1945, a decree by President Manuel Ávila Camacho made it possible to ship suspected drug traffickers and drug addicts to the forbidding federal prison on the Islas Marías, 60 miles off the coast of Nayarit state, without having them pass through a court of law. In five years, Mexico had gone from a policy of outpatient addiction treatment to outright criminalization of addicts.

Almost 85 years after the army band played at Mexico's first narcotics dispensary on Calle Sevilla,

the country continues to be anchored in a prohibitionist logic. Marijuana use remains unregulated, and the federal government has failed to adopt addiction treatment schemes that have proven successful in other parts of the world. In light of the damage caused by criminal violence in recent years, it seems senseless that alternatives to the prohibitionist model have not been tried.

Recent drug reforms at the state and federal level in the United States offer a new opportunity for Mexico to explore alternatives on how to address the issue of drug use. (The irony here is self-evident.) Will the government of Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico's president-elect, take advantage of this opportunity? Time will tell. One thing is certain: In this matter, as in others, Mexico can learn from its own history to imagine its future. 

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*Pérez Ricart is an assistant professor of international relations at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE) in Mexico City*

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Photo: Phelipe Azevedo Films

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# CULTURA



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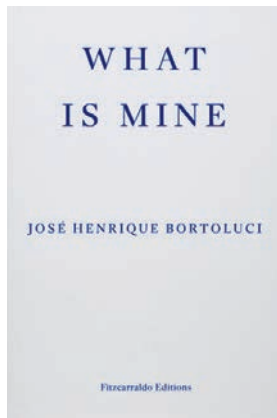
Andrea Villa Franco on *Layú biza'bi (The Promised Land)*,  
an exhibition by Dell Alvarado at Casa Guietiqui

# Books

## Nonfiction

**A sociologist tenderly weaves together his trucker father's life story with the broader contours of Brazil's tumultuous development.**

**Reviewed by Luiza Franco**



### **What Is Mine**

By José Henrique Bortoluci  
Translated by Rahul Bery  
Fitzcarraldo Editions  
144 pages

**“REMEMBER, YOUR DAD HELPED BUILD THIS AIRPORT SO YOU could fly,”** a long-distance trucker tells his son, who’s leaving for the United States to pursue a doctoral degree.

Father and son share a name: José Bortoluci. But the father goes more often by his nicknames: Didi when he’s home, and Jaú, the name of his hometown, when he’s on the road. The son, a sociology professor in his late 30s, is now a public figure in Brazil — and in *What Is Mine*, a hybrid of oral history, memoir and sociological essay, he chronicles Didi’s story, presenting his father’s road trip tales, narrating and commenting on his life, and drawing out the connections with the much larger tale of Brazil’s 20th century.

Didi, a trucker for 50 years, was one of the millions of hands who built Brazil’s monumental infrastructure projects, such as the country’s largest airport, Guarulhos, from which his son flew to the U.S. These projects were crucial to taking Brazil from rural to urban — and to tipping the Amazon into a spiral of destruction that is proving difficult even to slow, not to mention reverse, despite halting progress under the current Lula administration.

The book is a constant attempt at bridging things — the gaps between one person’s life and the forces that shape it, between father and son, between social classes, between Brazil’s past and its present. In the process, both Bortolucis, father and son, give us much to think about regarding the ever-elusive definition of Brazil’s national identity.

Brazil’s love affair with roads first took off in the 1950s, under President Juscelino Kubitschek, when industry was growing and the new capital, Brasília, was being constructed in a then-untouched part of the country. It accelerated under the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil for two decades from 1964, under the developmentalist slogan *integrar para não entregar*: Claim the interior so as not to lose it.

The dictatorship’s preferred method was building highways, rather than trains or boats, to reach into the frontier country in Brazil’s



Didi Bortoluci was treated for cancer while his son interviewed him for *What Is Mine*. He died in November 2023.

center-west — and, most damagingly, into the Amazon, with the construction, among other roads, of the 3,000-mile-long Trans-Amazonian Highway. Between 1960 and 1991, the population of the Amazon region increased from 5 million to 17 million.

Didi, or Jaú, became a trucker just after the coup, in 1965, at the age of 22. All through José Henrique's (the younger Bortoluci's) childhood and teenage years, he was frequently gone for months at a time, transporting everything that was needed for these big projects, from cement to food for workers. When he got back to their home in Jaú, he would excitedly tell his wife and two boys all about the trips. These were amazing adventures: broken engines when he was in the middle of nowhere, barbecues and long chats on the side of the road with fellow truckers. An awestruck José Henrique would listen admiringly. You can still feel something of that wide-eyed boy in the way he narrates these tales.

