

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

What will be—and what *should* be—on the agenda at the Summit of the Americas? A special report



As we celebrate this momentous milestone, we welcome the **Summit of the Americas** in the United States.





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Ambition Needed

Leaders gathering in California have a golden opportunity to focus on climate change, Central America, and other challenges where coordination can help.



HE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS has played host to a lot of drama over the years. From idealistic talk of a hemispheric-wide trade area at the inaugural 1994 edition in Miami, to Hugo Chávez declaring those dreams "dead" amid violent protests in 2005, and a historic handshake between Barack Obama and Raul Castro a decade later, the summit has been a venue for theatrics, disputes — and some genuine efforts to make the Western Hemisphere a better place.

So it's a shame that the 2022 edition, to be hosted in Los Angeles in early June, has so far elicited a lot of yawns. Perhaps that's testimony to a hemisphere exhausted by the pandemic, record migration, political polarization and the worsening effects of climate change. But better coordination, the kind that sometimes takes root when heads of state gather under one roof for a day, could help address precisely those challenges.

In this special report, AQ highlights a few opportunities for progress. These include efforts to lessen the damage from climate change in Central America's "Northern Triangle," where drought and crop failures have devastated villages and sent unprecedented numbers fleeing northward. Journalist John Otis visited a small town in Honduras (page 18) where coffee farmers and others are taking real-life, relatively low-cost steps to adapt — illuminating a path for others.

In Haiti, rural areas offer a similar venue for collaboration (page 34), writes former Prime Minister Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis. A renewed commitment to democracy (page 52) could also help stop the erosion of freedoms and institutions being seen in many countries, writes As/coa's Eric Farnsworth. Having attended the first summit as a young aide, he makes a plea to recapture at least some of the ambition and optimism present 28 years ago in Miami. That's a dream everybody in California should get behind.

The Summit Issue

Leaders from across the hemisphere will meet in California in June.

Which common challenges will be on the agenda? Which ones should be?

Our special report starts on page 18.

18 Adapting to Live

Central Americans are dealing with climate change, but help is needed. By John Otis

28 The Violent End of Central America's Decade of Promise

The Long View: How a 1998 hurricane devastated a region's hopes.

By Luis Guillermo Solís

34 A Better Path for Rural Haiti

Small farmers could hold the key to stability. By Michèle D. Pierre-Louis

38 The State of the Americas

A snapshot of 10 key countries in the region — and those running them By Emilie Sweigart

50 We Need to Cooperate Better on Migration

It is time for bolder and more effective regional coordination.

By Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian

52 The Summit of '94

Miami's biggest legacy was ambition. By Eric Farnsworth

54 Setting the Agenda for Development

Leaders in the hemisphere need to emphasize social inclusion.

By Susan Segal

PHOTO ESSAY

56 Perennial Peronism

The changing faces of Peronism in Argentina By Erica Canepa

DEPARTMENTS

- **3** From the Editor
- 5 Contributors
- 6 Our Readers
- 8 The Big Picture
- 16 Heard on the Podcast

17 AQ Q&A

Alfonso de los Ríos is trying to digitize logistics. By Ezequiel González Camaño

76 The AQ Profile

Rodolfo Hernández: the newcomer shaking up Colombia's election *By Will Freeman*

82 One Year Later

The Amazon Issue revisited By Iago Hairon

92 Latin America at a Glance

CULTURA

84 An Argentine take on Shakespeare, Moldy Strawberries and more

85 Books

88 Film

90 Music

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

Millennials are flocking to politics—and prompting a change of the guard. AQ will take a deep look at the new generation of politicians reframing policies across the region.



John Otis

Otis is an author and journalist based in Colombia. Previously the South America bureau chief for the *Houston Chronicle*, Otis' work has been featured in *NPR*, *Time*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.



Michèle D. Pierre-Louis

Pierre-Louis is a former prime minister of Haiti (2008–2009), the second woman to hold this position. She is the executive director of the Knowledge and Freedom Foundation, a member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation and a former resident fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Institute for Politics.



Luis Guillermo Solís

Solís served as the 47th president of Costa Rica (2014–2018). He has written extensively on Latin America and co-chaired the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel for the Economic Empowerment of Women. Currently, Solís is the interim director and a distinguished visiting professor at the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University.



Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian

Muñoz-Pogossian is the director of the Department of Social Inclusion at the Organization of American States. She has written extensively on migration and democracy in Latin America and is a founding member and coordinator of Red de Politólogas No Sin Mujeres, a network of women in political science.



Erica Canepa

Canepa is an Italian documentary photographer based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, interested in women and identity issues, health and religion. Recognized by *Artsy* as one of 20 rising female photojournalists, Canepa's work has been featured in *The New York Times, Time, National Geographic* and *The Wall Street Journal*, among others.



Tell us what you think. Please send letters to Brian@as-coa.org



AQ's managing editor, Cecilia Tornaghi, bottom, leads a conversation launching our special report on the pandemic's impact on education in Latin America. Fernando Reimers, top right, director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative at Harvard University, was joined by Claudia Costin, top left, founder of the Center for Excellence and Innovation in Education Policies.



Shannon O'Neil

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CFR VP and Sr Fellow for Latin America.

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Views my own.

Good piece by @dan_restrepo on how the US can lead international financial institutions to expand their own and the private sector's investment in Latin America's greener future.



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Content + Campaigns @BakerMcKenzie, Penn Kemble Fellow @NEDDemocracy; Former Deputy Director @ACLatAm @AtlanticCouncil. @GWAlumni. 🔊 🚍. Views my own.

Great thread and @AmerQuarterly article by @OliverStuenkel about setting and achieving realistic goals at the @SummitAmericas that are not overshadowed by geopolitical pressures to 'pick a superpower' or ideological assumptions about what the left or right in Latin America want.

Oliver Stuenkel & @ @OliverStuenkel · Feb 20
At the upcoming Summit of the Americas, which will take place in Los Angeles in June, there's a risk that geopolitical concerns about China and Russia will contaminate the U.S.'s relationships with Latin America.

Show this thread



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@Alonso GD

Assistant Professor @udelpacifico | Ph.D.(c) @UCLLaws | blogs @opiniojuris | Español/English | Views personal | Peru, History & Int'l Law

If you're wondering how Pedro Castillo is doing in Peru, this piece @AmerQuarterly, by the always timely @AMoncada C, is where you should start.



americasquarterly.org What to Make of Peru's Latest Crisis **Under Castillo** Fears of a radical shift by Peru's presid...



Mercedes Mateo

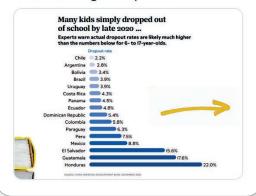
Chief of Education @the_IDB. Invest in people if you want to transform societies. RT not endorsement. Views=personal

@AmerQuarterly collected data from our recent @the IDB study to make this X-ray of the region's education crisis.

This graph shows the dropout rates in #LAC.

americasquarterly.org/wp-content/upl...

Can the damage be repaired?



Chris Blattman

@cblatts For those watching Colombian politics from afar, a good article about a candidate sadly swiveling from progressivism towards authoritarianism

Pedro H. Lima do Nascimento

@PeaceNascimento Perdas eleitorais históricas para os incumbentes e a economia afetada por uma alta no desemprego e dívida pública. Em outros países isto significaria um perigo para democracia, mas não na Costa Rica. @patricionavia e @lucas perello na @AmerQuarterly.

Patricio Provitina

Opprovitina An interesting analysis of Maximo Kirchner's recent resignation from @TimermanJordana in @AmerQuarterly

Hari Seshasayee

@haricito Excellent piece by @VickyMurilloNYC @AmerQuarterly using LAPOP data to show that Latin Americans are not so polarized. I think the left-right spectrum is no longer the determining factor in Latin American politics

marcelavelez

@marcelavelez Reabrir las escuelas en #latinoamerica es urgente, pero no basta. "Aceptar los reveses educativos (por la pandemia) es como aceptar otra década, o 2, o 3, de bajo crecimiento, aumento de la desigualdad y una generación perdida de jóvenes", dice @AmerQuarterly. Lectura recomendada.

Otto Granados

@Otto2025 Very interesting op-ed by Alejandro Werner: Argentina and the IMF: A Never Ending Story

Benjamin Gedan

@benjamingedan Many emerging progressive leaders "do not identify with old-school anti-imperial leftist orthodoxy that blames the United States for everything and is obsessed with economic and natural resource nationalism." Important reminder amid a supposed new "pink tide" in Latin America.









Monterrey, an industrial hub in Mexico, has had to start rationing water as local reservoirs dry out. At IO% of capacity, La Boca dam in Nuevo León state, above, is at its lowest level in 40 years. PHOTO BY JULIO CESAR AGUILAR/AFP/GETTY





Brazil's Formiga is the only soccer player in the world to have participated as an athlete in seven World Cups. On March I5, she became the first woman to have her footprints cast and hung in the soccer museum of the Mineirão stadium in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.











AS HEARD ON THE AMERICAS QUARTERLY PODCAST

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



"Whereas the previous administration's theory of change was based on regime collapse, ours is more on the need to recognize that only a negotiation will lead to concrete and sustainable change in Venezuela towards democratic order."

 – Juan Gonzalez, senior director for the Western Hemisphere at the National Security Council



"There are resources available for countries that understand and are ready to commit ... to help them navigate the energy transition. But you have to start to work on improving governance and standards."

 Luisa Palacios, senior research scholar at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy, on renewable energy sources



"What we're seeing in 2022 is old foes and new enemies: The old foe is low growth, and the new enemy is high inflation."

-Alberto Ramos, chief economist for Latin America at Goldman Sachs

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Alfonso de los Ríos

Co-founder and ceo, Nowports

Logistics bottlenecks
thwart Latin America's
trade growth. A 22-yearold Mexican thinks he
has a solution.

by Ezequiel González Camaño



AQ: What is Nowports?

Alfonso de los Ríos: Logistics is about the 90% of things around us that were moved in a shipping container or a truck. But the industry is in the same place it was 70 years ago. My co-founder Maximiliano Casal and I started Nowports in 2019 to change the way this industry works. With our app, shipments can be tracked in real-time, and our "smart containers" allow customers to remotely monitor things like humidity and temperature. Clients can also manage cost and financing through our platform.

AQ: How did you get started in this sector?

Adlr: I've been involved since I was a kid. I'm from Monterrey, one of Latin America's most industrial cities, and my family had a traditional logistics company. I was pretty geeky, and when I was maybe 12, I started programming websites and video games. Later, I just connected this with the family experience in logistics and supply chains. We started Nowports in Mexico and now operate in seven countries with plans to expand, even outside Latin America.

AQ: What challenges do you face?

AdlR: The next few months will be about connecting all parties — customs, shipping companies, carriers — to get these complex systems to talk to each other. A lot of customers began to rely on Nowports during the pandemic since we were the first to offer digital solutions. We realized that the industry has to become 100% digital; the question just became how to do that.

AQ: What excites you about the future of Nowports?

AdlR: We don't want to be just a logistics player; we want to be a backbone for business in Latin America. I'm excited about the impact our model can have in terms of transparency, particularly in an industry and a region not known for that. When you make logistics more transparent, more agile and less susceptible to corruption, you get faster economic growth. That's the ultimate goal that excites us.

THIS INTERVIEW WAS EDITED FOR CLARITY AND BREVITY

TRYING TOADAPT

How one town in rural Honduras is dealing with climate change in creative and unexpected ways.

by John Otis photographs by Tomas Ayuso

SAN JUAN DE INTIBUCÁ, HONDURAS — Should I stay or should I go?

That was the dilemma Honduran coffee farmer Otilia Aguilar faced when in 2017 when her entire crop succumbed to coffee rust, a deadly fungus that is now spreading faster across Central America due to rising temperatures. Destitute and discouraged, Aguilar and her husband considered joining the exodus of Hondurans seeking better lives in the United States.

But they lacked visas. They had little stomach for clandestine border crossings. And just the thought of leaving their four young children with relatives in Honduras as they toiled in El Norte broke their hearts. So instead of pulling up stakes, they doubled down.

They mortgaged their land to secure a small bank loan. After attending seminars on how to cope with unpredictable weather, they diversified by planting rust-resistant strains of coffee as well as corn, beans, mangoes, citrus and plantains, and by raising and selling piglets. The reconstituted farm has withstood droughts and tropical storms and produced enough for the Aguilars to pay off their loan and put food on the table.



"It was a good decision to stay put," said Aguilar, who lives on the outskirts of San Juan, a farm town in the pine-covered mountains of western Honduras. "We worked very hard to make this happen."

Although unfamiliar with the term, the Aguilars are practicing climate change adaptation. This means building up the resilience of communities and reducing their risks before they can be waylaid by droughts, tropical storms and hurricanes.

In most cases, adaptation boils down to commonsense, environmentally friendly adjustments — nothing revolutionary. Yet experts say that for Central America, an impoverished region with little margin for error, preparing for extreme weather is essential.

