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FEATURED Q&A

What's at Stake for Latin America at the G-20 Summit?



Argentine President Mauricio Macri is hosting this year's G-20 Summit, which begins Friday in Buenos Aires. // File Photo: Argentine Government.

Q In the wake of an "extremely tense" APEC summit earlier this month, which numerous observers described as a failure, anticipation has been building for even more conflict when leaders from the Group of 20 countries convene Friday in Buenos Aires. The G-20's 13th summit marks the first time the meeting has been held in South America. Has Argentina prepared to host the event well from a logistical and security perspective? Which countries and whose priorities will most likely dominate the event and its agenda? What does Argentina need to do to take most advantage of the opportunity as host, and how can other countries of Latin America benefit from the event being organized in the region this year?

A Juan Cruz Díaz, managing director, and Sergio Espinosa, political risk specialist, both at Cefeidas Group in Buenos Aires: "Argentina's government has held events in recent years that have served as tests for the G-20 summit, and it has devoted numerous resources to make sure that all public officials are committed to this event. Nationally, this has been the case for successful intragovernmental meetings, while international events such as the 2017 WTO Ministerial Conference and the G-20 (as well as the recent U-20) engagement groups in Buenos Aires have also been carried out successfully. Thus, there is some certainty with respect to the administration's ability to plan and execute such encounters, as well as assurance about its ability to coordinate logistical and security matters with the Buenos Aires city government. Certain themes are poised to dominate the summit, including a probable U.S.-China encounter and a possible meeting

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Brazil Backs Out of Hosting Climate Change Meeting

The South American country had planned to host the U.N. climate change conference next year. The incoming government's foreign minister has expressed opposition to the Paris climate agreement.

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ECONOMIC

Argentina, China Eye Deal for Nuclear Plant

The countries' governments are seeking to reach a deal that would have China finance the construction of a nuclear power plant in Argentina.

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POLITICAL

U.S. Sanctions Top Nicaraguan Officials

The United States slapped sanctions on Nicaraguan Vice President and First Lady Rosario Murillo and the country's national security advisor, Néstor Moncada. Washington has accused Nicaragua's government of deadly repression and rights abuses.

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Murillo // File Photo: Nicaraguan Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

U.S. Sanctions Nicaraguan Vice President, Top Aide

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday slapped sanctions on Nicaraguan Vice President and First Lady Rosario Murillo and the country's national security advisor, Néstor Moncada, freezing any assets or other property they may have in the United States, The Wall Street Journal reported. The sanctions, against a government

“This administration is committed to holding the Ortega regime accountable...”

— Steven Mnuchin

that the United States has accused of deadly repression and widespread corruption, also bar the two officials from entering the United States and complicate other international travel, the newspaper reported. “This administration is committed to holding the Ortega regime accountable for the violent protests and widespread corruption that have led to the deaths of hundreds of innocent Nicaraguans and destroyed their economy,” said U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. The sanctions also bar U.S. financial institutions from doing business with Murillo and Moncada, The New York Times reported. The Treasury Department's sanctions were accompanied by an executive order from Trump who said the actions by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's government amounted to “an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.” Murillo did not respond to a request for comment emailed by The Wall Street Journal, but Nicaragua's ambassador to the United States late Tuesday forwarded a government statement rejecting the

sanctions and called them and the accusations against the Nicaraguan officials “inconsequential, disrespectful, false and illegitimate.” More than 300 people have been killed in Nicaragua in connection with months of anti-government protests that erupted in April. U.S. officials and human rights groups have blamed many of the deaths on armed groups that they say have links to Ortega's government. In addition to those killed, the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights has said that more than 600 people have been imprisoned since the protests began, The New York Times reported. Earlier this month, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on four high-ranking officials in Nicaragua's government. At the time, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton said the United States would toughen its position toward not only the government of Nicaragua, but also those of Venezuela and Cuba, which he called Latin America's “troika of tyranny.” Until “free, fair and early elections” are held in Nicaragua, Bolton said, the Central American country's government “will feel the full weight of America's robust sanctions regime.”

