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## FEATURED Q&A

# How Well Has Juan Manuel Santos Led Colombia?



President Juan Manuel Santos, who became Colombia's president in 2010, leaves office next month. // File Photo: Colombian Government.

**Q** Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos' second term will come to an end on Aug. 7, when President-elect Iván Duque will be sworn in as the country's new leader. Santos received a Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for negotiating a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, ending almost 50 years of war. The treaty was controversial in Colombia, where many, including Duque, criticized aspects of the accord. Looking back on Santos' eight years in office, what were the country's main challenges when Santos became president in 2010, and how do they compare to those Colombia faces today? How did Colombia fare under Santos? What were his major achievements and shortcomings? Has Santos achieved a lasting peace with the FARC?

**A** Sergio Guzmán, analyst for global risk analysis at Control Risks in Bogotá: "Juan Manuel Santos will likely be remembered as a historic president, although his approval ratings do not necessarily reflect it today. Santos staked his entire political legacy on the idea of peace and attempted an ambitious agreement with a tenacious counterpart. Santos delivered an agreement, and although it was hailed internationally as a landmark deal, opponents chastised the agreement as brittle and overly generous. All the more, Santos has maintained economic stability, despite an environment of declining oil prices. He continued the country's intertwining to the international trade order by leading the creation of the Pacific Alliance and obtaining the country's membership to the OECD. Santos is criticized for his financial profligacy on the peace deal, but in time, this too shall pass.

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### BUSINESS

## Boeing Taking Over Commercial Jet Business of Embraer

Chicago-based Boeing signed a deal with Brazil's Embraer to take over its commercial jet and services business. Boeing will hold a \$4.75 billion, 80 percent stake in a new joint venture.

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### ECONOMIC

## Puerto Rico Sues Federal Fiscal Control Board

The U.S. territory filed a lawsuit against the board over two budget plans. Puerto Rico claims the board is overstepping its authority.

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### POLITICAL

## Brazilian Labor Minister Resigns After Suspension

Brazilian Labor Minister Helton Yomura resigned after the country's Supreme Court suspended him in connection with a corruption investigation. He denies wrongdoing.

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Yomura // File Photo: Brazilian Labor Ministry.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Brazilian Labor Minister Resigns After Suspension

Brazilian Labor Minister Helton Yomura resigned Thursday after the country's Supreme Court suspended him in connection to a corruption investigation, Globo reported. Yomura stands accused of involvement in a fraudulent scheme connected to the registration of trade unions, Bloomberg News reported. Yomura, a member of the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro, or PTB, had been labor minister only since

**Yomura denies wrongdoing in the corruption case.**

April, when President Michel Temer appointed him to the post amid a cabinet shuffle ahead of the country's October elections. Candidates running for office must resign their positions in the executive branch at least six months before the election. Temer's current chief of staff, Eliseu Padilha, will take over as interim labor minister, O Estado de S.Paulo reported. Padilha will continue to serve as chief of staff, the Associated Press reported. Yomura denies wrongdoing in the corruption case. His defense team released a statement saying, "Minister Helton Yomura, even without knowing what acts he is accused of, vehemently denies any accusation of a crime or irregularity." Federal prosecutors allege lawmakers and civil servants manipulated the procedure by which unions are registered with the government. As part of the probe, police were executing three arrest warrants and 10 search warrants. Authorities did not say who the targets were, but the AP reported that police searched the offices of Nelson Marquezelli, a member of the Chamber of Deputies. Marquezelli told Globo TV that he had "nothing to fear." He added, "I'll await their report."

## BUSINESS NEWS

## Boeing to Take Over Commercial Jetliner Business of Embraer

U.S. aircraft manufacturer Boeing and Brazilian aerospace company Embraer have signed a deal for a joint venture, in which Boeing would take over Embraer's commercial aircraft and services business, Boeing said Thursday in a statement. Boeing will hold an 80 percent stake in the joint venture, which the company said was worth \$4.75 billion, and Embraer will hold the remaining 20 percent stake. The new commercial jet company would be managed in Brazil, but the venture would be controlled by Boeing in Chicago, The New York Times reported. "The agreement with Boeing will create the most important strategic partnership in the aerospace industry, strengthening both companies' leadership in the global market," said Paulo Cesar de Souza e Silva, Embraer's president and CEO, in the same statement. The two companies, which have collaborated for years, also said they were discussing an additional joint venture comprising "new markets for defense products and services." The move comes after Boeing's main rival, European manufacturer Airbus, closed a deal with Canada's Bombardier regarding production of smaller aircraft earlier this week, The New York Times reported.