But as José Henrique accumulated knowledge about Brazil's political and economic history, advancing from a star student in his small public school to a Ph.D. and a professorship, questions started popping into his mind. What were all these roads for? What kind of national project were they a part of? And what did it all bring to the people who built it, like Didi?

In his rise to academic success, José Henrique also

changed classes, moving above his family, working-class descendants of early 20th century Italian migrants. But his love for his family, and theirs for him, remained unchanged, and can be felt throughout the book. José Henrique wants and tries to understand them, even if their worlds are so different. And in the way they care for him, they try to come closer to him, too. A very Brazilian tenderness runs through the narrative.

José Henrique critiques his fellow progressive intellectuals on the grounds that they don't come close enough to the working classes they study, don't use language that describes their everyday lives, an omission that alienates them. José Henrique is an intellectual who comes from a poor background, though he has the social advantages of being white and male. But he himself at times falls back on academic language, citing other intellectuals and using words that are unusual outside those circles. He makes the ideas entirely comprehensible, but I wonder if the book could have been even stronger without its academic inclinations.

As Brazilian as the love we feel in the family is the violence that Didi witnesses and that lies at the heart of the dictatorship-era developmentalist project. "Back then, [in the] 60s and 70s, the invaders went on murder sprees," Didi says, describing what it was



world. As she attempts to separate her private life from her work, the realms inevitably bleed into each other. Hers is a journey in pursuit of personal fulfillment against academic pressure, motivated by love and a penchant for forgotten things.

Contrasting with Sabrina is the novel's other protagonist, Jana, who works as an administrator at the AMIA but dreams of a career as an actor. She oscillates in and out of the realm of memory, embodying a long Argentine Jewish tradition of honoring the dead while grappling with the demands of the present.

*La última actriz* tells the story of two women between the archive and living memory, between death and life, between love and cemeteries. Its author is a young Argentine writer, philosopher, translator and feminist known for her insightful commentary on contemporary culture and gender issues. She gained prominence through essays and columns on topics such as sexuality, identity and power dynamics in society — leading to a 2019 book on contemporary sexuality, *El fin del amor*, that became a successful Argentine-produced Netflix series.

Writing with clarity, wit and depth, she has become a prominent voice in the ongoing conversation about feminism and social justice in Latin America. Personally, Tenenbaum embarked on a journey from the Haredi Orthodox Judaism of her upbringing to the very modern world of young people in Argentina's cosmopolitan capital.

In *La última actriz*, Sabrina's quest leads her to

confront fundamental questions about her origin, destiny and accountability, ultimately reshaping her understanding of herself and her relationships. Conversely, Jana embodies stability, serving as a counterpart to Sabrina's introspection. While Sabrina is perplexed by her own pursuit of passion and tormented by her personal life, Jana sees that the spaces she inhabits are mixed. The two worlds cannot be divided — they can only blend.

Tenenbaum brings Argentine Judaism to life as something more than just historical documentation. Through her characters, we see an essence that persists through generations. The novel illustrates how passion imbues life with meaning, while cultural heritage ensures its continuity.

Her novel offers a nuanced exploration of Argentine Jewish identity, weaving together themes of memory, inquiry and cultural legacy to create a rich tapestry of human experience. The struggle for justice, as much in the aftermath of the AMIA bombing as for the human rights abuses of Argentina's military dictatorship, reflects a timeless Jewish value: *tikkun olam*, the imperative to repair the world. That enlivens the novel's concern with recovery of the past, giving it a forward direction; it shows how the task of investigating and caring for the dead is a Jewish responsibility in the present day. AQ

|||||  
*Milman is an essayist and specialist in Jewish thought based in Buenos Aires*

## Upcoming Books

**The latest in economics, history, policy and fiction from across the hemisphere**

### FICTION

#### **Season of the Swamp**

Yuri Herrera  
Translated by Lisa Dillman  
October  
Graywolf Press  
160 pages

#### **Covert Joy: Selected Stories**

Clarice Lispector  
Translated by Katrina Dodson  
October  
New Directions  
160 pages