"The impacts from climate change are likely to get worse, so resilience and adaptation are going to be critical," Michael Camilleri, executive director of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Northern Triangle Task Force, told *AQ*.

Home to 45 million people, Central America is especially vulnerable due to its location in the Atlantic Ocean's hurricane alley, its drought-prone "dry corridor" along the Pacific coast, and its dependence on agriculture, with millions of subsistence farmers barely eking out a living even when the weather is good.

Between 1994 and 2013, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala were among the 10 countries most affected by extreme weather events, according to the Germanwatch Global Climate Risk Index. In 2019, after five years of droughts and torrential rains caused widespread crop failures, 1.4 million Central Americans required emergency food assistance, according to the World Food Program.

In 2020, the double whammy of Hurricanes Eta and Iota caused nearly \$3 billion in damages in Guatemala and Honduras and sparked a new wave of migration to the United States.

Around that same time, rising tides along Honduras' Pacific coast washed away buildings and streets in the seaside village of Cedeño. "Now, you need a canoe to get to the town square," Sergio Palacios, di-

rector of the climate change office for Honduras' Environmental Ministry, told *AQ*.

EVEN BIGGER CHALLENGES AHEAD

FEBRUARY REPORT BY the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicted that by 2050, extreme weather could severely damage food security in Central America and that, in a worst-case scenario, rice, corn and bean production could fall by about 20%. By midcentury, crop losses and rising poverty in Central America and Mexico could produce up to 4 million climate-change migrants, according to the World Bank.

The cruel irony is that Central America can do little to roll back global warming because its own greenhouse gas emissions are minimal.

"We are not responsible for climate change, but we are very susceptible to it," said Marlon Duron, a Honduran biologist for the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). "The only thing we can do is try to adapt."

So far, however, Central America and the rest of the world are not adjusting fast enough. The IPCC report focused heavily on adaptation, but said these efforts have been incremental and underfunded at a time when transformational changes are required.

The good news is that climate change adaptation is a bargain compared to the costs of cleaning up after crises. That's why UN Secretary-General António Guterres insists that half of all new climate financing should go towards adaptation.

For farmers this can mean sowing hardier crop varieties or switching out chemical pesticides for organics to save money and replenish the soil. In cities it can mean moving slum-dwellers to less flood-prone areas, planting trees to prevent erosion, and better waste management. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, such adaptation projects cost one-fourth to one-sixth the price of

"We are not responsible for climate change, but we are very susceptible to it. The only thing we can do is try to adapt."

— Marlon Duron, biologist for CIAT

repairing the physical damage caused by extreme weather events.

"This can be done," said Jesse Festa, a project manager for The Nature Conservancy who has helped farmers, ranchers and fishers in Central America prepare for climate change. "You need some up-front capital but, overall, these are low-cost solutions."

BEHIND THE CURVE

REATHING HARD AND SWEATING, Ariel Benítez climbed over tree trunks, boulders, broken pipes and other debris that have all but buried a stream called Agua Amarilla. Benitez, 35, is the mayor of San Juan, Intibucá, the Honduran town near Otilia Aguilar's rejiggered coffee farm. Dressed in jeans and hiking boots, he was inspecting the site of the town's most recent natural disaster.

In October 2020, four hours of intense rain caused the side of a mountain to collapse, creating landslides that washed away 250 acres of crops, four bridges, and a system of weirs and pipes that brought water from Agua Amarilla and two other streams to 3,500 San Juan residents. As he surveyed the path of destruction and the trickle of water that used to be a stream, Benítez abruptly declared, "This is climate change."

The calamity shocked San Juan's 15,000 residents, and for several days, images of the flooding and washed-out roads made national newscasts. But Benítez, a coffee farmer before he was elected mayor in 2017, has always paid close attention to the weather, which seemed more erratic.

"People used to know when it would rain. Our grandparents would say, 'Today is a good day to plant because it will rain," Benítez said. "But everything has changed. Now, the dry season is too long and when the rain finally comes, it's overwhelming. It causes the coffee to mature too fast."

That's why Benítez was one of the first mayors in Honduras to create a climate change adaptation plan. Town officials and climate experts sponsored by USAID, CIAT and environmental groups held dozens of meetings with the community at which they gathered information from residents and farmers about local weather patterns, drainage, erosion and soil fertility.

Instead of a bureaucratic opus, the resulting plan consists of 29 reader-friendly pages that clearly identify San Juan's biggest climate threats. Several points, such as waste management, are being implemented by the town, and agricultural engineers fanned out to rural areas to teach new techniques to famers.

LOOKING FOR A SIDE HUSTLE

MONG THEM IS IRENE HERNÁNDEZ. He's a 52-year-old San Juan coffee farmer who was initially skeptical about adaptation. But he had been losing more of his crop to coffee rust while two of his sons, who used to work on the farm, gave up and resettled in the U.S.

So Hernández gamely showed up at the seminars, where he learned how to make fertilizers and pesticides with the waste from de-pulped coffee berries,





chicken excrement, leaves and other organics. The concoctions have fortified his coffee bushes, his soil and his wallet because he no longer shells out for expensive chemicals and sometimes sells these natural products to his neighbors.

"The other day I sold two canisters of pesticides for 500 lempiras," Hernández said, referring to the \$20 he earned in Honduran currency from the deal.

In fact, one of the adaptation plan's recommendations is that farmers create side businesses as hedges should bad weather batter their crops. Several larger coffee farms now double as hotels in a drive to bring visitors to the region, which lies a few hours away from the ancient Mayan city of Copán.

But most new ventures are small. They include a group of 16 farmers, most of them women, who have built a wood-burning oven to make and sell bread in rural zones where there are no bakeries. Others have planted blackberries, oranges and pineapples and are fermenting the fruit into wine, which they sell for \$6 a bottle.

Informal lending clubs have sprung up to provide small loans to help farmers get by until the next harvest. At a recent lending club meeting, held on a farmer's back porch, several borrowers came forward with fistfuls of lempiras to repay loans as a volunteer treasurer carefully recorded each transaction in a spiral notebook.

"You learn how to be responsible with money and then you can borrow more if you really need it," said Maidra Méndez, who lost a quarter of her coffee crop when Hurricane Iota roared through Honduras two years ago.

Elsewhere in Central America, adaptation techniques once dismissed as science fiction are catching on with small producers exasperated by extreme weather.

In Nicaragua, where dairy farmers have been hit hard by droughts, some have switched to silvopastoral ranching, which improves pastures by combining high-density fodder with tropical grasses and trees. They now spend less on feed because their cattle can graze year-round, while the yields and qual-

ity of their milk have improved.

In Belize, where coastal communities have seen fishing stocks decline, seaweed farming is taking root. This involves attaching pieces of seaweed to underwater rope lines in the ocean, then returning to collect the fully grown plants.

Growers can earn about \$15 for a pound of dried seaweed, a nutrient-rich superfood that is also used in soap and cosmetics. Another benefit: Reduced fishing in and around seaweed farms appears to be bringing back fish, lobster and conch populations, said Festa of The Nature Conservancy, who has helped set up three seaweed farm cooperatives in Belize.

"We are looking to scale this up," said Festa, who added that coastal communities in Nicaragua and Honduras also want in on the action. He estimated the start-up costs for a seaweed farm at about \$80,000.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT IS KEY

nother project that will soon come online throughout Central America is Servir, a partnership between usaid and masa to provide satellite imagery. The data can provide near-real-time fire alerts, identify potential frost areas to give farmers more time to prepare, and locate fish-killing microalgae spots at sea so fishing boats can avoid them.

Speaking to the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, in November, NASA Administrator Bill Nelson boasted that the project "connects space to the actual village."

That sounds cutting-edge and adds to the impression that much is happening to shelter Central Americans from oncoming storms. Yet experts point out that the region's adaptation efforts remain piecemeal and underfunded and often get no further than the drawing board.

One problem is that many Central American governments have been mired in corruption scandals and other controversies while providing little lead-







ership on climate change. Local politicians, in turn, usually focus on age-old challenges like health care, education and water projects.

"There are still so many basic needs that climate change adaptation is not a high priority," said Duron, the Honduran biologist with CIAT and the main author of the San Juan adaptation plan.

The Biden administration has pledged to spend \$4 billion to address the root causes of poverty in Central America and to stem irregular migration. Yet only a small fraction of that amount is likely to be set aside for climate adaptation. For example, Biden's \$861 million budget request for Central America for fiscal 2022 includes just \$33.5 million for climate change, with about half that amount earmarked for adaptation.

International development groups and multilaterals are stepping in with funding and training. However, the private sector is lagging even though it, too, has also been hit hard by climate change, said Gina Kawas, a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.

Even the proactive citizens and town officials in San Juan are largely on their own. Of Honduras' 298 towns and cities, San Juan is one of only about a dozen that have produced climate adaptation plans, even though a 2013 law calls on every community to do so. Neither Tegucigalpa, the capital, nor San Pedro Sula, the country's largest city, have one.

Still, even one plan can carry a lot of weight—as Aguilar, the farmer who nearly fled Honduras for the U.S., can attest. On a recent morning she could be found using a wooden rake to spread her harvest of coffee beans over a plastic sheet so they could dry in the sun. Nearby, her four *cipotes*—Honduran slang for kids—frolicked with their dogs and cats and stripped kernels from ears of dried corn so mom could make cornbread.

Revamped to resist the wrath of Mother Nature, Aguilar's farm now holds her family together.

■

Otis is a journalist based in Colombia. His work has been featured in The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and elsewhere.





The Violent End of Central America's Decade of Promise

How a 1998 hurricane devastated a region's hopes — and laid bare enduring challenges for its democracies.

by Luis Guillermo Solís

VERYONE KNEW Hurricane Mitch would be brutal. Before the Category 5 storm began dumping water on Central America in October 1998 with sustained wind speeds of 180 miles per hour, atmospheric scientists had warned it would be among the strongest Atlantic hurricanes on record.

But no one expected Mitch to slow to a crawl, hovering mercilessly for days on end above Honduras, its arms sucking up water from both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean and pouring it back down on the land, catching politicians and ordinary citizens hopelessly off-guard. Despite the advance warning, authorities in the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, were unable to find shelter for the many people living in informal dwellings near the banks of the rivers before torrents washed them away. When the storm hit, cliffs collapsed, along with houses built on them.

At the Casita volcano in Nicaragua, rain filled up the volcano's crater and caused it to partially collapse in a cataclysmic landslide that killed 1,500. A rare ray of light came from the Mayan ruins at Copán in Honduras that survived — testimony perhaps to that ancient civilization's mastery of drainage systems.

By the time the rains subsided, at least 11,000 people lay dead. The whole region bore Mitch's impact, but Honduras and Nicaragua were hardest hit, suffering 7,000 and 3,800 dead, respectively. While countries such as Costa Rica and Belize largely escaped the worst human toll, the economic impact was widespread and severe. Mitch washed away crops; banana production on Honduras' Caribbean coast was almost totally wiped out and would take years to recover. Twenty percent of Honduras' population was left homeless, and as a direct result of the hurricane, the country's economy shrank by nearly 2% in 1999, and was left wounded for many years to come.

A Central American renaissance interrupted

NDEED, SEEN FROM today's perspective, Hurricane Mitch was more than just a storm. It put an end to a decade of unusual optimism in Central America, an enduring blow from which the region has still not fully recovered — and a cautionary tale for what could happen again in this era of extreme climate change unless societies heed its lessons.

The 1990s had been a time of growing peace, cooperation and economic growth in the region, as the republics of Central America experienced a period of moderate but increasing well-being. Yes, many of the challenges faced by the region, such as poverty, self-serving elites and the lack of a strong middle class, were still present. But the Cold War was over, and the Esquipulas Peace Accords set terms for the end of Central America's armed conflicts of the 1980s.

Reaping the benefits of expanding U.S. markets, the region's economies grew 3.5% to 4% per year even as countries recuperated from the devastation of war and dealt with rising crime. Central America seemed destined for an age of pluralism, respect for human rights and the rule of law — one in which democracy promised better conditions for the poor. And meanwhile, the region was opening to the world, as leaders from around the globe paid visits and multilateral financial institutions included Central American countries in major campaigns to ease financial pressures and even eliminate their foreign debts.

But Mitch also shattered the illusion of regional integration conjured by the rebirth of the Central American Integration System in 1991. Instead of seeking a joint recovery strategy, Central American nations engaged in frantic competition for relief funds from the international community. If the relief ef-

fort was free of the allegations of massive corruption that had clouded previous campaigns, such as in Nicaragua after a 1972 earthquake in Managua, the atmosphere of national jockeying undermined budding regional cooperation on other fronts, such as security, social investment and tourism strategies.

A shock to an already vulnerable system

HE IMPROVEMENTS in Central American democracy over the 1990s proved all too vulnerable to a shock like Mitch. Countries became increasingly vulnerable to crime and narcotrafficking as poor, segregated neighborhoods in the region's large cities became centers of operation for violent gangs formed by Central Americans deported from the U.S. to their countries of origin in the early 1980s. Problems long faced by the region—such as poverty, inequality and social exclusion—worsened as progress slowed, then went into reverse.