## Argentine Court Rejects Action Against Chevron

An Argentine appeals court rejected an attempt to enforce a \$9.5 billion Ecuadorean court judgment against the U.S.-based oil major, the company said Thursday. The three-judge panel unanimously dismissed the action against Chevron due to lack of jurisdiction, saying the company has no legal presence or assets in Argentina and that the company's subsidiaries in Argentina are separate legal entities.

## NEWS BRIEFS

## At Least 24 Killed in Explosions in Mexico's 'Fireworks Capital'

A series of explosions in a pyrotechnics workshop Thursday in Mexico resulted in at least 24 people dead and dozens injured, including children and government officials, CNN reported. The fireworks manufacturing warehouse is located in the La Saucera area of the municipality of Tultepec, which lies just north of Mexico City and calls itself the country's "fireworks capital," CNN reported. Similar fatal incidents have occurred there in the past, with blasts earlier this year killing seven people, BBC News reported.

## Pence, Colombia's Duque Meet at White House

Colombian President-elect Iván Duque met with U.S. Vice President Mike Pence at the White House on Thursday, where they discussed the Colombian peace agreement, economic engagement, and illegal immigration, the White House said in a statement. Duque and Pence committed to continue battling drug production and trafficking, and they emphasized the importance of pressuring Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and dealing with the "tragic collapse of democracy" there, the statement said.

## Brazil May Be Forced to Import Soybeans: Exporters Group Official

Brazil, which exports more soybeans than any other country in the world, may have to resort this year to importing the oilseed from the United States, an executive of Anec, an exporters association, said Thursday, Reuters reported. A trade war between China and the United States may lead the Asian nation to demand more soybeans from Brazilian processors, the executive, Luis Barbieri, said at an event in São Paulo, the wire service reported.

U.S. courts have found that the Ecuadorean judgment was obtained through fraud. The long-running case stems from 1993 when a group of Ecuadoreans sued Texaco, which Chevron later acquired, arguing that oil drilling sickened local villagers.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## Puerto Rico Sues Federal Fiscal Control Board

Puerto Rico on Thursday sued a federal fiscal control board over two proposed budget plans that seek to bring the U.S. territory out of an 11-year recession, the Associated Press reported. Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló says that the federal board's \$8.75 billion budget excessively controls every aspect of Puerto Rico's public finances and over-steps its authority. Rosselló also claims the board is attempting to "illegally usurp" the island's leadership and "impose its policy preferences,"



Rosselló // File Photo: Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

which include several austerity measures, such as cutting a yearly Christmas bonus, El Vocero reported. The board's budget also eliminates a \$50 million annual fund for cities still grappling with the consequences of Hurricane Maria last September and a \$25 million yearly scholarship fund for the University of Puerto Rico, the AP reported. The governor signed another budget, which legislators had approved, earlier this week. The lawsuit will decide which budget plan will be implemented, but it is also expected to determine the functions and limits of the federal board.

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Peace agreements themselves are delicate things, and Santos has not delivered peace itself—rather, he delivered a peace framework, which will likely suffer alterations and modifications by Iván Duque, who also has staked his political ambitions against the agreement. Duque will face a difficult scenario as he has to uphold his promise to renegotiate large parts of the agreement—some which threaten its core—while at the same time conserving Colombia's orthodox economic model when the public demands economic populism, and also providing security and state services in rural areas without prompting a significant escalation of conflict. This is already a tall order and a delicate balancing act."