### NONFICTION

#### **Pancho Villa: A Revolutionary Life**

Paco Ignacio Taibo II  
Translated by Todd Chretien  
August  
Seven Stories Press  
1,008 pages

#### **The Buenos Aires Reader: History, Culture, Politics**

Edited by Diego Armus and Lisa Ubelaker Andrade  
November  
Duke University Press  
408 pages

# Film

## Documentary

**A new film retraces Bolívar's difficult campaign across the Colombian Andes, revealing nature's final victory over mankind.**

**Reviewed by Ena Alvarado**

**I**N 1819, AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS MILITARY CAMPAIGN AGAINST Spanish colonial rule, Simón Bolívar crossed a stretch of high-altitude grassland in Colombia known as the *páramo*. His troops, utterly unprepared for the frigid temperatures and rough terrain, barely made it through. Most of his men (and their horses) froze to death and were thrown into a lagoon, where they have lain buried ever since. This gorgeous if inhospitable landscape serves as the backdrop for Pablo Álvarez Mesa's *La laguna del soldado*, a poetic meditation on how nature subsumes human history.

In lieu of characters and plot, *La laguna del soldado* presents beautiful images of the *páramo* along with sporadic voice-over narrations from locals and scientists. Álvarez Mesa creates a contemplative mood that his film's experimental structure sustains throughout. Almost without us noticing, the environmental and social stories we hear of the Colombian Andes begin to intertwine.

Take the *frailejón*. Long shots focusing on this curious-looking shrub — reminiscent of a giant artichoke or succulent — give way to a scientific explanation of the plant's significance. The *frailejón* belongs to the same family as the common sunflower, and it plays an outside role in the water cycle of the *páramo* and beyond. It captures water from the moist air, later releasing it into the soil through its roots. The subterranean deposits it creates eventually give rise to rivers. “These creeks connect us with the Orinoco, with the Eastern Plains,” a soft-spoken voice tells us, referring to one of South America's longest rivers and the famous plains that surround it. “What we do here is clearly reflected there.”

The social reality of the *páramo*, however, has never benefited from such cohesion. For hundreds of years, the *frailejón* has been known by another name to the Muiscas, the Indigenous people of the *páramo*. To them, the plant holds strong associations with the sun, which its later Spanish appellation failed to grasp. Until 2016, when the FARC guerrilla



### *La laguna del soldado*

Directed by  
Pablo Álvarez Mesa

Screenplay by  
Pablo Álvarez Mesa

Colombia and Canada

2024



*La laguna del soldado's* experimental structure overlays images of Andean grasslands with the voices of scientists and locals—and a reading of Bolívar's poetry.

group signed a peace accord with the government, considerable parts of the *páramo* had been entirely inaccessible to everyday Colombians — and threats of fresh conflict there remain. This state of affairs recalls Bolívar's own failed projects of integration. Though his independence campaign through the *páramo* ultimately succeeded, his dreams of unity for Latin America in a single political community never did.

An interconnected ecosystem belies fragmented societies. Indigenous communities, Spanish colonists, modern armed forces — these men and women span several centuries of clashing human history, and yet they have all intersected with a natural constant in the *páramo*, one that transcends any particular culture. *La laguna del soldado* repeatedly builds off details of this kind — the *páramo's* bats, its minerals, its fog — to collapse human time and the convulsions of our past.

The exercise feels remarkably appropriate for a country embroiled in decades of conflict and finally fixated on sustaining some kind of peace. Perhaps

it should also come as no surprise that a common thread emerges in Bolívar, Colombia's enduring idol. The start of *La laguna del soldado* features the film's only noncontemporary oral narrative. A man with a Spanish accent recites Bolívar's mysterious poem, "My Delirium on Chimborazo," which includes reflections about man's stature in the face of the cosmos.

"Feverish delirium engulfed my mind. I felt as if inflamed by strange, supernatural fire. The God of Colombia had taken possession of me. Suddenly Time stood before me — in the shape of a venerable old man, bearing the weight of all the centuries, frowning, bent, bald, wrinkled, a scythe in his hand," Bolívar wrote. Even this man who was larger than life, Álvarez Mesa seems to be reminding us, could recognize the primacy of the natural world over and above everything else. The *páramo*, as a kind of archive, lives on with or without us. [AQ](#)

Alvarado is a writer and former assistant editor at The Atlantic

# Music

## AQ's Summer Playlist

From São Paulo to Havana, unexpected combinations and cultural collisions mark AQ's music critic's warm-weather selection.

