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## FEATURED Q&A

# How Do Latin Americans View the U.S. Election?



The results of the election in the United States between incumbent President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden (L-R) remains too close to call. The candidates are pictured at their first debate Sept. 29 in Cleveland. // Photo: C-SPAN.

**Q** The results of Tuesday's presidential race in the United States remained too close to call this morning as Vice President Joe Biden approached the number of electoral votes needed to be elected, and President Donald Trump's campaign launched a series of legal challenges in key states. How do Latin Americans view the United States' bitter and contested national vote, and what do they most want to see from the next president? What do the results so far say about the influence of Latinos voting in the United States? Amid reports of missing mail-in ballots and potential legal challenges, to what extent do you see the election as being free and fair?

**A** Carolina Goic Borojevic, senator and former presidential candidate in Chile: "First, I hope the dilemma over the votes is resolved as soon as possible and in the most transparent way possible. Raising doubts about the results in such a close election does not do the United States any good, and given the country's relevance, it does no good to democracy worldwide. Regarding the Latino vote, and ballots cast for example in New York, California, Arizona, Texas and Florida, we can no longer speak of the Latino vote as one thing, because there are differences. In the first two states, we already know that Biden won and that he could also win Arizona. But, in Texas and Florida, we know that President Trump won. What happened in Florida reveals the volatility of the Latino vote, because in that same state last election, Hispanics had voted for Hillary, and today they support Trump. As such, it is difficult to say what all Latinos want, although I dare to point

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### POLITICAL

## Deadly Storm Slows But Keeps Drenching Honduras

Eta, which has resulted in at least four deaths in Honduras and Nicaragua, slowed but continued pummeling Honduras with heavy rain, flooding roads and destroying homes.

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### ECONOMIC

## IMF Urges Mexico to Implement Tax Reform Package

The International Monetary Fund urged Mexico to implement tax reforms after the country begins recovering from the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

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### POLITICAL

## Iranian Foreign Minister Arrives in Venezuela

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif arrived in Venezuela for a tour of Latin America. He is also expected to visit Cuba and Bolivia.

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Zarif // File Photo: Austrian Foreign Ministry.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Deadly Storm Slows, Continues Hitting Honduras With Rain

Eta, which struck northeastern Nicaragua and eastern Honduras on Tuesday as a Category 4 hurricane, has weakened to a tropical depression but was drenching Honduras this morning with torrential rain that has already caused deadly landslides in the region, the Associated Press reported. The storm was continuing to “produce heavy rains and life-threatening flooding over portions of Central America,” the U.S. National Hurricane Center said in an advisory today at 3 a.m. Central Time.

“We still don’t know the extent of the damage, because a lot of the communities are isolated and don’t have electricity or telephones.”

— Timothy Hansell

At that time, the storm was centered about 90 miles south of La Ceiba, Honduras, with maximum sustained winds of 30 miles an hour, moving west-northwest at 8 miles an hour, the Hurricane Center added. Eta is forecast to return into the Caribbean late today and then strengthen to a tropical storm on Friday, possibly hitting Cuba on Sunday and parts of southern Florida on Monday, the AP reported. Before the storm even began pounding Honduras, floodwaters forced hundreds of people from their homes. Early Tuesday, the mayor of the central Honduran town of Sulaco said a 15-year-old boy had drowned attempting to cross a river that had been swollen by heavy rains. The same day, a 12-year-old girl was killed in a mudslide in the Honduran city of San Pedro Sula, according to Marvin Aparicio, an official at the country’s emergency management agency. On Wednesday, Aparicio said that

approximately 379 homes had been destroyed, mainly by floodwaters, the AP reported. Additionally, 38 communities were cut off as roads became flooded. In addition to the two deaths reported in Honduras, two gold miners were killed Tuesday in a mudslide in the Bonanza municipality in northeastern Nicaragua, The Wall Street Journal reported. “We still don’t know the extent of the damage, because a lot of the communities are isolated and don’t have electricity or telephones,” Timothy Hansell, country manager at U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services, told The Wall Street Journal. “We’ll be finding out in the next few days as people are able to go out and see what’s happening.”