For a time, the region's politics preserved a semblance of normality. But now, two decades after Mitch, democracy has deteriorated so much that it has begun to resemble the grim conditions of the mid-1970s. If the region's armed forces have largely refrained from direct meddling in politics, signs of trouble are everywhere.

Since 1999, a new dictatorship under the iron fists of Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo, has been consolidated in Nicaragua. An extremely popular autocrat governs El Salvador with complete disrespect for the separation of powers and the rule of law. Guatemala's institutions are in severe disarray, vulnerable to organized crime, unaccountable for and unable to prevent the constant violation of human rights.

Honduras struck a lighter note in November 2021, with the election of a woman, Xiomara Castro, in a moment that raised hopes for the arrival of muchneeded legitimacy and transparency. But even Panama and Costa Rica, the two most stable nations in Central America, face increasing polarization and

growing inequality. Belize remains in a category of its own, but its links to its neighborhood have weakened as it moves into a leadership transition. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the region, damaging its economies and straining its health systems. Anti-vaccine sentiment has limited the reach of immunization policies and prevented the limitation of tourist arrivals. In early March, 1 million doses of the Sputnik vaccine expired in Guatemala, where less than half of the population was fully vaccinated.

Slow growth traps the region in poverty

ruled Central America have failed to provide a timely response to popular demands, despite having been elected in free and fair elections. A big part of that failure has been the weakness of the region's economies. Growth rates lagging below 3% or dipping into negative territory fall far short of what's needed to provide opportunity for the region's poor. Several countries continue to have poverty rates over 50%, and poverty is believed to have worsened over the course of the pandemic — while climate experts predict the effects of climate change will increase the number of people at risk of malnutrition in Central America over coming decades.

Poverty is in turn a principal cause of outward migration from the region. Without reliable public services such as healthcare, education, drinking water, housing, public security and care for children and senior citizens, life for most Central Americans is painful. Millions have ventured north to the U.S. or south to Costa Rica and Panama in search of a better life.

To finance quality public services, the obvious option for Central American countries would be to introduce a progressive taxation regime. But thanks to opposition from national elites, this has not been possible. These powerful segments of society have helped make Central America the region with the lowest rates of taxation in the Western Hemisphere. With neither taxation nor economic growth to finance



The U.S. requested the extradition of former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, center, on drug trafficking charges.

social investments, most Central American countries have resorted to debt spending, with the result that the region is subject to the imposition of austerity policies by multilateral financial institutions.

A corrosive cycle of corruption

HE REGION'S PROBLEMS aren't only economic. Organized crime has also taken a toll. But no other factor has been more detrimental to democratic legitimacy than corruption. Under dictatorship and democracy alike, in conservative as well as purportedly progressive administrations, the region's governments have been marred by embezzlement, fraud, bribery, money-laundering and other unlawful activities related to narcotrafficking.

In one well-known case in 2019, a Guatemalan presidential hopeful was caught plotting the murder of two of his adversaries and the sale of favors to traffic drugs through Guatemala, for \$14 million dollars. A few years earlier, former Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes escaped to Nicaragua after being accused of embezzling more than \$350 million dollars from his country's treasury. In February 2022, two weeks after Honduras' former President Juan Orlando Hernández left office, the U.S. requested his arrest and extradition for his presumed involvement in drug-related activities.

Cases like these, frequently discussed on social media, have turned public opinion against the region's political class in general. It's not only politicians who are now seen with suspicion, but also officials and other decision-makers in the public sphere.

Likewise, the weakening of political parties and ideological contestation has not been an improvement for the region's politics. As doctrinal consistency has been replaced by lawfare, fake news and improvisation, populism is on the rise — and in Central America as in other parts of the world, it has been prone to extremism, violence and religious fundamentalism.

Is class structure to blame?

poverty, corruption or political woes, the ultimate explanation of liberal democracy's weakness in Central America lies in the absence of strong middle classes. In most Western democratic societies this group, sometimes called the bourgeoisie—whether liberal professionals, public employees, entrepreneurs or skilled laborers, urban or rural—became the backbone of material progress and political stability. A strong middle class is perhaps the best antidote against radicalism, and a natural buffer between the elites and the dispossessed.

Costa Rica provides the best example of how a strong public sector can anchor a robust middle class — and the stabilizing effect of this class may explain the difference between it and much of the rest of the region. Without a middle class, it becomes difficult to guarantee upward mobility, diversify productive sectors, provide quality public education and healthcare, and promote the orderly development of urban dwellings — which would do much to protect societies from the impact of another Mitch.

But a middle class can't be improvised. To develop one requires trading violence and institutional weakness for dialogue and the rule of law — and that, in turn, requires all the things Central American elites seem to lack: wise, responsible leadership, political acumen, international solidarity and a focus on achieving economic success.

Can this vicious cycle of poverty, injustice and violence give way to a virtuous cycle of democracy, welfare and peace? Probably. The experience of the 1990s shows Central America, when ruled by leaders willing to think beyond their limited time frames, can make strides on its developmental challenges. When good leadership coincides with a favorable international context, the results can be extraordinary. Though the immediate future seems bleak, there is room for cautious optimism in the medium and long term. As the saying goes, it's always darkest before the dawn.

Solís is a former president of Costa Rica. He is the interim director at the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University.

A Better Path for **Rural Haiti**

The current crisis is a golden opportunity for the international community to fundamentally change its approach.

by Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis

ORT-AU-PRINCE — The earthquake that battered southern Haiti in August 2021, followed two days later by a devastating tropical storm, revealed once again the fragility of our environment and the precarious conditions of our people. These twin catastrophes occurred amid a political vacuum, a constitutional and judicial imbroglio, an economic meltdown, and continued clashes among gangs who control much of our national territory. The current makeshift government had little to no capacity to intervene, leaving the field to international donors and agencies that until today have failed to make much difference. A few local organizations were able to respond rapidly, but for the most part, the post-earthquake situation has left the population unable to fend for themselves.

Leaders gathering at June's Summit of the Americas face fundamental questions: What to do about Haiti? Should the international community continue to pour in millions of dollars in aid that we know will be misspent or wasted? Or turn its back and give up hope?



A farmer stands in his grain field in the highlands of central Haiti.

There is another path.

This path begins with a detour through history, and a recognition of some of our most painful legacies. Shortly after the U.S. military occupation of Haiti began in 1915, the Marines reintroduced the *corvée*, a policy reminiscent of slavery with roots in the 19th century, which required citizens to work without compensation on infrastructure and other projects. These outside rulers considered local peasants and small landholding farmers to be backward and unfit for civilization, and made a racist choice to use their bodies as cheap, unskilled labor in Haiti and in the region. The first major forced migration of Haitians, mostly peasants, was organized in the 1920s for the benefit of U.S. sugar companies in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. We see the consequences to

this day, in the visceral rejection of Black Haitian migrants on U.S. shores and on U.S. borders, including the awful scenes of violence against our people in 2021 under a highway bridge in Del Rio, Texas.

This background illuminates the many factors conspiring against Haitians in rural areas as they fought to achieve freedom and independence. In her book *Taking Haiti, Military Occupation & the Culture of Imperialism, 1915–1940*, U.S. scholar Mary Renda shows her profound understanding: "Haitian peasants had struggled to establish a peasant economy and to resist forces urging them toward plantation wage labor. Picking coffee and growing food for themselves and for the market in their own garden plots afforded greater levels of control over their lives than plantation agriculture would allow. ... They

worked body and soul for economic independence."

Put another way, today's Haitian peasants are the descendants of a population of former slaves who fought for the country's independence, but soon afterward were marginalized for refusing to return to the plantation system and work for miserable wages. The hard truth is that this legacy has never been accounted for in public policies or international agendas.

The agricultural sector in Haiti is made of about 1 million smallholder farmers, men and women, working on small plots of about 2.5 acres with little more than the colonial-era hoe. There are also a few young entrepreneurs who found niche markets in crops such as cocoa, coffee, vetiver and other essential oils, and a few products for internal consumption. There is a very limited number of agroindustry outfits on plots of approximately 100 acres of land. They all work on a diversity of products, but productivity remains low. The added value to the economy created by the agricultural sector is about 20% to 25%. There are three agricultural campaigns and in high season they can mobilize as many as 5 million people, representing 60% of employment.

The contribution of this sector to the GDP is about \$76 million per year and has barely fluctuated since 2014. Persistent constraints limit its growth and the well-being of the smallholder farmers and their families. These include: a lack of long-term investment, lack of agricultural and rural infrastructure, inadequate technological means, climate change and its effect on the environment, and others. All this amounts to the historical abandonment of this productive primary sector by the public sector and international agencies.

No money for small farmers

2019 study by USAID makes clear how Haiti's small farmers are not included in traditional financial and economic mechanisms that might lead to their growth. The USAID report stated that "commercial banks and development finance institutions use the incentives provided by BRH (Haiti's central bank) to lend to well-established processors of agricultural goods. As of September 2018, commercial bank lending to the primary sector of the economy accounted for 0.51% of their total loan portfolio. In March 2019, this number increased to 0.79%, representing a 55% jump. This increase is thought to be primarily due to funds lent out by the microfinance arms of commercial banks, and to firms exporting agricultural goods."

The report continued: "Farmers, on the other hand, are left with very few options besides obtaining loans from the microfinance sector at high interest rates or advances from market intermediaries and processors. A survey of the microfinance sector in Haiti published in 2018 shows that only a small proportion of their loan portfolio, 14%, went to production."

That helps explain why Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere.

Yet, despite this grim picture, the potential is there for food production that can have a positive impact on food insecurity. There are pockets of hope that need to be sustained so that production can reach much higher levels and enhance the entire Haitian economy. The urgency today is not for short-term projects that can maintain the smallholder families in precarious conditions. Instead, we should support much longer-term investment, in local seed production for example (seeds

Haiti's small farmers are not included in traditional financial and economic mechanisms.

Now is the time to change the way we look at our territory, our population, our habitat.

are largely imported from the United States), and in the whole value chains of specific sectors with added value, which can be highly significant to food production and niche exports.

There are risks, of course, but why should the smallholder farmer living in subsistence be the only one bearing the consequences? Why not also bet on local organizations that have a proximity to, and experience with, the farmers and can ensure that funds are used properly and accounted for? In my personal experience the smallholder farmer sector is culturally resilient, capable of extraordinary courage, inventiveness and stamina when allowed and encouraged to produce for themselves and their families.

Rather than launching large-scale but short-term projects where international intermediaries absorb a major portion of the funds, the Haitian rural world needs small-scale investments that are sustained over a long time span with encouragement for local markets, school canteens and small-scale tourism outfits. There are private and nonprofit Haitian relays on the ground capable of providing careful interface with smallholder farmers, organizations with sensitive attention to an appropriate rhythm of growth.

At the more institutional level, any support that can help Haitian universities develop their scientific capacities to create the necessary links with the agricultural sector and help the farmers develop their sanitary and phytosanitary standards is also an area of concern in times of climate change. Haitian universities are beginning to partner with U.S. and Latin American universities to improve research capacities and to extend support to rural communities. That is a promising trend.

A new beginning

e are no longer in the days of the "big stick," the gunboat, the dollar and the missionary diplomacy advocated by successive U.S. presidents at the beginning of the 20th century to establish their hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. Yet we cannot help asking ourselves why the political and economic choices made in the course of history to this day seem to always be detrimental to our country.

And more persistently, why in a small country like Haiti is it still not possible to educate, to create decent jobs, to acknowledge the fundamental role of smallholder farmers, men and women, in the economy and invest with them to fight food insecurity and help mitigate natural disasters?

This is a chance to invest in areas that really matter, that can open perspectives to millions of young men and women who could finally project themselves in the future of the country.

Paradoxically, catastrophes also offer opportunities. What happened in Haiti's south is an eye-opener. Science keeps warning us that this could happen anywhere else in the country with graver consequences, more suffering, and probably more migration.

Now is the time to change the way we look at our territory, our population, our habitat. We need to build scientific capacities to educate, to empower and to bridge the social divide that has for too long marginalized millions of men and women.

This is the real audacious political agenda for the next generation that I dream of for our country. №

Pierre-Louis is a former prime minister of Haiti



The State of the Americas

AQ's snapshot of who is in government, where economies stand and how societies are faring in IO key countries.

by Emilie Sweigart





Argentina

PRESIDENT

TERM

Alberto Fernández

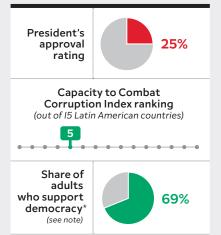
2019-2023

Fernández has tried to navigate a difficult economy while confronting tensions within his Peronist coalition, including pointed criticism from Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. Rising poverty and chronically high inflation, at around 50%, contributed to a setback for the Peronists in the 2021 legislative elections, and complicated negotiations for a debt restructuring with the International Monetary Fund. Currency restrictions are in place to prevent further devaluation of the peso. Fernández has sought cordial relations with the United States while also deepening ties with Russia and China during state visits to both countries in 2022, joining China's Belt and Road Initiative and welcoming Chinese investment in a nuclear power plant, railways and lithium mining. Beef and soy exports to China have fueled bilateral trade in recent years, but recent droughts will affect grain output and dent economic growth in 2022.