by Sebastián Zubieta



**Flautas Gigantes**  
by Orlando "Maraca" Valle y el Big Band  
"Flautas Gigantes"

**Todo lugar é aqui**  
by Orquestra Mundana Refugi

**Beleléu leléu eu**  
by Itamar Assumpção

**Tembla**  
by Hamilton de Holanda and C4 Trio

THE FIRST TRACK ON THIS BIG BAND- and small guitar-focused playlist, "Mambísimo" starts with a piano bass line and percussion, as any Latin jazz piece may. Next, we would expect trumpets, saxes and trombones to join them, with perhaps a flute or two. This, however, is no ordinary salsa big band, but **Flautas Gigantes**, a group created by Orlando Valle, a Cuban flutist with a long career in his country's jazz world, including the supergroup Irakere in the 1980s. What makes this big band special is that, besides the usual rhythm section (piano, bass and percussion), it is made up exclusively of flutes, big and small, with over sixty flutists participating on the album. The result is swinging Cuban jazz filtered through the flutes' liquid sound, at once light and solid, with some acrobatic solos.

The **Orquestra Mundana Refugi** was founded in São Paulo by musician Carlinhos Antunes and social worker Cleo Miranda in 2017, aiming to create opportunities and a community for refugee musicians, and now includes 22 musicians from 11 countries. The project, started at São Paulo's SESC cultural center, features a variety of instruments and music-making traditions, and collaborates regularly with established Brazilian musicians such as Badi Assad (on their latest single) and Adriana Calcanhotto. They launched their third album, *Todo lugar é aqui*, in January, with songs in a smorgasbord of musical styles from around the world. "Batarsite" is an anthem of Réunionese identity by Danyèl Waro, whose title, a word developed by the author, encapsulates the island's rich creole culture. OMR's version adds a new layer to its cross-cultural message, flowing over pulsing Afro-Brazilian percussion and big band sounds (with saxes and brass this time).

**Itamar Assumpção** was one of the leading figures of the Vanguarda Paulista, a movement of independent artists that flour-





Orquestra Mundana Refugi performing their song “Taranta” from their album *Todo lugar é aqui*.

ished in São Paulo toward the end of the military dictatorship in the 1980s, centered around the independent label and theater Lira Paulistana. Assumpção released just a handful of albums between 1980 and his death in 2003. His music, especially in his debut *Beleléu leléu eu*, is a mysteriously restrained and lyrical minimalist funk, like in “Fico louco,” a love song built over a reggae-inspired guitar, in which Assumpção’s voice is in a dialogue with a chorus that contributes doo-wop and jarring interventions. The adjective “minimalist” means different things applied to different art forms — in this case, it means that the mix (the relative volume of the instruments and voices in the song) foregrounds one element at a time: first the organ melody, which gives way to the guitar, which in turn is replaced by the chorus to finish the introduction.

**C4 Trio** and **Hamilton de Holanda**, who were on the stage at Americas Society several years ago in

their first New York appearances, are perhaps the continent’s most visible players of what you might call the small guitars category: the Venezuelan *cuatro*, the Brazilian *bandolim*, the Andean *charango*, and others. After sharing a table at the Latin Grammys in 2022, the Venezuelan group and the Brazilian soloist decided to work together, and the resulting album, *Tembla*, was recorded in Bogotá last year and released in May. It includes 10 classics from the Latin American songbook, along with original pieces, featuring a stellar roster of guests. “La tierra del olvido” is one of Carlos Vives’ early hits. This is an instrumental album, but this evocative version borrows the chorus from the original version, creating a brilliant contrast. If you are in New York, you can catch Héctor Molina, one of the members of C4, live at Americas Society in spring 2025. [AQ](#)

Zubieta is music director at Americas Society

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# Visual Arts

## Museum Exhibition

**With handfuls of earth and hard data, a Oaxacan artist testifies to the dark side of development in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec.**

**by Andrea Villa Franco**

**E**ARTH CAKED ONTO COTTON PAPER, industrial waste and gold dust layered in violent strokes and thin lines. In her latest exhibition, *Layú biza'bi*, the Oaxacan artist Dell Alvarado creates a visceral testimony to a territory singled out for development promotion by Mexico's outgoing president — but riven by the environmental toll of resource extraction.