## U.S. Seizes \$24 Mn in Virtual Currency in Brazil Fraud Scheme

The U.S. Department of Justice announced Wednesday that it had seized \$24 million in virtual currency at request of Brazil’s government in connection to a large fraud scheme. Brazilian authorities say tens of thousands of Brazilians may have been defrauded of more than \$200 million through the scheme, the Justice Department said. Federal prosecutors in Brazil have charged several people in the case, known as “Operation Egypto,” according to the Justice Department. The seizures of virtual currency were related to the alleged involvement of Marcos Antonio Fagundes. The Brazilian stands charged with several crimes in his home country, including the operation of a financial institution without legal authorization, fraudulent management of a financial institution, misappropriation, money laundering and violation of securities laws, the Justice Department said. A court in Brazil issued a seizure order of virtual currency in the United States that Fagundes owned or controlled. From August 2017 to May 2019, Fagundes and other defendants allegedly solicited money from prospective investors over the Internet and sometimes over the telephone, and held the money in a way that subjected it to financial institution regulations, with which Fagundes and the others allegedly failed to comply,

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Iranian Foreign Minister Arrives in Venezuela to Begin Tour of Region

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif arrived in Venezuela for a tour of Latin America, Venezuela’s foreign ministry said Wednesday, Reuters reported. Zarif’s trip is to include a visit to Cuba and Bolivia, where he plans to attend the inauguration of President-elect Luis Arce, who has said he will strengthen ties with Iran. The Middle Eastern country has become a key ally of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro amid U.S. sanctions aimed at removing him from power.

## Delgado Takes Over as Interior Minister, Cabinet Chief for Chile’s Piñera

A former mayor of the Estación Central commune in the Chilean capital city of Santiago on Wednesday took office as the new interior minister and chief of cabinet, the fourth person to hold that position in President Sebastián Piñera’s administration, Agence France-Presse reported. Rodrigo Delgado, 46, is replacing Víctor Pérez, who resigned on Tuesday after the Chamber of Deputies passed a constitutional indictment against him, temporarily banning him from office. Pérez came under fire for not having defused a protest by truckers who were blocking roads, AFP reported.

## Chile to Hold Clinical Trials of AstraZeneca’s Potential Covid Vaccine

President Sebastián Piñera said Wednesday that Chile’s health regulator had approved clinical trials of the potential Covid-19 vaccine of British pharmaceutical maker AstraZeneca, Reuters reported. The AstraZeneca trial would follow other trials by U.S.-based Johnson & Johnson and China’s Sinovac, said Piñera. The Sinovac vaccine arrived in Chile on Wednesday, the wire service reported.

the Justice Department said, citing Brazilian court documents. The alleged scheme involved solicitations for “innovative investment opportunities” involving investments in cryptocurrencies, the Justice Department added. “The Brazilian court found, however, that only a very small amount of funds were invested in cryptocurrencies as promised, and very little was returned to the investors,” the department said in a statement. “To carry out the scheme, the conspirators are alleged to have made false and inconsistent promises to investors about the way the funds were invested and exaggerated the rates of return.”

## ECONOMIC NEWS

# IMF Urges Mexico to Implement Tax Reform Package

The International Monetary Fund has urged Mexico to implement a tax reform once the country begins recovering from the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a central bank statement published Wednesday that outlines recommendations issued by the



López Obrador // File Photo: Mexican Government.

leader. IMF directors suggested a tax reform to support government spending in the medium term, saying they generally “saw the need for announcement of a credible medium-term tax reform, to be implemented once the recovery is underway, to bolster the space for providing near-term support, close fiscal gaps, lower public debt and finance needed investment spending.” Directors proposed broadening the tax base, raising subnational taxes and reduc-

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out that, regardless of who is elected as the next president of the United States, what the Latino community wants is for their voices to be heard and their rights to be respected, considering they are the largest minority, representing 18 percent of the population, and that they can define an election regardless of individual political positions. The United States is and has been an example of democracy throughout its history. The worst that could happen is that, beyond questions surrounding its electoral system, that there be doubts about the results, as President Trump has raised. I believe that, as of today, elections were free and fair. But I also believe the debate on whether the voting system is the most appropriate is totally legitimate; however, that cannot happen in the middle of a campaign or when there are doubts about results in an election as close as what we’re witnessing.”