- high performing middle performing
- low performing

Governance



Military expenditure as % GDP

0.8%

Economy

2.5%
52.1%
30%
9.4%
37.8%
6.3%

Society

Population (millions)	45.6
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	4.6
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	157
Share of public social spending on education	7 %
Global press freedom ranking 69 1	

 \star NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: Management & Fit (March); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation, unemployment: Bloomberg (March); total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: Inter-American Development Bank (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2020); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020). NOTE: Informal labor force is for urban population only.



Brazil

PRESIDENT

Jair Bolsonaro

TERM

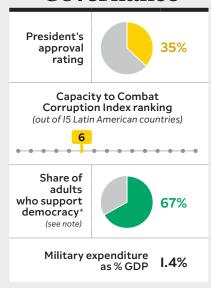
2019-2023

To facilitate comparisons among these 10 countries, the data is color-coded.

- high performing middle performing
- low performing

Dubbed the "Trump of the Tropics," the former army captain has been widely criticized for his handling of the pandemic and rising deforestation in the Amazon. He was elected on the promise of pro-market reforms, but few have passed Congress and Brazil's economy remains smaller on a per-capita basis than a decade ago. Bolsonaro met with President Vladimir Putin in Russia a week before the invasion of Ukraine, citing the need for an accord on fertilizers. Campaigning for reelection in October, Bolsonaro gets high marks from supporters for his handling of security (homicides have fallen to their lowest level in more than a decade) and social issues (his recent Supreme Court pick pleased Evangelical Christians), but he still trails his biggest rival, former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in polls. Some observers fear Bolsonaro could attempt to overturn the election if he loses, pointing to his repeated clashes with the Supreme Court and comments questioning the integrity of Brazil's electronic voting system.

Governance



Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	0.5%
Projected inflation 2022	7.6%
Total trade as % GDP	32%
Unemployment	12.4%
Share of labor force in informal economy	34.8%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	5.1%

Society

Population (millions)	214
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	18.5
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	467.4
Share of public social spending on education	9.6%
Global press freedom ranking	
iii.	
1	

*NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: PoderData (March); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation, unemployment: Bloomberg (March); total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: Inter-American Development Bank (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



Chile

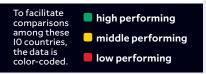
PRESIDENT

TERM

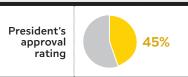
Gabriel Boric

2022-2026

Chile's youngest-ever president, the 36-year-old former student leader took office to soaring expectations in March. Boric's election came two years after widespread protests over inequality, and he has promised deep reforms to Chile's economic model and private pension system as well as an expansion of social services. He must work with a divided Congress to pursue an ambitious progressive agenda, and faces the immediate challenge of governing while Chile drafts a new Constitution to replace the Pinochet-era charter. A referendum on the new Constitution is slated for this year. Boric has stated he will reform Chile's national police, which was criticized for human rights violations during the 2019 protests. Security forces and indigenous Mapuche communities have clashed recently in the south, and northern Chile has seen violence against migrant communities near the Bolivian border.



Governance



Capacity to Combat Corruption Index ranking (out of 15 Latin American countries)





Military expenditure as % GDP

1.9%

Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	2.5%
Projected inflation 2022	7.2%
Total trade as % GDP	58%
Unemployment	7.6%
Share of labor force in informal economy	32%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	4.5%

Society

Population (millions)	19.2
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	3.6
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	81.2
Share of public social spending on education	26.8%
Global press freedom ranking 54 1	

*NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: Cadem (April); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation, unemployment: Bloomberg (March); total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: Inter-American Development Bank (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



Colombia

PRESIDENT

Iván Duque

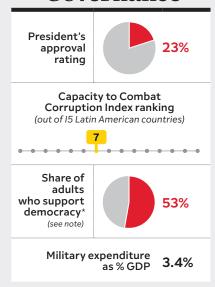
2018-2022

10 countries, TERM the data is color-coded.

To facilitate high performing comparisons among these middle performing low performing

Backed by former President Álvaro Uribe, Duque entered office in 2018 with plans to modernize the economy. In 2021, a proposed tax reform sparked nationwide anti-government protests that were met with excessive force by the police. Duque's approval ratings have continued to fall amid dissatisfaction with high unemployment, inequality and crime. In a step that won him international plaudits, Duque granted temporary protective legal status to 1.7 million Venezuelan migrants in Colombia for a decade. Duque leaves office in August, and reelection is no longer allowed in Colombia. The first round of the presidential elections is on May 29, and a June 19 runoff is likely. Colombians are generally upset with the traditional political class, and this climate may favor outsiders and the leftist candidate Gustavo Petro, who has consistently led opinion polls.

Governance



Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	4.4%
Projected inflation 2022	5.9%
Total trade as % GDP	34%
Unemployment	II.7%
Share of labor force in informal economy	62.4%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	19.2%

Society

Population (millions)	51.3
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	26.8
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	89.1
Share of public social spending on education	23.5%
Global press freedom ranking	
134	
1180	

*NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: Invamer (March); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation, unemployment: Bloomberg (March); total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: Inter-American Development Bank (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



Dominican Republic

PRESIDENT

TERM

Luis Abinader

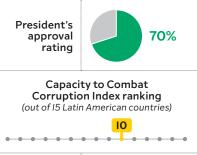
2020-2024

A wealthy former businessman with some of the Americas' highest approval ratings, Abinader ended the Dominican Liberation Party's 16-year hold on the presidency when he was elected in 2020. The president made an anti-corruption push, and authorities have investigated alleged corruption involving members of the previous administration and Abinader's government. He has sought to improve regional relations by joining the Alliance for Development in Democracy with Costa Rica and Panama to promote political ties and economic growth. The economy has benefited from pandemic-era tourism, and GDP grew by 10.4% in 2021, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The Abinader administration has been criticized for mistreatment of Haitians amid a spike in deportations and construction of a wall along the border. Abinader was among leaders named in the Pandora Papers for holding offshore accounts in tax havens, but denies wrongdoing.

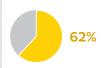




Governance



Share of adults who support democracy* (see note)



Military expenditure as % GDP

0.8%

Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	5%
Projected inflation 2022	5.7%
Total trade as % GDP	44%
Unemployment	6%
Share of labor force in informal economy	54.5%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	5.6%

Society

Population (millions)	10.9
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	10.3
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	27.8
Share of public social spending on education	37.5%
Global press freedom ranking 50 1	

*NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: CID Gallup (February); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation: Bloomberg (March); total trade: World Bank (2020); unemployment: Trading Economics (March); informal labor force: International Labor Organization (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: In Sight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



Ecuador

PRESIDENT

Guillermo Lasso

TERM

2021-2025

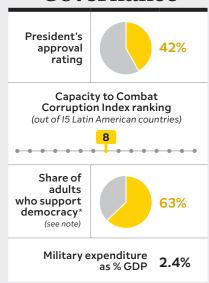
To facilitate comparisons among these 10 countries, the data is color-coded.

high performing middle performing

low performing

Lasso narrowly won the 2021 election against a protégé of former President Rafael Correa. A conservative former banker, Lasso is seeking to open up Ecuador's economy and enact judicial reforms while confronting a surge in criminal violence. He has prioritized mass covid-19 vaccinations, even making the jab mandatory for most citizens. The early popularity Lasso once enjoyed has diminished. He was among a host of world leaders with offshore accounts named in the Pandora Papers, and has stated that he got rid of legitimate investments abroad in order to compete in the 2021 election. Lasso visited China in early 2022, seeking to renegotiate billions of dollars in debt, and is pursuing free trade deals with China as well as the United States. In late 2021, Lasso declared a state of emergency to address a growing security crisis. Gang rivalries contributed to over 300 deaths in Ecuadorian prisons last year, and violence has increased as organized criminal groups vie to control cocaine shipment routes.

Governance



Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	3%
Projected inflation 2022	1.7%
Total trade as % GDP	43%
Unemployment	6.1%
Share of labor force in informal economy	75.3%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	10.8%

Society

Population (millions)	17.9
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	14
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	30.9
Share of public social spending on education	35.7%
Global press freedom ranking	
1	

*NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: CID Gallup (February); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation, unemployment: Bloomberg (March); total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: Inter-American Development Bank (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



Guatemala

PRESIDENT

TERM

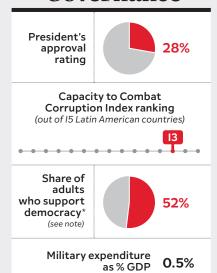
Alejandro Giammattei

2020-2024

Guatemala has lagged behind its neighbors in covid-19 vaccinations under the right-wing former physician's leadership. Organized crime and corruption remain entrenched, and Giammattei has overseen the removal of several high-profile anti-corruption prosecutors and judges, provoking nationwide protests and international condemnation. While criticizing his government, the U.S. has engaged Giammattei in talks to address the root causes of migration from the Northern Triangle. Guatemala, along with El Salvador and Honduras, is part of the Biden administration's four-year \$4 billion plan to improve conditions in Central America and stem migration to the U.S. The Guatemalan economy relies heavily on remittances from migrants, which reached over \$15 billion and were the largest contributor to GDP growth in 2021. Violence, poverty and the effects of climate change, including droughts as well as extreme flooding, have fueled migration from Guatemala.



Governance



Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	4.1%
Projected inflation 2022	4%
Total trade as % GDP	42%
Unemployment	4%
Share of labor force in informal economy	79%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	N/A

Society

Population (millions)	18.3	
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	16.6	
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	18.9	
Share of public social spending on education	35.3%	
Global press freedom ranking		
116		
1		

 \star NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: CID Gallup (February); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation: FocusEconomics (March); unemployment: Trading Economics (March); total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: International Labor Organization (2019); population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



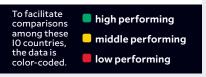
Mexico

PRESIDENT

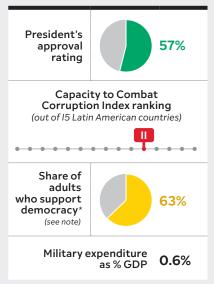
TERM

Andrés Manuel López Obrador 2018-2024

The former mayor of Mexico City has pursued his "fourth transformation" reform agenda, including large-scale infrastructure projects as well as an energy sector overhaul. Concerns about democratic backsliding mounted in 2022 as López Obrador increasingly lashed out against independent institutions and pursued politicized investigations into his critics. López Obrador's approval ratings remained high by regional standards, buoyed by support among Mexico's poor, but have eroded amid recent scandals. As levels of migrants crossing Mexico towards the United States increase, López Obrador has requested that the U.S. limit immigration restrictions. Still, he has complied with the Trump-era "Remain in Mexico" policy reinstated in December 2021, which human rights groups have denounced for endangering migrants.



Governance



Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	2.1%
Projected inflation 2022	5.3%
Total trade as % GDP	78%
Unemployment	4%
Share of labor force in informal economy	59.9%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	9.2%

Society

Population (millions)	130.3	
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	26	
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	357	
Share of public social spending on education	33.1%	
Global press freedom ranking		
143		
1		

*NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: El Financiero (March); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, inflation, unemployment: Bloomberg; total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: Inter-American Development Bank (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



Peru

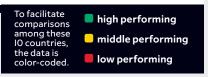
PRESIDENT

TFRM

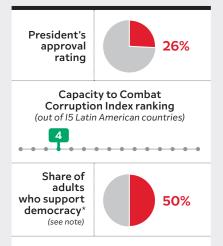
Pedro Castillo

2021-2026

Castillo's lack of political experience has shown since his surprise win in 2021's tight runoff election. By February, the socially conservative former schoolteacher and member of the far-left Perú Libre party had replaced his cabinet four times. There have been multiple allegations of corruption and mismanagement within Castillo's inner circle, contributing to Peru's overall political instability and raising the specter of impeachment. Tense relations with Congress stymied Castillo's promise to write a new Constitution. Despite fears that a Castillo presidency would end years of economic stability, Peru's economy has proven resilient, thanks in part to pragmatic leadership at the finance ministry. GDP grew by 13.5% in 2021, recovering from a double-digit recession in 2020. Peru continues to rely heavily on mining and petroleum revenues, and low wages and high labor informality persist.



Governance



Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	3%
Projected inflation 2022	4.5%
Total trade as % GDP	43%
Unemployment	8%
Share of labor force in informal economy	60.4%
Share of population living in extreme poverty	8.6%

Society

Military expenditure

as % GDP

1.3%

Population (millions)	33.4	
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	4.3	
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	44.7	
Share of public social spending on education	30.3%	
Global press freedom ranking		
91		

 \star NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Approval rating: Ipsos (March); support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stockholm International Peace Institute (2020); GDP, Inflation, unemployment: Bloomberg; total trade: World Bank (2020); informal labor force: Inter-American Development Bank (2020); poverty, population, education spending: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: InSight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)



Venezuela

PRESIDENT

Nicolás Maduro

TERM

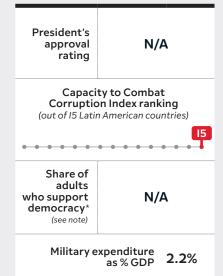
2013-2025

To facilitate comparisons among these IO countries, the data is color-coded.