**A** **Maria Velez de Berliner, managing director of Red Team Group, Inc.:** "President Santos was expected to continue former President Álvaro Uribe's democratic security, operations to defeat the FARC militarily, aerial spraying to eliminate coca and increase the support of the traditional economic and political establishment. Once Santos failed to deliver on the first three, he had an implacable opponent in ex-President (now Senator) Uribe and his followers, for whom Santos could do no right. The now-disintegrating FARC peace agreement and the favorable, legal concessions made to FARC under the agreement's Special Jurisdiction for Peace contribute to Colombians believing Santos is the country's worst president in two generations. Colombia has higher rates of violence and insecurity than when Santos took over; coca growing skyrocketed; and the FARC's dissident groups and sundry criminal organizations proliferate and wreak havoc in Antioquia, the country's southwest and Catatumbo on the Venezuela-Colombia border. Peace with the FARC is ephemeral, at best. Peace was signed with the aged, jungle-tired members of the Central Command, not with the whole organization. Therein lays the weaknesses and progres-

sive demise of the peace agreement. Santos failed because he believed Colombia could be put on the path to peaceful settlement of a guerrilla war, lasting peace, civility, security and political, economic, social, and

“Peace with the FARC is ephemeral, at best.”

— Maria Velez de Berliner

cultural fairness, and relative equality by the stroke of his pen. Given Colombia's history of political violence, widespread inequality and economic, political, social, economic, and cultural cleavages of all sorts, how sadly mistaken President Santos was."

**A** **Luz Ángela Sánchez, senior director at Llorente y Cuenca in Bogotá:** "Santos' main challenges when he became president in 2010 were reducing poverty and unemployment; improving security in relation to armed conflict, urban criminality and drug trafficking; improving the economy by increasing state income and redistribution of the royalties; transforming the country's infrastructure at all levels; and rebuilding international relationships with the region, especially Venezuela. Colombia has achieved some of this. However, President-elect Duque has to consolidate important things that Santos started, for example, the implementation of the peace agreement and the continuation of the negotiations with ELN guerrilla. Moreover, Duque needs to control the migratory crisis in the Venezuelan border, strengthen the fight against corruption that the current government started with a package of legislative initiatives, improve the quality of the health benefit and increase economic

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growth. Santos had an advantage that was the opportunity to govern for two consecutive periods in which the country reached great achievement in all the subjects. The infrastructure improved both on roads and airports, the poverty was reduced almost by 50 percent, 43 percent more of school graduates go to university, there were also zero political prisoners and an improvement of the justice system. Colombia also entered the OECD and NATO, and last but not least, Santos ended 60 years of conflict with the biggest armed group in Latin America. Santos hasn't achieved a lasting peace with the FARC because the road for that is just beginning. To get there, Colombia needs years in which transitional justice will be the main character. What Santos achieved was the end of a 60-year war, but the next government is responsible for consolidating that peace, reducing the levels of drug crops and defeating the FARC dissidents."

**A** **Ana Caridad, program associate for the Latin America and Caribbean Program at The Carter Center:** "President Santos came to power in 2010 in a landslide victory committed to continue Álvaro Uribe's campaign to defeat the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP). Clashes between government troops and the guerrilla on election day, which left 10 government troops dead, were a strong reminder that, despite major gains in security, the country was still at war. However, once he took office, President Santos made it clear that additional policies were required to bring peace to Colombia. In 2012, the Colombian government initiated direct peace negotiations with the FARC-EP in Oslo and then continued in Havana. The talks continued into 2013 and 2014—the year in which President Santos was re-elected with

just 50.95 percent of the vote, in an election perceived by many as a referendum for the peace process. After four years of successes and disappointments at the negotiation table, in September 2016, the Colombia's government signed a peace accord with

“**President Santos will leave to his successor a better country than the one he took charge of in 2010...**”

— Ana Caridad

the FARC-EP, bringing the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end, a war that has cost the lives of at least 220,000 Colombians, displaced close to six million people, and left more than eight million victims. Colombians narrowly rejected the agreement with the guerrilla in a referendum (after a renegotiation the agreement was then ratified by Congress), in a reminder that building sustainable peace in Colombia will require commitment to structural changes for generations to come. President Santos will leave to his successor a better country than the one he took charge of in 2010, as the FARC-EP have turned in their weapons, trading armed insurgency to become a political force. The chance to build sustainable peace in the country cannot be allowed to slip away. The incoming administration should embrace this as an opportunity for a mandate of inclusive peace-building."

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at [gkuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gkuleta@thedialogue.org).*

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