ECONOMIC NEWS

Argentina, China Eye Deal for Nuclear Plant's Construction

Argentina and China hope to reach a deal over the weekend for the construction of a Chinese-financed, multi-billion-dollar nuclear plant in the South American country, a key regional ally of the United States, Reuters reported. The Argentine government anticipates an announcement of the agreement for the Atucha III project during Chinese President Xi Jinping's official visit on Sunday after the Group of 20 summit, Juan Pablo Tripodi, the head of Argentina's national investment agency, told the wire service. In addition to funding Argentina's fourth nuclear power plant, which is reportedly worth as much as \$8 billion, China is expected to double the amount of its credit line to Argentina to \$18.7 billion, making the

NEWS BRIEFS

Workers at BHP Copper Mine in Chile Begin Strike

Workers at BHP's Spence copper mine in Chile have started a strike following layoffs at the mine that happened earlier this week, a union leader said today, Reuters reported. The work stoppage has shut down operations at the mine, located in northern Chile. Some 50 workers had been laid off, along with eight supervisors, said Ronald Salcedo, the union's president.

Colombian VP Calls for More Pressure on Maduro

Colombian Vice President Marta Lucía Ramírez on Tuesday called for the international community to step up pressure on the government of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to change its policies and for help in dealing with the massive outmigration crisis in Venezuela, which has resulted in more than one million people fleeing to Colombia, the Miami Herald reported. With another one million migrants expected to enter the Andean country in the coming months, Ramírez said Colombia could not single-handedly manage them despite “the best intention.”

Mexico May House Immigrants Applying for Asylum in U.S.: Official

Incoming Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard signaled Tuesday that the country is willing to house the more than 5,000 Central American migrants who are camped out at a sports complex in Tijuana while they apply for asylum in the United States, the Associated Press reported. Ebrard, who takes office along with incoming President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Saturday, also said a key goal of the new administration is to secure a U.S. commitment to development and job-creation projects in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Asian country Argentina's largest non-institutional lender, Clarín reported. The negotiations on the Atucha III project are concerning for the U.S. government, an unnamed senior Trump administration official told Reuters. "These are infrastructure projects where China is coming in and providing very low interest loans or they are just having Chinese companies do it," the U.S. official said. "It's creating an economic and political dependency on China that's incredibly dangerous." The Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement that China's investment in Latin America is "in line with market rules" and "common international rules and practices," Reuters reported. The increasing trade tensions between the United States and China are expected to be the backdrop to the two-day G-20 summit, which opens Friday in Buenos Aires. Leaders including Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have already started to arrive.

Brazil Backs Out of Hosting Climate Change Conference

Brazil is backing out of hosting next year's U.N. climate change conference, a move that comes two months after the country won the bid to organize it, Folha de S.Paulo reported Tuesday. The foreign ministry announced its decision to Patrícia Espinosa, the executive secretary of the U.N. Convention on Climate Change, citing budgetary restrictions and the government transition process of President-elect Jair Bolsonaro, who takes office Jan. 1, as its reasons for the reversal. The announcement comes after Bolsonaro appointed diplomat Ernesto Araújo as the incoming foreign minister. Araújo has previously voiced his opposition to the Paris climate agreement and has called climate change a "Marxist dogma," Folha reported. On Monday, local newspaper Gazeta do Povo published an article by Araújo in which he promised to fight international ideologies, including "climate alarmism." The U.N. conference, which focuses on the implementation of the Paris accord, was scheduled to take place next November. Home to the world's