- high performingmiddle performing
- low performing

Maduro has consolidated power and repressed critics throughout his years in office, leading more than 6 million Venezuelans to flee the country's dire humanitarian and security situation. Maduro's party won key governorships in November 2021's regional elections, which were widely considered neither free nor fair. Talks between the government and the fractured opposition in Mexico City last September were suspended. Inflation remains high, but a years-long run of hyperinflation ended in early 2022. High oil prices, an increase in crude oil production, and dollarization have contributed to an economic rebound after a 35% decline in gdp in 2019, according to the IMF. The Maduro government has promoted mining in Venezuela's Amazon, contributing to environmental degradation and violence in mining areas. Conflict is common along the Venezuela-Colombia border, where demobilized Colombian guerrillas and organized criminal groups fight to control territory.

Governance



Economy

Projected GDP growth 2022	5.3%
Projected inflation 2022	606.6%
Total trade as % GDP	N/A
Unemployment	N/A
Share of labor force in informal economy	N/A
Share of population living in extreme poverty	N/A

Society

Population (millions)	28.7	
Homicide rate (per 100,000 people)	40.9	
Annual carbon dioxide emissions (millions of tons)	84.6	
Share of public social spending on education	N/A	
Global press freedom ranking		
148		
1		

*NOTE: Support for democracy reflects percentage who agree that democracy is preferable to any other form of government.

SOURCES: Support for democracy: Latin American Public Opinion Project (2021); Capacity to Combat Corruption Index (2021); military expenditure: Stock-hold International Peace Institute (2017); GDP, inflation: Bloomberg (March); population, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2020); Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index (2021); homicide rate: Insight Crime (2021); CO2 emissions: Global Carbon Project (2020)

SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

PRESIDENT'S APPROVAL RATING (%)

Dominican Republic	70
Mexico	57
Chile	45 📒
Ecuador	42 📒
Brazil	35 📒
Guatemala	28
Peru	26
Argentina	25
Colombia	23
Venezuela	N/A

CAPACITY TO COMBAT

CORRUPTION INDEX RANKING		
Chile	2	
Peru	4	
Argentina	5	
Brazil	6	
Colombia	7	
Ecuador	8	
Dominican Republic	10	
Mexico	Ш	
Guatemala	13	
Venezuela	15	

SHARE OF ADULTS WHO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY (%)

tina	Argentina	69
hile	Chile	68
razil	Brazil	67
dor	Ecuador	63 🧧
xico	Mexico	63 📒
blic	Dominican Republic	62 📒
ıbia	Colombia	53
nala	Guatemala	52
eru	Peru	50 🔳
uela	Venezuela	N/A

MILITARY EXPENDITURE AS % GDP

Colombia	3.4
Ecuador	2.4
Venezuela	2.2
Chile	1.9
Brazil	1.4
Peru	1.3
Argentina	0.8
Dominican Republic	0.8
Mexico	0.6
Guatemala	0.5

PROJECTED GDP GROWTH 2022 (%)

Venezuela	5.3
Dominican Republic	5
Colombia	4.4
Guatemala	4.1
Ecuador	3
Peru	3
Argentina	2.5
Chile	2.5
Mexico	2.1
Brazil	0.5

INFLATION (%)

Ecuador	1.7
Guatemala	4
Peru	4.5
Mexico	5.3
Dominican Republic	5.7
Colombia	5.9
Chile	7.2
Brazil	7.6
Argentina	52.1
Venezuela	606.6

TOTAL TRADE AS % GDP

Mexico	78	
Chile	58	
Dominican Republic	44	
Ecuador	43	
Peru	43	
Guatemala	42	
Colombia	34	
Brazil	32	
Argentina	30	
Venezuela	N/A	

UNEMPLOYMENT (%)

Guatemala	4
Mexico	4
Dominican Republic	6
Ecuador	6.1
Chile	7.6
Peru	8 📙
Argentina	9.4
Colombia	11.7
Brazil	12.4
Venezuela	N/A

SHARE OF LABOR FORCE IN INFORMAL ECONOMY (%)

IN INFORMAL LCONOR	11 (70)
Chile	32
Brazil	34.8
Argentina	37.8
Dominican Republic	54.5
Mexico	59.9
Peru	60.4
Colombia	62.4
Ecuador	75.3
Guatemala	79
Venezuela	N/A

SHARE OF POPULATION LIVING IN EXTREME POVERTY (%)

	,
Chile	4.5
Brazil	5.1
Dominican Republic	5.6
Argentina	6.3
Peru	8.6
Mexico	9.2
Ecuador	10.8
Colombia	19.2
Guatemala	N/A
Venezuela	N/A

POPULATION (MILLIONS)

(MILLIONS)	
Brazil	214
Mexico	130.3
Colombia	51.3
Argentina	45.6
Peru	33.4
Venezuela	28.7
Chile	19.2
Guatemala	18.3
Ecuador	17.9
Dominican Republic	10.9

HOMICIDE RATE (PER 100,000 PEOPLE)

(PER 100,000 PEOPLE)	
Chile	3.6
Peru	4.3
Argentina	4.6
Dominican Republic	10.3
Ecuador	14
Guatemala	16.6
Brazil	18.5
Mexico	26
Colombia	26.8
Venezuela	40.9

ANNUAL CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS (MILLIONS OF TONS)

Guatemala	18.9
Dominican Republic	27.8
Ecuador	30.9
Peru	44.7
Chile	81.2
Venezuela	84.6
Colombia	89.1
Argentina	157
Mexico	357
Brazil	467.4

SHARE OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SPENDING ON EDUCATION (%)

·	
Dominican Republic	37.5
Ecuador	35.7
Guatemala	35.3
Mexico	33.1
Peru	30.3
Chile	26.8
Colombia	23.5
Brazil	9.6
Argentina	7
Venezuela	N/A

GLOBAL PRESS FREEDOM RANKING

Dominican Republic	50
Chile	54
Argentina	69
Peru	91 📙
Ecuador	96 📒
Brazil	111
Guatemala	116
Colombia	134
Mexico	143
Venezuela	148

SOURCES: CAPACITY TO COMBAT CORRUPTION INDEX, LATIN AMERICAN

PUBLIC OPINION PROJECT, STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE, BLOOMBERG, WORLD BANK, INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS, INSIGHT CRIME, GLOBAL CARBON PROJECT.

NOTES: FOR GUATEMALA, GDP AND INFLATION: FOCUSECONOMICS; FOR GUATEMALA AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, UNEMPLOYMENT: TRADING ECONOMICS; INFORMAL LABOR: INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION.

We Need to Cooperate Better on Migration

It's time for bolder and more effective regional coordination on migration.

by Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian

IGRATION NUMBERS in the Americas are staggering. More than 6 million Venezuelans have been displaced in the past decade, along with around 100,000 Nicaraguans and hundreds of thousands more from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America. Crossings at the United States' southern border are at record levels, while migration has also become a major political issue throughout much of South America and the Caribbean.

Governments have attempted to tackle these issues by developing various mechanisms — and although many have worked to some extent, the pressure continues to mount. Humanitarian needs are increasing rapidly and require a bold and more comprehensive response. U.S. President Joe Biden

said that signing a regional declaration on migration would be a priority at the upcoming Summit of the Americas.

So, what should be pursued in a forum of this nature? Here are three proposals.

An umbrella forum

n recent years, Latin American countries have developed some migration governance mechanisms to foster coordination and cooperation. However, this coordination often occurs in a fragmented manner. Considering the demands of receiving and integrating millions of migrants and forcibly displaced populations and the hemispheric nature of the phenomenon, we must work to establish an

umbrella mechanism that brings together existing institutionalized and ad hoc mechanisms. Precedents include the Quito Process, established to articulate a regional strategy to address the Venezuela crisis; the consular coordination between Chile and Brazil to protect children of Haitian nationals at the U.S.-Mexico border who are also Chilean or Brazilian nationals; and the High-Level Meeting on Irregular Migration promoted by Panama to facilitate safe and regular passage for migrants. These kinds of initiatives can offer lessons on potential responses and their impacts. Bolder cooperation was also central to the proposals that the Human Mobility Coalition of the Americas made to oas member states in November 2021. Their proposals include creating a Convention on Human Mobility in the Americas that facilitates the development of national and regional policies to address migration and forced displacement as well as establish shared responsibility for tackling these challenges and their root causes.

Documenting the irregular

🔰 econd, a mechanism of this nature should map out current regularization schemes, covering both legal pathways for migration and access to refugee status as well as complementary protection programs. For instance, what did Colombia and the U.S. learn from the Temporary Protected Status processes for Venezuelans? What has Costa Rica learned from receiving forcibly displaced Nicaraguans versus those who move for labor purposes? What is working for Brazil or Ecuador in terms of receiving migrants and refugees? What could the U.S., Chile, Peru and other countries learn from their experiences? The answers can provide tools to manage the crisis domestically and also facilitate effective international coordination. Concrete goals such as providing humanitarian assistance or promoting social inclusion and integration in receiving countries can be more effectively achieved through more comprehensive cooperation and complementary policies and rules.

A common language

hird, countries should consider some standard definitions. To better understand and respond to migration, we need to speak the same language. A hemispheric conversation could help countries arrive at some standard definitions and establish minimum protocols for policies on integration and regularization. A regional pact could also standardize categories for people currently in limbo, such as victims of climate displacement and those who do not neatly fit under refugee or economic migrant categories. This seemingly minor step will facilitate coordination on migration, forced displacement and mixed flows.

All this implies greater international and financial support for countries dealing with the large numbers of people currently moving across the continent. A hemispheric migration and protection pact could summon that support, including from local governments, the private sector, academia, international organizations and, of course, migrants and refugees themselves.

The Summit of the Americas provides an ideal space to start the conversation about a hemispheric mechanism and put into practice the principle of shared responsibility. No country should bear the cost of receiving and integrating migrants and refugees alone. Some thought leaders have proposed establishing quotas or numerical limits for each country according to collectively agreed-upon rules. Questions of whether or not conditions are ripe for establishing quotas, or even if predetermining where people should go is the most humane approach to migration, should also be addressed.

Fundamentally, improving regional coordination mechanisms should be a priority in itself. If they are not improved, it will be impossible to address root causes, eliminate trafficking networks, strengthen asylum systems and integrate new arrivals.

Muñoz-Pogossian is the director of social inclusion at the Organization of American States. Views are personal; they do not represent those of the OAS.

Miami's Biggest Legacy? Ambition

The Americas have changed since the first summit in 1994. But there are still lessons.

by Eric Farnsworth

'LL NEVER FORGET the sense of limitless possibility. During a remarkable 48 hours in 1994, leaders from every nation in the Americas but one joined together in Miami for a celebration of an entire hemisphere, newly emerging from Cold War darkness, united in a vision of the world's first fully democratic region committed to open markets and social development. As hard as it may be now to envision, the first Summit of the Americas promised to put aside deep divisions to pursue a robust agenda agreed, improbably, by consensus.

There in the now-faded "class photo" from Miami was newly elected President Eduardo Frei of Chile, proving that democracy was sustainable after the oppressive Augusto Pinochet dictatorship. Violeta Chamorro was also there, having defeated Nicara-

gua's once and future dictator Daniel Ortega in free and fair elections. So was Haiti's Jean-Bertrand Aristide, replacing disgraced dictator Raoul Cédras. Mexico's "accidental president" Ernesto Zedillo, whose own actions would prove decisive to advance Mexican democracy in the 2000 elections, was there. Venezuela's Rafael Caldera sought to promote energy cooperation as a priority. In a show of democratic strength and support, Brazil sent both its incoming and outgoing presidents. Nobody wore a military uniform.

Hosts Bill Clinton and Al Gore, fresh from Congressional victories on NAFTA and the WTO Uruguay Round, came to the summit with a domestic mandate to pursue the hemisphere-wide trade agenda that regional leaders were clamoring for (rather than the other way around). And they got it. Summit doc-

uments record a comprehensive agenda of significant initiatives, but the headline was an agreement to conclude a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2005. Returning to Washington from Miami, I had the sense that the hemisphere was embarking on a new, sustainable, exciting direction that would lead to increasing prosperity, decreasing inequality and corruption, and full insertion into the rapidly globalizing economy.

In hindsight, that was wildly optimistic. Today, mention of the ftaa elicits sneers, mostly. While countries such as Argentina and Brazil turned their back on trade by the 2000s, Washington had largely done so by the late 2010s. NAFTA SUCCESSOR USMCA could be the vehicle that launches new efforts, but it threatens to be the last significant U.S. trade initiative for some time.

