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FEATURED Q&A

Which Issues Are Driving Uruguay's Presidential Race?



Among the front-running hopefuls ahead of Uruguay's presidential race this year is former Montevideo Mayor Daniel Martínez. // File Photo: Uruguayan Government.

Q General elections are scheduled in Uruguay on Oct. 27, with the ruling Broad Front coalition seeking a consecutive fourth term in office. If no presidential candidate receives a majority in the first round of voting, a runoff will take place on Nov. 24. Which candidates have the best chances of winning their parties' nominations during the June primaries? Which issues will drive the campaigns? What effect is current President Tabaré Vázquez, who is ineligible to run for re-election, having on the race?

A Francisco Panizza, professor of Latin American and comparative politics in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science: "In the ruling Frente Amplio (FA) party, the front-runner is the former mayor of Montevideo, Daniel Martínez. A member of the Socialist Party, he has the backing of the moderate sectors within the FA. His main rival is Carolina Cosse, a former minister of industry and president of state telecommunications company ANTEL. She has the support of the Movimiento de Participación Popular (MPP), the biggest grouping within the FA. In the main opposition party, the Partido Nacional (PN), the front-runner is Senator Luis Alberto Lacalle Pou, the scion of one of Uruguay's most prominent political dynasties. If he is nominated, this will be his second presidential campaign. He is running on a platform of gradual rather than radical change in the hope of attracting disenchanted FA voters. His main rivals are veteran Senator Jorge Larrañaga and Juan Sartori, a millionaire political newcomer. In the other traditional party, the Partido Colorado (PC), the front-runner is 83-year-old Julio María Sanguinetti, who has

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICS

Mexico Has Detained 15,000 Migrants in Past Month: Official

Mexico has increased its deportations of migrants, mainly from Central America, following threats by U.S. President Donald Trump to close the U.S.-Mexico border.

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BUSINESS

Google Completes Cable From California to Chile

Google completed a 10,000-kilometer undersea cable from California to Chile, which the government said will benefit millions of Internet users.

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POLITICAL

Brazilian Court Reduces Lula's Prison Sentence

Brazil's Superior Court of Justice reduced former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's prison sentence to eight years and 10 months. Lula was imprisoned a year ago after he was convicted in two corruption trials.

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Lula // File Photo: Brazilian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Mexico Has Returned 15,000 Migrants in Past Month: Official

Mexico has sent 15,000 migrants back to their home countries over the past 30 days, a top government official said Tuesday, a day after authorities detained hundreds of migrants in what is believed to be the largest single raid on a migrant caravan, Reuters reported. Tonatiuh Guillén, the head of Mexico's National Migration Institute, told reporters in Mexico City that 11,800 migrants were returned from April 1-22. In all of April last year, Mexican authorities returned 9,650 migrants. Guillén did not say to which countries the migrants were sent back, but most of the migrants moving through Mexico in hopes of reaching the United States are from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. A third of the migrants that have been entering Mexico are minors, and there are some 3,000 Cuban migrants in the country, Guillén added. Two-thirds of the Cubans are in the northern border city of Ciudad Juárez, while the rest are in the southern state of Chiapas, he added. Mexico's deportations of migrants have increased amid demands from U.S. President Donald Trump who has pressured Mexico to block migrants from heading north toward the United States. Last month, Trump threatened to close the U.S.-Mexico border if Mexico did not stop the caravans of migrants. In March, more than 100,000 migrants either presented themselves to U.S. authorities or were detained by U.S. agents, said the White House, which called the figure the highest level in a decade. Speaking to reporters alongside Guillén, Mexican Interior Minister Olga Sánchez said Mexico is not to blame for the "unprecedented" number of migrants. Anyone entering Mexico must follow the country's laws and register with authorities, said Sánchez. On Monday, Mexican authorities detained nearly 400 migrants near the town of Pijijiapan in Chiapas State, The Wall Street Journal reported. The migrants, from Central America and Cuba, were sent to overcrowded immigration stations near Mexico's border with

Guatemala, according to Mexican authorities and migration advocates. Many of the detained migrants are families with young children. Some 200 other migrants were detained in the Mexican village of Mapastepec as they waited for temporary visas.