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 1

between President Trump and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince bin Salman in the wake of the Khashoggi murder. For the Western Hemisphere, the possible signing of the USMCA trade agreement on the sidelines would be a major event. Argentina's objective of guiding discussions from a Latin American perspective, as per Macri's instructions to Argentine G-20 Sherpa Pedro Villagra Delgado, if achieved, could give the encounter a distinct regional flavor and help promote the region's interests at a global level. This would be enhanced by the presence of regional members Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, as well as Chile as a special guest. Similarly, the G-20 summit is Macri's latest effort to give Argentina a relatively 'central' role in global politics, after the 2016 nomination of former minister Susana Malcorra for U.N. secretary general and building on the 2017 WTO conference in Buenos Aires. Preparation efforts have yielded a renewed, prolonged and deep engagement of Argentine public officials at different levels of government with their counterparts in other countries, which could reap long-term benefits. A successful summit could cement Argentina's global positioning and these international relationships."

A Benjamin Gedan, senior advisor to the Latin America program and director of the Argentina Project at the Woodrow Wilson

Center: "As Argentina prepared to host the World Trade Organization's ministerial last December, organizers had a modest objective: Save the WTO from extinction. Now, as the Argentines convene a second global gathering in the Trump era, expectations are once again at rock bottom: Negotiate a unanimous communiqué, even if leaders can only agree on the spring weather in

largest rainforest, the Amazon, Brazil has been a key player in international climate talks, The Guardian reported. Deforestation in the South American country, which increased by nearly 14

Buenos Aires. Such is multilateral life these days, particularly for the Group of 20, which until President Trump's election had played a leading role in promoting free trade and addressing climate change. Meanwhile, summit paralysis—as occurred at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Papua New Guinea earlier this month—is not the worst-case scenario for Argentina. The

“**Summit paralysis ... is not the worst-case scenario for Argentina.**”

— Benjamin Gedan

June Group of 7 summit in Quebec sparked an ugly spat between Trump and Justin Trudeau. Trump's recent visit to Paris ignited a feud between Trump and Emmanuel Macron. There are other potential downsides. Argentina is on edge, as spending cuts—a condition of its International Monetary Fund bailout—worsen the recession. President Mauricio Macri's embrace of Trump, who is deeply disliked in Argentina, will not help Macri's popularity. Despite these risks, Argentina's government lobbied relentlessly for Trump's attendance. Be careful what you wish for? Not necessarily. Argentina coordinated closely with the United States on summit security, and the gathering will likely unfold impressively. Moreover, 62 percent of Argentines want the country to be active in global affairs, and almost half see benefits from hosting the summit, according to the latest ArgentinaPulse survey by the Wilson Center and Poliarquia."

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percent between August last year and July, has resulted in an area of 7,900 square kilometers of forest cleared in just one year, according to Greenpeace, Agence France-Presse reported.

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A Félix Peña, director of the Institute of International Trade-ICBC Foundation in Argentina: “The Buenos Aires summit is the final part of a process of dialogue among G-20 participant nations developed since December 2017. During the last 12 months, this process took place in different cities of Argentina, through more than 60 meetings with the participation of thousands of representatives of member countries, several of them at high-level or ministerial positions, and also from different sectors of civil society. Logistics and security were normal and even excellent. Regarding the upcoming summit, everything indicates that both logistics and security should be good. However, as the Hamburg experience demonstrates, not everything in terms of security problems can be anticipated. For Argentina, this year’s G-20 process has been an opportunity to demonstrate not only its responsibility in terms of organizing meetings, but also, especially, its capacity to promote together with its Latin American partners a constructive dialogue among all the members, in many cases in a context characterized by strong

differences. Among many others, perhaps one of the most important disagreements this year had to do with the idea of preserving a multilateral trade, rule-oriented system and especially about how to modernize the

“Perhaps one of the most important disagreements this year had to do with the idea of preserving a multilateral trade, rule-oriented system...”

– Félix Peña

WTO and increase its efficacy. The Mar del Plata meeting of trade ministers was positive in its consensus on this topic. For Latin American countries, this is one of the most relevant new issues related to the current and future agenda of the G-20.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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Advisor Video

Chinese Infrastructure in LAC: Perceptions and Realities

An Inter-American Dialogue Discussion with
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