**A** **Diego Arria, member of the Advisor board, director of the Columbus Group and former permanent representative of Venezuela to the United Nations:** “I can only comment as a Venezuelan whose country does not have any kind of free elections, so I watch with envy and admiration the public and free display of the electoral process with full media participation—the complete opposite of our disastrous situation. Again, as a Venezuelan, I hope that the sanctions that President Trump has imposed on the narco-tyranny in my country will increase, in order to help us remove it from power. The influence of Latino voters is very mixed, as the Latino community is not homogenous. However, for example, results in Florida and Arizona eloquently show Latino voters’ growing influence. To me, the election looks

ing value-added tax gaps while strengthening social safety nets. Leftist Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has resisted raising taxes, although his government has narrowed down on tax collection and enforcement,

transparent and fair. But I am not surprised that mail-in ballots could be contested.”

**A** **Arturo Sarukhan, member of the Inter-American Dialogue’s Board of Directors and former Mexican ambassador to the United**

**States:** “For the last four years, President Trump has consistently sought to undermine the institutions and norms of a democratic society, but never so blatantly as in the early hours after Election Day. His attempt to falsely claim victory and to subvert—torpedo,

“**The big lesson here is that Democrats need to stop taking Latinos for granted.**”

— Arturo Sarukhan

even—the election itself by calling for a halt to vote-counting represents the gravest of threats to the stability of the country and to liberal democracy worldwide. Regardless of the outcome, the winner will face a nation bitterly and profoundly divided—with a polarized and tribalized society—like at no other time since possibly the Civil War. The message that the ‘bananization’ of U.S. democracy sends to Latin America and the Caribbean, where resilient democracy has painfully and sometimes awkwardly and gingerly started to take root across most of the region, is deeply concerning, because what happens to democracy in the United States reverberates globally, and even more so across the Americas. And the president’s further erosion of democracy would have a domino effect felt around the world.

Moreover, given his compelling win in Florida

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Reuters reported. Last month, López Obrador’s deputy finance minister, Gabriel Yorio, quickly rejected IMF recommendations for a fiscal and tax reform in the country, *El Economista* reported.

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on the back of Cuban-American voters, a Trump re-election would likely mean a doubling down on the chest-thumping that has characterized policy toward Cuba and Venezuela—and that delivered that state on Nov. 3—and the little bandwidth given to any other hemispheric issues beyond border security and its interface with migration and fentanyl trafficking. And the strategic decision to prioritize other demographics over Latinos, particularly in Florida and Arizona—and even Pennsylvania—in an effort to lure back suburban white and senior voters could come back to haunt Democrats. The big lesson here is that Democrats need to stop taking Latinos for granted.”

**A** **Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, director of the Department of Social Inclusion at the Organization of American States:** “The post-election scenario in the United States seems complicated as we do not yet have a clear outcome. However, we should trust the institutional framework around the resolution of electoral disputes as the mechanism to bring the election to a close. Latin America awaits the results, probably with the same interest as U.S. voters. This is mainly because the region continues to see the United States as a key regional partner, especially in supporting processes that could bring about a democratic transition in Venezuela, as well as in terms of how best to address the root causes, and the effects, of major migration movements that include Venezuelan migrants and refugees as well as Central Americans. It is precisely issues such as these which became crucial to mobilize the Latino vote in key swing states. This reveals the growing role of diasporas in U.S. elections, and the crucial connection between domestic and foreign policy.”

**A** **Rubens Barbosa, former ambassador of Brazil to the United States:** “The bitter and contested national vote in the presidential election shows how divided the United States is. Democracy is not threatened because of the strength of U.S. institutions, but the political polarization could lead to violence and clashes between supporters of the two candidates and parties. The results show that the majority of Latinos living in the United States have voted conservative

“**The political polarization could lead to violence and clashes between supporters of the two candidates and parties.”**

— Rubens Barbosa

and supported Trump. It is difficult to accept that the president of any country would go public to dispute the results of any election and denounce fraud without any evidence. To refuse to accept and take, again, to the Supreme Court the way votes are counted is not a good example to the world. The public opinion poll institutes failed to deliver credible results. The mistakes in some states were outside the margin of error. And, last but not least, the media again continued polarized reporting along partisan lines. These are some serious attitude distortions that could affect future developments in the U.S. political scene.”

*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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