Brazilian Court Reduces Lula's Prison Sentence

Brazil's Superior Court of Justice on Tuesday reduced former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's prison sentence from 12 years to eight years and 10 months, The Rio Times reported. In the unanimous decision, the four-judge panel also upheld Lula's conviction on charges of bribery and money laundering. The ruling could allow the former president to be eligible for "semi-open" prison later this year. Lula, who was in office from 2003 to 2010, was placed behind bars a year ago after being sentenced in two separate trials for corruption. Lula has consistently denied the charges against him, saying they are politically motivated. During his campaign, current President Jair Bolsonaro said he hoped Lula would "rot in prison."

ECONOMIC NEWS

Venezuela Imports Crude for First Time in Five Years

Venezuela imported crude for the first time in five years as its output plummeted to below one million barrels per day to a 16-year low in March, Bloomberg News reported Tuesday. As the South American country struggled amid U.S. sanctions targeting its oil sector and sporadic blackouts that shuttered oil fields, pipelines and ports, Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA bought a cargo of crude from Nigeria, which is also a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC. The nearly one million

NEWS BRIEFS

Peru's Vizcarra Visits Kuczynski in Hospital

Peruvian President Martín Vizcarra visited former President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, 80, at a clinic in Lima where Kuczynski has been complying with pretrial prevention while being treated for cardiac problems over the past week, EFE reported Tuesday. Vizcarra said the visit to his predecessor was a "personal" matter and expressed hopes of a speedy recovery for Kuczynski. Vizcarra served as Kuczynski's vice president before replacing him in 2018 after he resigned to avoid impeachment for alleged connections to a bribery scandal linked to Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht.

Brazil Loses More Than 43,000 Jobs in March

Brazil's economy lost 43,196 jobs in March, the Economy Ministry announced today, Reuters reported. In a recent poll, economists had expected the country to add 79,000 jobs. Since January, the Brazilian economy created a net 179,543 new jobs, according to the ministry. "This negative result is directly related to February. Sectors that normally hire in March brought that forward to February, and those that lay off [in February] concentrated dismissals in March," the ministry said. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the April 8 issue of the Advisor.]

Puerto Rico to Demolish 16,000 Structures Damaged in Hurricane

Officials in Puerto Rico said Tuesday that they plan to demolish 16,000 structures that sustained damage nearly two years ago when Hurricane Maria pummeled the island, the Associated Press reported. Officials in the U.S. territory said they are expecting \$400 million in federal funds to pay for the demolition. The money is still pending federal approval. Maria caused more than \$100 billion in damage.

barrels of light Agbami crude is Venezuela's first oil import since 2014 and may help offset falling domestic production, Bloomberg News reported. The oil can also be used as a diluent for the country's crude, so it can more easily be extracted from underground reservoirs. Production of Venezuela's top exported oil, Merey



Maduro // File Photo: Venezuelan Government.

16, which is a blend of light oil with heavier streams, fell by 50 percent between 2006 and 2016 to 313,000 barrels per day, according to the latest official data available. The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump recently announced a fresh round of sanctions targeting oil Venezuela ships to Cuba, one of the South American country's top allies, as it continues to pressure Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to step down. The United States and dozens of other countries recognize opposition leader and National Assembly head Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president.

BUSINESS NEWS

Google Completes Undersea Cable From California to Chile

Google has completed a 10,000-kilometer subsea cable connecting Chile to the coast of California as it moves to expand its global cloud computing infrastructure, Reuters reported Tuesday, citing Google Chile's website. The so-called "Curie" cable, which starts in Los Angeles, arrived at the Chilean port of Valparaíso on Tuesday. The technology company has invested more than \$47 billion into expanding its infrastructure, especially in key submarine

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twice served as president (1985-1990 and 1995-2000). His main rival is the free-market economist Ernesto Talvi. While the economy is doing better than in neighboring Argentina and Brazil, it has stalled over the past year. It is likely to be at the center of the campaign, including how to reduce the fiscal and pension deficits. Crime and education, two areas in which the government is seen as having done poorly, are also set to figure high on the agenda."