In collages, sketches and sculptures, Alvarado draws on her own extensive travel through the mountains, valleys and mangroves of her native community in Oaxaca. Alvarado hails from Guidxi Gubiña, the term in Diidxazá, a local language, for a town of 14,500 in Oaxaca officially known as Unión Hidalgo. It's one of many *binnizá* communities, a subgroup of the Zapotec peoples, on the Pacific coast of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

The isthmus has undergone a radical transformation over the last several decades. In 1994, the state-owned CFE utility started a trend of building wind farms in the area; in 2008, Spanish company Iberdrola built Mexico's first private wind farm nearby. Now there are more than 2,000 turbines in the region. As one of the shortest land routes between the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico, the isthmus is also being promoted as an alternative commercial route to the Panama Canal. Through the Interoceanic Cor-







Above: Labels, translations, maps and, at right, a piece of dirty industrial fabric document the local impact of resource extraction.

Below: Alvarado's earth pigments evoke the primordial impulse to reach out and touch the bare earth.

# LATIN AMERICA AT A GLANCE

Latin America lags other regions in women's representation on corporate boards. Last year, only 15.1% of the region's board seats were held by women, well below the 23.3% global average, data compiled by Deloitte shows.



## GDP GROWTH

	ARGENTINA	BRAZIL	CHILE	COLOMBIA	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	GUATEMALA	MEXICO	PERU	VENEZUELA
2024 (projected)	-3.6%	2.1%	2.7%	1.5%	4.5%	0.7%	3.5%	2.1%	2.5%	4.4%
2025 (projected)	3.0%	2.0%	2.3%	2.6%	4.6%	1.8%	3.7%	1.8%	2.5%	3.1%
2026 (projected)	2.5%	2.2%	2.4%	3.0%	4.5%	2.0%	N/A	2.0%	3.0%	N/A

PROJECTIONS CURRENT AS OF JUNE 2024

## ECONOMIC INDICATORS

2024 Inflation (projected)	253.7%	4.0%	3.8%	6.6%	3.8%	2.2%	4.0%	4.5%	2.7%	100.0%
2024 Unemployment rate (projected)	8.5%	7.7%	8.2%	10.6%	6.0%	4.2%	N/A	2.9%	6.9%	N/A
2024 Govt. deficit as % of GDP (projected)	-2.0%	-7.2%	-2.2%	-5.3%	-3.3%	-2.6%	-1.7%	-5.1%	-2.5%	N/A

PROJECTIONS CURRENT AS OF JUNE 2024

## WOMEN ON CORPORATE BOARDS

% of board seats held by women	7.5	15.9	20.5	19.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.3	11.1	N/A
Ranking out of 50 geographies	47	36	30	31	N/A	N/A	N/A	41	43	N/A

DELOITTE'S REPORT ON WOMEN IN THE BOARDROOM ANALYZED 18,085 COMPANIES WORLDWIDE IN 2023.

## PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL RATINGS

President										
Approval	48%	50%	34%	34%	66%	58%	54%	60%	6%	19%

SOURCES: GDP growth forecasts, inflation rate, unemployment rate, government deficit as percentage of GDP: Bloomberg (June); Venezuela inflation rate, Dominican Republic and Ecuador unemployment rates: IMF (April); Women in the boardroom: A global perspective, Deloitte Global (March 2024).

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL: Encuesta de Satisfacción Política y Opinión - Universidad de San Andrés (May); Brazil: Genial/Quaest (May), Chile, Plaza Pública Cadem (June); Colombia, Invamer (April), Dominican Republic, CID Gallup (May); Ecuador, Perfiles de Opinión (May); Guatemala, CID Gallup (May); Mexico, El Financiero (April); Peru, Ipsos (June); Venezuela, CID Gallup (Sept. 2023).

NOTE: Figures rounded to nearest percentage.

CANCILLERÍA ARGENTINA VIA COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA; CASA ROSADA VIA COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA; GETTY; SEBASTIAN BARROS/NURPHOTO/GETTY; FLICKR; ASAMBLEA NACIONAL DEL ECUADOR FROM QUITO, ECUADOR VIA COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA; GOBIERNO DE GUATEMALA VIA COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA; RADIO ZÓCALO NOTICIAS; WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION VIA COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA; GABY ORAA/BLOOMBERG/GETTY

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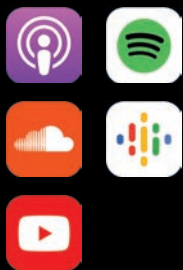
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