Which simply means that as the United States hosts the next Summit of the Americas in June, hemispheric leaders looking for an economic boost to help recover from the COVID pandemic and ward off increasing dollar-denominated debt loads, spiking energy prices and inflation, amid other challenges, may have to look elsewhere. The region seeks enhanced trade and investment — and while many would welcome closer ties with Washington, others are turning instead to an alternative partner that is expanding, rather than shrinking, its regional presence: China.

On the ground, the contrast between U.S.-hosted summits is stark. Since 1994, both Nicaragua and Venezuela have joined undemocratic Cuba, subverting rather than protecting basic human rights. Haiti is suffering through yet another political crisis in the wake of the unsolved assassination of Jovenel Moïse. El Salvador's leader routinely takes to social media to bash U.S. officials by name. U.S. officials sometimes repay the favor, adding in Guatemala for good measure. Meanwhile, reportedly defying explicit U.S. entreaties, the presidents of Argentina and Brazil each turned up in Moscow mere days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Mexico's president has rejected U.S. complaints about press freedoms and journalists' murders, and the bilateral relationship is increasingly complicated.

It all adds up to a challenging environment for summit planners. While every democratically elected leader is invited, it's still not clear who will accept. Heavy diplomatic lifting is required to ensure success.

In addition to a unified, full-throated condemnation of Russia's move on Ukraine, there are at least three priorities for urgent attention. First, COVID relief: It is vital that Latin America and the Caribbean fully emerge from the pandemic that has caused so much heartache. Agreement to #VaccinateTheAmericas would be an important start, as well as ensuring that the region is able to address the inevitable next pandemic.

Second, economic recovery, despite higher prices for commodities exports, is not guaranteed, particularly in an inflationary environment. Active consideration must be given to significant economic support including expanded trade — even if a formal deal is off the table.

Finally, democracy cannot be taken for granted. Due to Venezuela's collapse, the region is experiencing the worst humanitarian crisis in its modern history. Nicaragua's migration pressures threaten to intensify. Cuba and Haiti may be next. A renewed commitment to democratic governance, with enhanced tools to support it, should be at the very top of the agenda.

The Americas are in a different place today than during the first summit. But with a pragmatic mindset and realistic goals, and something meaningful to offer, the United States can once again host a summit that will bring the region together around a common agenda and set a course for enhanced cooperation. Given hard work, goodwill, and a little luck, the region can restore the spirit and promise of a more hopeful and sustainable future for all.

Farnsworth is vice president of Americas Society/ Council of the Americas. A former official at the White House, U.S. Trade Representative and State Department, he attended the 1994 summit as part of the State Department's diplomatic outreach and policy coordination team.

Setting the Agenda for Development

Leaders in the Western Hemisphere must emphasize social inclusion.

by Susan Segal



To succeed, women must be on the agenda and at the table. More women are entering the workforce than ever before, but how many of them hold senior titles, sit on boards of directors, receive funding to start and build businesses, or are named to cabinet–level positions? Too few! A notable exception is the new government of Gabriel Boric in Chile, which includes 14 women ministers, or 58% of the cabinet, including the ministers of foreign relations and the interior. But most countries and companies have yet to achieve this level of parity. Despite numerous studies showing that increased diversity leads to better decisions and higher profitability, women are still underrepresented on boards, in C-suites and in other decision–making spaces.

Digital connectivity is also urgent. The lack of digital infrastructure in Latin America became tragically evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children lost years of their education and now millions of students in the region are lagging in the very skills needed to succeed in a competitive job market. If this generation is left behind, we will see greater poverty, inequality and migration.

At the summit, leaders must focus on the real issues impeding development. They need to demonstrate boldness and prove that they, too, can innovate to solve problems. An executable plan to ensure digital access and education must be developed. In today's world, gender diversity, digital connectivity and access to education are not privileges, but rights.



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

Central American Youth Corps

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Young people are the hope and future of Central America. As the region recovers from the COVID-19 crisis and natural disasters, the time to invest in them is now. The Central American Youth Corps is a youth service corps that harnesses the power of young people to drive change and prosper in their own communities. It provides job skills, leadership training, and community investment.

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Perón Forever?

A look at the changing faces of Peronism in Argentina today

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERICA CANEPA

THE PERONIST LEGACY in Argentina has few if any parallels elsewhere in Latin America. Nearly 50 years have passed since Juan Perón was last president (he ruled from 1946 to 1955 and again from 1973 to 1974), but the contours of his political platform continue to define the country's ideological divide. His second wife, Eva, was just 33 at the time of her death in 1952, but also remains an almost saintly figure among admirers thanks to a preternatural ability to connect with Argentina's working class.

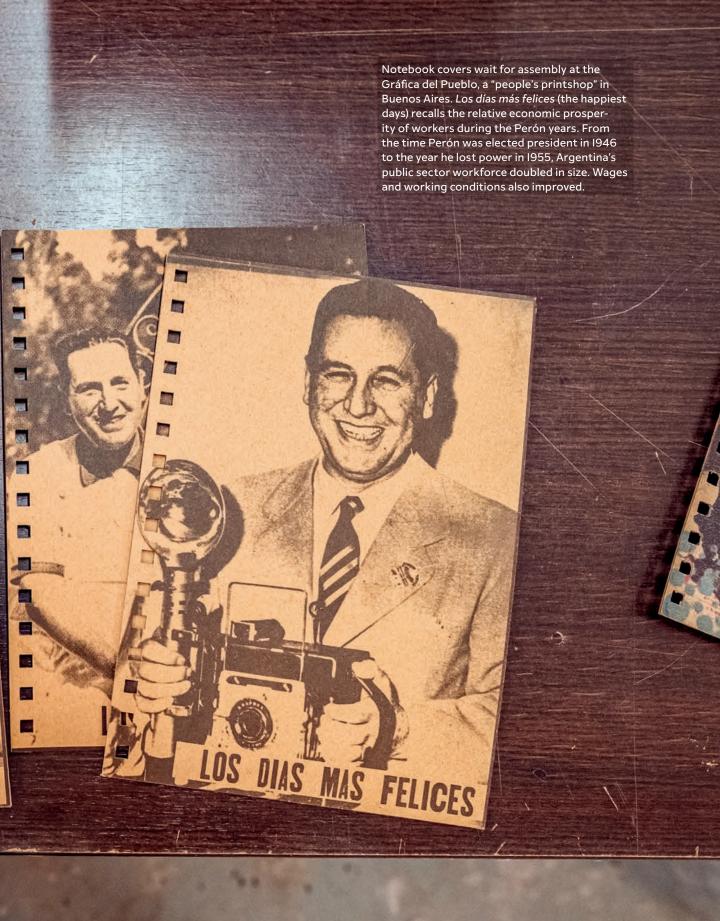
Their legacy continues to evolve — and be disputed by many parties — in today's Argentina. Both President Alberto Fernández and his vice president, former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, call themselves Peronists. So too does around 37% of the general public, according to a 2020 poll. But Peronism means different things to different people. For proof, look no further than the diversity of Peronist iconography on display in this photo essay.

Images of the Peróns and their successors are a common sight not only at museums, but at cafés, public buildings and protest marches. Seventy years after Eva's death, she and her husband remain touchstones in Argentine art, politics and much else in between — inspiring devotion, derision and nostalgia in almost equal measure.











Two giant portraits of Eva by artist Alejandro Marmo have adorned the iconic Ministry of Public Works building in Buenos Aires since 20II. The Argentine flag backdrop, lit up under the presidencies of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Alberto Fernández, was left dark during Mauricio Macri's presidency from 20I5 to 20I9. A smiling portrait of Eva looks south, toward the city's working-class neighborhoods, while a more challenging pose faces the richer north.

















Eva in particular has garnered a following among a younger generation of Argentines. Facundo Rossi, right, said he decided to get a tattoo of the former first lady after Alberto Fernández's election win in 2019. Blue forget-me-not flowers, a discreet Peronist symbol when the movement was banned under Argentina's military dictatorship, are another popular choice.

















SANTAEV

- Sauta

The Santa Evita restaurant in Buenos Aires' Villa Crespo neighborhood, which also features an altar to Eva and is adorned with murals and imagery of the Peróns, has become a favorite for Peronists and tourists alike.

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THE AQ PROFILE

Rodolfo Hernández

The 76-Year-Old Newcomer Shaking Up Colombia's Election

by Will Freeman



ARTAGENA, COLOMBIA — Everyone knew that strong challengers would emerge to compete with leftist front-runner Gustavo Petro in Colombia's May presidential race, but nobody expected Rodolfo Hernández to be one of them. The 76-year-old civil engineer has exploded on TikTok — and in the polls. A plain-spoken, cantankerous populist, he was virtually unknown on the national stage before this campaign; he was perhaps most famous for, as mayor of Bucaramanga, slapping a city councilman as cameras rolled for allegedly soliciting a bribe.

Hernández refuses to accept campaign donations or hold rallies, which he calls "prefabricated" events that "people are paid to attend." Running as an independent, he also refused to participate in March's center-left or center-right primaries despite the opportunity to gain broader exposure, insisting, "My only coalition is with the people." Yet his simple messaging focused on anti-corruption — including his slogan "Don't rob, don't lie, don't betray, and zero impunity" — appears to have broken through.

The latest polls have him in second or third place, and the septuagenarian is solidly the second-most popular candidate among youth ages 18 to 24. On TikTok, his videos have attracted more than 1 million likes and earned him more followers there than any other candidate. He has also made waves for proposing to legalize cocaine, restore diplomatic relations with Venezuela, and make peace with the ELN guerrilla group, which he believes abducted and murdered his daughter in 2004.

Petro remains the favorite in the race after the primaries, which also gave a boost to Federico "Fico" Gutiérrez on the right. But no one is discounting Hernández from making it to the second round — or at least becoming its kingmaker. "He's growing exponentially, too much," Petro's campaign manager, Armando Benedetti, told me earlier this year. "He's gathering votes of the right, and picking up some of Petro's, too, because he's anti-system."

How did he achieve such a rapid rise to prominence? What does it tell us about Colombia's national mood? What would he do if elected? *AQ* sat down with Hernández in February to find out, and he laid

out a platform that was equal parts bold, unconventional and hard to decipher.

An opportune opening

OR DECADES, Colombian elections were predictable enough, centered on the question of whether to pound the country's insurgencies into submission or negotiate for peace. On the side of a crackdown was right-wing ex-President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010) and his followers. On the other side was the centrist and leftist opposition. Even after ex-President Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018) broke ranks with Uribe, his political mentor, and negotiated the 2016 Peace Accords with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the internal armed conflict still loomed large. The most recent presidential election in 2018 became a de facto referendum on the peace accords, propelling President Iván Duque, an Uribe ally, into office.

Then came the political earthquake of 2019, when hundreds of thousands of Colombians took to the streets to voice their anger on issues that had for vears taken a back seat to the armed conflict: rampant corruption and impunity, ferocious income inequality and dwindling opportunities for young people. Mass protests flared back up in September 2020 over police brutality and again in April 2021 over Duque's unpopular tax reform. Violent police crackdowns and counterattacks by protestors left dozens dead and hundreds detained, tortured or disappeared. Colombians' outlook on the future darkened dramatically. Today, 85% say the country is heading in the wrong direction, the second-highest rate behind Peru among 28 countries surveyed by polling firm Ipsos.

Against this backdrop, all major candidates — left, right and center — have condemned the corrupt, clientelist machine politics that much of the public holds responsible for an unacceptable status quo. The problem is that almost all the candidates running are tied to the machine politics they vow to replace. Petro remains a solid 20% ahead of his nearest rivals, but he's no political outsider, having served as a congress-

man, senator and mayor of Bogotá over the past 20 years. What's more, he has now brokered alliances with an array of well-known machine politicians like ex-Antioquia Governor Luis Pérez and Senator Roy Barreras, raising doubts about his commitments to eschew vote-buying and backroom deal-making. Nor can centrist Sergio Fajardo easily tap into anti-establishment angst; he has already run for president once and now faces a controversial corruption investigation linked to his time as governor of Antioquia.

This has provided Hernández an opening. Arguably his most popular campaign slogan is "Neither Petro nor Uribe." To Hernández, they're equally in the wrong. As he explained, "Left and right is a way to distract the population so politicians can divide up the spoils and keep governing."

The roots of Rodolfismo

mystery even since his sudden surge to national fame, which was anything but preordained. Born in Piedecuesta, a small city in eastern Colombia, he grew up far from the country's centers of power. After studying engineering at Colombia's National University, he became a self-made millionaire, primarily by building housing for the poor and middle class. During the turbulent 1980s and 1990s, he steered clear of ties to narco-traffickers and rightwing paramilitaries — unlike many of his peers — and gained a reputation as an honest job-creator.

Besides a short stint as a city councilor, he kept his distance from politics until 2013, when he began to consider a run for mayor of Bucaramanga, Santander's capital. His brother, a reclusive Kantian philosopher, agreed to help, reportedly on two conditions: that Hernández not ally with Santander's machine politicians and that he never buy a vote. Hernández agreed and launched a long-shot campaign, promising to build 20,000 houses for the poor if elected. Victory looked so unlikely that Hernández left the country on a rare trip abroad ahead of election day in 2015. When he got the news that he had won, he was stunned.