A **Charles H. Blake, professor of political science at James Madison University's School of Public & International Affairs:**

"Public opinion polls have been indicating that the October 2019 presidential election may end in another runoff between the center-left Broad Front (FA) coalition and the center-right National Party (PN). Senator Luis Lacalle Pou (the son of former President Luis Alberto Lacalle) is the favorite to win the nomination again for the PN, as he continues to lead fellow Senator Jorge Larrañaga by roughly 20 percentage points. Greater uncertainty surrounds the Broad Front's primary process. Daniel Martínez, the former mayor of Montevideo, is supported by President Tabaré Vázquez's sector in the FA. Martínez's lead over Carolina Cosse, the former minister of industry, has varied considerably in tracking polls during 2019. Cosse comes from the largest FA sector, the Movement of Popular Participation (MPP). Some in the MPP want to coax former Pres-

cables linking its global network, local technology blog FayerWayer reported. Its global plans include a cable from the United States to Denmark and Ireland and another linking cities in Asia, Reuters reported. The Curie cable will "provide advantages and opportunities for millions of Internet users" in Chile, the country's minister for transport and telecommunications, Gloria Hutt, said in a statement, FayerWayer reported. The cable "shows our country's commitment to being pioneers in the digital

ident José Mujica out of retirement as he is perceived as a more formidable candidate in the general election than either Martínez or Cosse. In turn, the center-right Colorado Party (PC) has not recovered to date from its poor performances in the past three presidential elections. Former President Julio María Sanguinetti is the clear favorite to win the nomination, but polls show him unlikely to exceed 10 to 15 percent of the vote in October. In the upcoming campaign, the Broad Front candidate will likely emphasize their coalition government's success in poverty reduction and its ability to govern 15 years without a recessionary downturn. Opposition candidates will criticize rising crime rates during the FA's time in the presidency."

A **Héctor B. Viana, partner at Jiménez de Aréchaga, Viana & Brause in Montevideo, Uruguay:**

"Parties' nominations are still quite open, though per latest polls, some candidates already seem well-positioned. That is the case of former Montevideo Mayor Daniel Martínez, who represents the ruling Broad Front party. The National Party's Luis Lacalle Pou maintains his leadership; however, candidates Jorge Larrañaga and Juan Sartori—the latter in an unpredictable sprint—should not be disregarded. In the Colorado Party, former President Julio María Sanguinetti is making a strong comeback overriding—on short margin—new candidate Ernesto Talvi. It is likely that the top issues up for debate will be security and education.

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revolution we are living," she added. Chile is currently working on deploying a fiber-optic network to connect the entire country, as well as a separate plan to install a submarine line with Asia, Reuters reported. Earlier this year, Chile announced its plans to begin an auction process to roll out 5G services nationwide as it seeks to boost the country's connectivity. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the April 2 issue of the Advisor.]

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Other issues will include employment and the economy, including the fiscal deficit and overpricing policies, infrastructure needs and international intervention. The ruling party will be heavily targeted on all of these issues. If anything, current President Tabaré Vázquez's impact on the presidential race could be negative to his party. His administration is suffering a serious economic turndown after many years of bonanza. This may well explain the uncertainty on who the new ruler will be in Uruguay."

A **Ignacio Zuasnabar, director at Equipos MORI:** "Luis Lacalle Pou leads the polls in the Partido Nacional's primaries (around 40 percent), but the race is not decided yet. His old rival, Senator Jorge Larrañaga, maintains 25-30 percent of the vote, and support for novel candidate Juan Sartori (a young businessman with no previous political experience) has grown strongly over the past months. Former Montevideo Mayor Daniel Martínez is leading the polls in the Frente Amplio (around 50 percent). His most likely rival, former Minister of Industry Carolina Cosse (the only female candidate among more than 20) has about 30 percent. She has the support of the Movimiento de Participación Popular (MPP), the political group led by former President José Mujica,

which can boost her chances. Inside Partido Colorado, former President Julio María Sanguinetti is leading the race and will be the most likely candidate of his party. His main rival is Ernesto Talvi, a very well-known economist without previous political experience. Tabaré Vázquez's government has

“**Tabaré Vázquez's government has been unpopular in recent years.**”

— Ignacio Zuasnabar

been unpopular in recent years. In March, his job approval was 28 percent, while 47 percent disapproved, according to a survey by Equipos Consultores. Vázquez's personal image is better than that of his government. Thirty-eight percent of Uruguayans view him positively, making him the second most popular political leader in the country. He is constitutionally barred from running this year, but his government will make a major effort to show its accomplishments to citizens in several areas."

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

LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

is published every business day by the Inter-American Dialogue, Copyright © 2019

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Latin America Advisor is published every business day, except for major U.S. holidays, by the Inter-American Dialogue at 1155 15th Street NW, Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005

www.thedialogue.org

ISSN 2163-7962

Subscription inquiries are welcomed at ebrand@thedialogue.org

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