His time in city hall was polarizing, dramatic and —

above all — popular. As mayor, he hosted his own public TV show to lambast corrupt politicians, and he clashed with the city council — literally. Hernández focused on pulling Bucaramanga out of debt. In the end he did not build any of the houses he had promised. But the city's residents don't seem to have blamed him for it; Hernández left office with an 84% approval rating, one of the highest for an elected official anywhere in the country. Even an ongoing corruption investigation tied to a questionable contract made by one of his sons hasn't slowed Hernández down.

More questions than answers

I expected him to be flanked by an entourage, but he was sitting with his two sons and a handful of mostly millennial advisors — half his campaign team, which numbers just eight. He had come to the city to listen to a group of politically independent businesspeople, he emphasized, not to meet politicians or hold rallies. Unlike his larger-than-life, brash media persona, the real-life Hernández spoke softly.

Corruption, Hernández said, is the root of the country's problems. He drew a straight line from corruption and impunity to the 22 million Colombians, nearly half the population, who endure food insecurity and the millions more living in poverty. "After we take the checkbooks away from the robbers, we will start to generate funds," he explained.

In his view, politicians and public contractors have colluded to capture the Colombian state. "Because most candidates don't have the financial means (to run for office), they have to search out business partners," he explained, "and these partners, 99% of them, are self-interested." Politicians then rig public contracts to benefit their campaign financiers, generating a vicious cycle. "We're breaking this system and trying to get elected not with money, but with emotions, feelings, communication," he said. Hernández has insisted that he will not accept campaign donations from anyone, and by the looks of his personal fortune and threadbare campaign, this pledge seems credible.



But his policy proposals to root out corruption are less so. He has promised to revise all major public contracts immediately. "As soon as I win the presidency, I'll call the contractors, the ones implicated (in alleged corruption schemes), and say ... it's on you to correct this," he said. He did not, however, explain why the contractors would "correct" the situation. As for the judiciary, Hernández derided it for its slowness, musing, "As head of state, one needs to demand results." He did not, however, offer specific proposals for judicial reform.

His economic proposals, meanwhile, sounded more like those of the populists of yesteryear — think Juan Domingo Perón or Getúlio Vargas — than those of a 21st-century planner. "No more selling primary materials, commodities," Hernández intoned. "Let's sell finished products." He then described a scheme to subsidize industry and agriculture, but it was unclear how he'd ensure that the subsidies would promote competitiveness as opposed to graft and sluggish, state-dependent industry.

On the 2016 Peace Accords, his posture might surprise, given his family's suffering at the hands of guerrilla groups. Hernández's father was held for months by the farc, and he blames the eln for his daughter's disappearance in 2004 while traveling through eln-controlled territory. Yet he proposes negotiations with the eln similar to those held with the farc. He also condemned the Duque administration's slow implementation of the peace accords. When he told the story of visiting an underfunded camp for demobilized farc militants in César, he lamented, "What a shame all the money the donor countries gave us for these demobilization camps, when Colombian politicians have robbed so much and made a joke of the Accords."

A soft spot for Bukele

ERNÁNDEZ WAS EQUALLY STRIDENT on foreign policy. He has pledged to restore diplomatic relations with Venezuela, not out of any sympathy for dictator Nicolás Maduro, but to better serve Colombians living in the country. When asked about Colombia's relations with the United States, he said he welcomes "everything the United States can do for international trade, to make us more competitive." But he insisted, "We prefer that you don't put shackles on us in terms of the exports we produce." He was also frank about his distaste for the status quo approach to counter-narcotics. "The recipe we've accepted, that the U.S. has offered, doesn't work," he said, proposing full-scale legalization of cocaine instead.

The conversation took a turn when Hernández discussed Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, doing nothing to hide his admiration. Hernández glowed when he described his recent trip to El Salvador. "Why should we value the democracy of thieves that was there (in El Salvador before)?" he asked, marveling at Bukele's sweeping power. He even endorsed Bukele's decision to send the military into El Salvador's legislature during a critical vote in early 2020, a move that earned international condemnation and fanned worries of authoritarianism. "It got the job done," Hernández said, adding that no one was physically hurt.

His connection to Bukele goes beyond the superficial; Hernández for a time worked with the Spanish political strategist Victor López, who also worked on Bukele's 2019 presidential campaign. "If the opposition can't find an argument, you (as president) have a 'demolishing power," he explained, implying that Colombia might need some demolition work of its own. So far, this kind of praise for strongmen hasn't seemed to cost him much public support — another sign of the Colombian public's lack of enthusiasm for the country's political institutions.

As we wrapped up the interview, Hernández invited me to visit a model home for the poor he had built in the central square of his home town, Piedecuesta. He took out his phone and flicked through pictures of the house, which looked vaguely like a spaceship. You couldn't miss the irony; the home was complete but uninhabited, while the thousands of units Hernández had promised prior to becoming mayor never materialized.

Colombia's pressing economic, social and political problems could use a capable engineer ready to mend the cracks in the country's foundations. But, as with the other top presidential contenders, it's not yet clear whether Hernández is up to the task.

Freeman is a journalist based in Colombia

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Pressure Mounts in the Amazon

An update from our May 2021 issue on sustainable development

by Iago Hairon

AST MAY'S SPECIAL edition of Americas Quarterly on sustainable development in the Amazon showcased the region's enormous potential for economic growth that simultaneously protects the environment and promotes social well-being. Since the issue was published, the private sector, local politicians and civil society groups have taken massive steps to capitalize on this potential despite the regressive policies of President Jair Bolsonaro and his administration. Now, the fate of this progress may hinge on the outcome of the October general elections.

Numerous positive initiatives are flourishing. The Consortium of Amazon Governors put inequality and illegal deforestation on the regional agenda through its Green Recovery Plan. Pará state strengthened its Amazon Now Plan to tackle environmental crime and constructively regulate green economic activity. The Green Climate Fund, in partnership with

the Inter-American Development Bank, approved a \$600 million Amazon Bioeconomy Fund, and a coalition of NGOs and companies called the Amazon Concertation launched an initiative to boost sustainable private investment in the region.

These developments demonstrate both public and private sector determination to transform Amazon economies in desperate need of change. In December, the Social Progress Index released its newest report, showing that in the Brazilian Amazon, municipalities with the highest deforestation rates have the worst quality of life indicators. These municipalities rely on economic activities — such as illegal mining and intensive cattle and soy farming — that not only harm the environment but also drive intense inequality and resource concentration.

Development that destroys rainforest also harms some of Brazil's most disenfranchised and vulnerable people, including the residents of favelas in cities like Manaus and Belém, and the public is increasingly concerned. A survey published last September found that almost 80% of Brazilians think it's very important to protect the Amazon and that 58% would consider voting for a president who presents a specific plan to do so.

And yet, the Bolsonaro administration has been moving in the opposite direction. Bolsonaro and his allies continue to weaken environmental laws, encourage harmful activity in the Amazon and jeopardize the lands of indigenous and *quilombola* communities. During cop26, the UN's 2021 climate change summit, Brazil's Environment Minister Joaquim Leite announced new climate pledges to calm international criticism of the country's environmental record. He said Brazil would end illegal deforestation and halve its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, but these promises were not met with as much skepticism from the international community as might be expected.

The testimony of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Brian Nichols before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on February 3 is a case in point. Nichols said that during cop26, the U.S. "was able to achieve much stronger commitments from the Brazilian government than anyone would have expected, and they are working hard to implement them." But there's no clear sign that the Brazilian government will keep its promises.

Bolsonaro failed to meet the 2020 deforestation goal set out in the National Climate Change Plan, and Amazon deforestation hit an all-time high in 2021. In just the first three weeks of January 2022 — as Bolsonaro continued his campaign to expand mining in indigenous territories — an area of rainforest more than six times the size of Manhattan was destroyed, according to the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research (INPE). Meanwhile, much of the Amazon is losing its ability to recover from the destruction as it nears dangerous tipping points; more than half the rainforest could become savanna in just decades, according to a study published on March 8 in the scientific journal *Nature Climate Change*.

In the October general elections, the public will have a say in the future of the Amazon at a critical moment in the rainforest's history. Voters will likely face a stark choice between two radically different futures. In one, the Bolsonaro administration's destructive environmental policies will continue to concentrate wealth and deepen inequality. In the other, new models of more equitable development will protect the environment, create green jobs and put food on the table for Brazilian families. The Amazon will be on the ballot.

Hairon is the climate justice program officer for Latin America and the Caribbean at Open Society Foundations



left, on the set of Sycorax

Ena Alvarado reviews Sycorax by directors Matías Piñeiro and Lois Patiño

Music 90

Sebastián Zubieta's spring playlist

Books

Nonfiction

A new book defends the legacy of Roberto Bolaño against a multiplying array of critics.

Reviewed by Nick Burns

s IT STILL COOL TO LIKE Roberto Bolaño? As recently as the late 2000s, there were few authors who inspired more excitement and reverence than this late Chilean. His 1998 novel *The Savage Detectives*, translated into English in 2007, hypnotized readers across the Americas with a mix of mystery, Bildungsroman, and oral history of Mexico City's 1970s avant-garde.

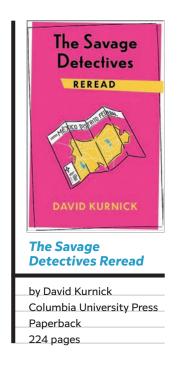
But lately Bolaño-mania seems to have given way to second thoughts. David Kurnick, at the start of his new book looking at the legacy of *The Savage Detectives*, recalls how a prominent Latin American critic called Bolaño overrated at a recent academic conference — inspiring hoots of delight from the audience.

The backlash has extended to the U.S., too. A recent piece in *The Drift* magazine wondered if Latin American literature in translation was doomed to endless cycles of boom and bust, with Bolaño the latest installment. Kurnick frets about being seen as one of "those" gringos traipsing around Mexico City with a copy of *The Savage Detectives*.

On one level, it was strange in the first place that *The Savage Detectives* made such a big splash in the U.S. As Kurnick notes, Bolaño's work ignores the U.S. almost entirely, and is immersed in the inside baseball of Latin American literature.

For example, few U.S. readers would recognize the name of Carlos Monsiváis, a towering figure of Mexican intellectualism, when he appears in *The Savage Detectives* to lambast its protagonists for disliking Octavio Paz. For Bolaño's Latin American readers, on the other hand, the appearance of Monsiváis was an absurd, unexpected joke — the equivalent of having Christopher Hitchens appear in your novel.

Yet make a splash the book did — with a U.S. marketing campaign that



relied on "exoticism," says Kurnick. One contemporary review recommended Bolaño be read alongisde "a platter of pisco sours." "Hard to imagine the Times recommending Manischewitz to accompany your (Philip) Roth," Kurnick acidly remarks.

Latin American critics accuse Bolaño of being apolitical to cater to a U.S. audience. Irreverent but sympathetic, he has sometimes run afoul of a new U.S. censoriousness. (Kurnick, a gay man himself, correctly rebuts the charge that Bolaño writes about homosexuality in a macho manner.)

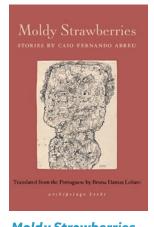
Kurnick, writing more in the tone of an admiring reader than a critic, rightly insists that the problem is not with Bolaño but with some of his U.S. readers. Bolaño, he argues, did not sell out the radical politics of the Latin American 1970s. On the contrary, he pioneered a new form of writing committed to a cause: not as a "heroic decision" but rather as an "acknowledgement that the commitment happens to you." At a time when other writers declared that Latin America

was a dead concept, Bolaño testified to an inescapable bond with his generation and his region.

As for his U.S. reception, it turns out you don't need to understand the references to love Bolaño's characters for their ravenous appetites — for books. for sex and companionship, for the avant-garde and all things Latin American. Readers in the U.S. might like his books in part because they demonstrate that Latin American writers have more fun and put more on the line.

It's cliché to say that a writer can give you faith in literature: In Bolaño's case the reverse may be true. He shows, page by page, that for his characters literature is a creed — a demanding one, to which they sacrifice much and sometimes all. And his popularity stands as proof that readers, in the U.S. and everywhere, long for writers who treat literature as something more than merely a career. .

Burns is editor and production manager at AQ



Moldy Strawberries

by Caio Fernando Abreu Archipelago Paperback 200 pages

Fiction

Brazilian millennials rediscover the tender charms of a bisexual writer active during the 1980s.

Reviewed by Tom Müller

■ HE SMALL SELECTION of Brazilian literature that has been translated into English is dominated by a small handful of themes. Among them: the brutality of the backlands, lust and loss amid family feuds, and the gentle — and not-so-gentle — disappointments of the idle rich.

Of course, there are exceptions, as a recent surge of interest in the pathbreaking work of Clarice Lispector reminds us. And now, with the publication of Caio Fernando Abreu's Moldy Strawberries, a lifelong fan of Clarice takes his rightful place among the outliers.

From a small town in southern Brazil, Abreu got his start as a journalist before his unapologetic bisexuality and unwavering commitment to personal, political and artistic freedom landed him in hot water with the military government then ruling the country. His very first work of fiction came off the press just as he left the country - into an exile that

proved mercifully short.

Originally released in 1982, the short stories in his collection *Moldy Strawberries* are told from the perspective of narrators with fluid, hard-to-pin-down romantic identities, seeking affection in an unforgiving urban landscape. Aching with loneliness, his characters move in and out of bodegas, buses and cabs. They call each other on pay phones late at night to talk about nothing in particular — or rather, the most important things of all: death, the possibility of friendship in a fallen world, how to survive on the mean streets.

"Am I annoying you?" one of his characters asks, plaintively, sensing the lack of eagerness on the other end of the line. She is indeed, but that does not prevent her from following up with another question: "Lui, do you think the world is ending?" What both she and her friend fear most, one gets the sense, is not the apocalypse, but their own loneliness — which neither drink nor company seems to ameliorate.

The book's honesty and raw, emotional truth made an outsized impression among the generation of young men and women that would soon cast their very first ballot in a presidential election, as Brazil made a slow and belated transition to democracy. Two years later, another of Abreu's works would win the prestigious Jabuti Prize, cementing his place as one of the most important literary voices in late 20th-century Brazil. Always highlighting the uni-

versality of his writing and the shared humanity of his characters, Abreu's refusal to be siloed was key in bringing attention to LGBTQ themes in a country emerging from authoritarianism. He died in 1996 at just 47, a victim of AIDS — as were many other artists of his generation.

His work found an even wider readership in the 2000s, when he was rediscovered by Brazilian millennials then entering high school and discovering social media. Perhaps Abreu's work seemed like manna from heaven to young people drenched in the cheap cynicism of the 2000s because his characters, though they are always on the move, always with longings to satisfy, are almost never mean. Though by no means immune to pessimism, what shines through above all is the unrelenting generosity of his voice. And in many ways Abreu was made for the Internet. An omnivorous reader, he was as comfortable writing about astrology as about psychoanalysis.

Though Abreu's sensibility certainly belongs to a vanished time, his themes remain as relevant as ever. Walking down dingy streets, drenched by a downpour, with a bottle of vodka in one hand and a gnawing insecurity within, his characters hope to be seen by others in a better light than they see themselves. They hope that someone, anyone, will answer the door when they knock. Don't we all?

Müller is a Madrid-based writer

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By Fernando Henrique Cardoso May 20, 2022 Companhia das Letras Hardcover, 416 pages

Constructing Latin America: Architecture, Politics, and Race at the Museum of Modern Art By Patricio Del Real

By Patricio Del Real June, 2022 Yale University Press Hardcover, 320 pages

Film

Drama

An Argentine director plays with Shakespeare in unexpected ways, bringing neglected female roles to the forefront.

Reviewed by Ena Alvarado



Sycorax

Directed by Matías Piñeiro and Lois Patiño

Screenplay by Matías Piñeiro and Lois Patiño

Starring Agustina Muñoz

Spain and Portugal

Distributed by Bando à Parte and Filmika Galaika

AQ Rating: $\star\star\star\star$ (4/5)

N THE LONG TRADITION OF ADAPTING SHAKESPEARE to film, Matías Piñeiro stands apart. Unlike other filmmakers, this Argentine director is not interested in faithful stagings or loose reworkings of the Bard's plays. Over the past decade, he has developed the "Shakespeareads," a cycle of films populated by interpreters of all kinds — directors, actors, translators — intent on reimagining the female characters in Shakespeare's comedies. Piñeiro has characterized this project as a "game of variations," in which the Elizabethan stage and modern life meet "like two balls that hit each other and go their separate ways." The result is a world that defies its source material yet still feels deeply Shakespearean.

The latest installment in the series is a collaboration with Galician director Lois Patiño, inspired by *The Tempest*. In *Sycorax*, Agustina Muñoz — a recurring actress in Piñeiro's work — wanders around a village in the Azores. She is a theater director in search of a woman to play the role of Sycorax.

Bringing this character to life seems a difficult goal. In *The Tempest*, Sycorax is described as a "blue-eyed hag" banished from Algiers for sorcery. Arriving on a remote island, she gives birth to the monstrous Caliban and imprisons the spirit Ariel in a pine tree. That is the only information we get about her, as she dies long before the play's first act. The little we know comes almost exclusively from Prospero, the play's protagonist, and readers would do well to distrust him. After all, he never met Sycorax, and in taking her place as master of the island, he has a vested interest in discrediting her.

But Shakespeare's silences, and possible biases, serve only as inspiration to Muñoz. She organizes an audition with 14 women, each of whom recites, in varying styles, "Wind, rain, fire, fog. This island they want to steal. Ariel, this tree will take care of you." These lines were not written by



Agustina Muñoz wanders through an Azorean forest in Sycorax, searching for the film's elusive title character.

Shakespeare; Muñoz strings them together from individual words uttered in the play. Literary collage proves an effective method to revive this elusive character.

If anything, Sycorax's absence is a catalyst for the development of the film's central aim: to dramatize the creative process of interpreting Shakespeare today. The other "Shakespeareads" similarly follow directors staging plays (*La princesa de Francia*) or translating them (*Hermia & Helena*), and actresses performing theater productions (*Viola* and *Isabella*). They deal with the nitty-gritty of aesthetic decision-making — location scouting, rehearsing lines, writing dialogue — and assign new significance to otherwise minor female characters along the way. Rather than simply transpose a play's plot into a different place and time, Piñeiro and Patiño use Shakespeare, in their words, as "a clay that we can put our hands into."

In *Sycorax*, a speechless and disembodied woman acquires an unexpected afterlife. The innovations of Muñoz,

the film's fictional director, call to mind the *Macbeth* adaptations of Roman Polanski and Joel Coen. In their roles as directors, Polanski and Coen injected fresh power into the character of Ross — an unexceptional messenger in the original tragedy — by making him a third conspirator in the murder of Banquo, Macbeth's best friend. For these three filmmakers, Shakespeare's own designs are simultaneously essential and irrelevant.

Sycorax pushes the limits of Piñeiro's "game of variations." An absent, voiceless character is recast in terms exactly the opposite of Shakespeare's. She is, according to Muñoz, "neither old, nor wicked, nor ugly, nor crooked." How can so much grow out of so little? Sycorax lays bare the enormous space of possibility that lies between Shakespeare's brilliance and his readers' own imaginations.

Alvarado is a writer and former assistant editor at The Atlantic

Music

AQ's Winter Playlist

A new album by a longtime Brazilian favorite raises the question of whether Latin American musicians will be included in the recent bonanza of catalog sales.

by Sebastián Zubieta



Portas

Marisa Monte Sony Music

Brazil

HE MUSIC WORLD HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN in recent months by a frenzy of acquisitions of pop stars' catalogs by record labels, including those of Sting and Bob Dylan for a price tag of more than \$300 million each. Readers may be wondering what it means for artists to sell their catalogs — and whether the acquisition wave could be coming to Latin America.

Buying a song catalog means a label has purchased the right to collect payments for future uses of the artists' thousands of songs and recorded performances. Composers and lyricists who created a song (or their heirs) are entitled for a limited time — until 70 years after their death in the U.S. and most of Latin America — to be paid every time their creations are recorded, performed, sold or used in a movie or TV soundtrack. Rights for recordings are more complicated, but the principle is the same.

These deals have so far been limited to male, Anglophone artists born in the 1940s and 1950s — it remains to be seen whether Latin American artists' catalogs will attract similar attention. One prominent candidate for a catalog sale is Marisa Monte, a Brazilian superstar whose music I have enjoyed for decades and who just released an album after a long pause.

This multi-Grammy-winning carioca singer-songwriter has been one of the most popular figures in Brazilian popular music since the release of her first album, MM, in 1989. Her enduring fame owes much to a perpetually crystalline voice that placed some of her early recordings on telenovelas — but also to her distinctive style as a composer and producer, which she has developed starting with Mais in 1991, and to a collaborative spirit that led her to record and compose with Carlinhos Brown, Arnaldo Antunes and David Byrne, among many others.

Portas, Monte's 14th album and her first with new material in over a decade, includes 17 songs, all but one composed in collaboration with musi-



Multiple Marisa Montes move around in the music video accompanying her new album's title track.

cal partners old and new. Monte was ready to start recording in March 2020, so a sense of the pandemic's constraints and the desire to open the album's eponymous "doors" to new music and musicians is present throughout. The songs display the distilled stylistic variety and imaginative touches we usually find in her recordings, from the fado-inflected sound of "Vagalumes" to the odd bolero-tinged, Middle Eastern sound of "Vento sardo," an ode to the freedom of the wind composed and performed with Uruguayan star Jorge Drexler. Portas closes with the soulful and optimistic "Pra melhorar," featuring and written in collaboration with Seu Jorge, which brings to mind one of Monte's earliest released compositions, the equally swinging — but heartbroken — "Ainda lembro," off of Mais, that pairs guest Ed Motta's vocals of with a seemingly out-of-place sitar.

Monte's releases are always anchored by her preternaturally youthful voice and the earnestness of her musical arrangements. These features unite her ever-varied sound palettes, making the instrumental textures almost as recognizable as her vocal timbre. There is always an unexpected musical element that pulls the songs away from a mere recreation of established musical styles. The frevo colors of "O que se quer," including accordion and triangle, are disturbed by a mandolin, while the hymn-like atmosphere of "Gentileza" is made richer by a sweeping electronic growl. A fragment of a poem by Eça de Queiroz and a subtle wind instrument crescendo make "Amor I Love You," the first track on *Memórias*, *Crônicas e Declarações de Amor*, feel more heartfelt.

Thirty years after the release of her first album, Marisa Monte, subtly sentimental and always original, continues to add to her priceless catalog.

■

Zubieta is director of the music program at the Americas Society

LATIN AMERICA AT A GLANCE

Despite market volatility following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, most Latin American economies are still expected to have modest growth in 2022. Several countries are increasingly reliant on remittances as a component of gdp, indicating weakness in local investment and job markets.





















	ARGENTINA	BRAZIL	CHILE	COLOMBIA	REPUBLIC	ECUADOR	GUATEMALA	MEXICO	PERU	VENEZUELA
GDP GROWTH				,	,	,	,	•	,	,,
2022 (projected)	2.5%	0.5%	2.5%	4.4%	5.0%	3.0%	4.1%	2.1%	3.0%	5.3%
2023 (projected)	2.0%	1.8%	1.7%	3.0%	5.0%	2.2%	3.4%	2.1%	3.2%	5.0%

PROJECTIONS CURRENT AS OF MARCH 2022

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

LCONO IIIC III		•								
Inflation (projected)	52.1%	7.6%	7.2%	5.9%	5.7%	1.7%	4.0%	5.3%	4.5%	606.6%
Unemployment rate (projected)	9.4%	12.4%	7.6%	11.7%	6.0%	6.1%	4.0%	4.0%	8.0%	N/A
Govt. deficit as % of GDP (projected)	-4.3%	-7.1%	-4.0%	-6.4%	N/A	-I.6%	N/A	-3.3%	-3.5%	-8.0%

DEMITTANCES

KEPHI IAHCES	·									
remittances as % GDP in 202l	0.2%	0.2%	0.02%	2.8%	11.7%	3.8%	18.0%	4.1%	1.3%	0.6%
202l remittances (millions USD)	\$961	\$4,100	\$71	\$8,347	\$10,462	\$4,000	\$15,004	\$52,743	\$2,938	\$279
% increase from 2020	52.3%	16.0%	0.0%	20.5%	25.6%	19.6%	31.6%	23.0%	0.0%	0.0%

WORLD BANK REMITTANCES DATA COVER ONLY OFFICIALLY RECORDED REMITTANCES AND DO NOT INCLUDE REMITTANCES SENT THROUGH INFORMAL CHANNELS.

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL RATING

	The second second							(A)	1	
President	Alberto Fernández	Jair Bolsonaro	Gabriel Boric	Iván Duque	Luis Abinader	Guillermo Lasso	Alejandro Giammattei	Andrés Manuel López Obrador	Pedro Castillo	Nicolás Maduro
Approval	25%	35%	45%	23%	70%	42%	28%	57%	26%	N/A

Sources: GDP growth forecasts, inflation rate, unemployment rate, government deficit as percentage of GDP: Bloomberg (March); Dominican Republic: unemployment: Trading Economics (March); Guatemala: GDP and inflation: FocusEconomics (March), unemployment: Trading Economics (March); Remittances: World Bank (November 2021). NOTE: Figures rounded to one decimal place.

Presidential Approval: Argentina, Management & Fit (March); Brazil, PoderData (March); Chile, Plaza Pública Cadem (April); Colombia, Invamer (March); Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Guatemala, CID Gallup (February); Mexico, El Financiero (March); Peru, Ipsos (March). NOTE: Figures rounded to nearest percentage.

> INCLUDES DATA PROVIDED BY Bloomberg

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