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## FEATURED Q&A

# What Changes Are in Store for U.S. Immigration Policy?



Immigration policy is one of several areas in which U.S. President-elect Joe Biden is expected to change Trump administration policies. // File Photo: U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

**Q** Physicians, mental health experts and advocates for immigrants and children are calling on U.S. President-elect Joe Biden to commit to a plan to reunite immigrant parents with their children who were separated from them at the U.S. border under a controversial deterrence policy by the Trump administration. In a debate with U.S. President Donald Trump in October, Biden called the family separation policy "criminal." As president, what steps can Biden take to correct the consequences of the family separation policy, and how will his administration address the core issues related to child migration? What do you expect will be Biden's most important actions on immigration policy? What are the chances for immigration reform in the new U.S. Congress, and what might it consist of?

**A** Jim Kolbe, senior transatlantic fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States and former Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Arizona: "A newly inaugurated President Biden will have a laundry list of immediate 'must do' items on Jan. 20—reversing regulations on climate change, pandemic strategies and immigration policies, for starters. On immigration, there is little doubt that the new administration will move swiftly to stop construction of border walls and to remedy the chaos left behind by the brief implementation of family separation for illegal immigrants apprehended at the border. Family separation was an ancillary consequence of a zero-tolerance policy that the Department of Homeland Security briefly implemented to discourage families from migrating

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### POLITICAL

## Colombia's Saab Can Be Extradited to U.S.: Cape Verde Appeals Court

An appeals court in Cape Verde made the ruling against Alex Saab, a Colombian businessman who is accused of laundering money for Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's government.

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### ECONOMIC

## World Bank Sees 3.7% Economic Growth for Region

Latin America and the Caribbean are expected to experience growth of 3.7 percent this year, the World Bank said in a report.

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### POLITICAL

## Maduro Allies Take Control of Venezuela's National Assembly

Allies of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro took control of the National Assembly, the last remaining government institution that they did not already control.

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Maduro // File Photo:  
@NicolosMaduro via Twitter.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Allies of Venezuela's Maduro Take Control of National Assembly

Allies of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on Tuesday took control of the country's National Assembly, the last institution that they did not already dominate, the Associated Press reported. The new legislature was seated nearly a month after the country's Dec. 6 parliamentary election, which has been internationally denounced as fraudulent. The country's main opposition parties boycotted the election. Jorge Rodríguez, the National Assembly's new president, vowed to "exorcise" all vestiges of the opposition from the legislative palace, and he accused Maduro's opponents of plotting to overthrow him with the help of the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump and foreign mercenaries, the AP reported. "Just so there are no doubts, pretty soon we'll spray every corner of the parliamentary chambers with holy water," Rodríguez joked. Meantime on Tuesday, opposition leader Juan Guaidó, who, as president of the National Assembly, gained international recognition two years ago as Venezuela's legitimate acting president, held his own legislative session via the Zoom video

conferencing platform with other opposition leaders. "They are trying to annihilate Venezuela's democratic force," said Guaidó. "But we aren't going to give up." In an online session last month, Venezuelan lawmakers opposed to Maduro voted to extend their mandate for a year. While the country's Maduro-allied Supreme Court struck down that measure, the Trump administration has continued to support and recognize Guaidó. "We consider this group to be illegitimate and will not recognize it nor its pronouncements," U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, referring to the new Maduro-allied legislature. "President Guaidó and the National Assembly are the only democratic representatives of the Venezuelan people as recognized by the international community, and they should be freed from Maduro's harassment, threats, persecution, and other abuses." [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Dec. 8 issue of the Advisor.]

## Colombia's Saab Can Be Extradited to U.S.: Cape Verde Court

A court in Cape Verde has ruled that Alex Saab, a Colombian businessman with ties to Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, can be extradited to the United States, The Wall Street

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Salvadoran Court Orders Saca to Return \$4.4 Mn

A court in El Salvador on Tuesday convicted former President Elías Antonio "Tony" Saca and his wife Ana Mixco of "illegal enrichment" and ordered them to return \$4.4 million to the government, Reuters reported. Prosecutors had discovered irregularities in the couple's declaration of wealth and accused them of transferring public money to their personal bank accounts and to the accounts of a broadcasting company they owned. In September 2018, Saca pleaded guilty to money laundering and embezzling \$300 million and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

## Board of Chile's Codelco Approves \$1.83 Billion for Salvador Mine Repairs

The board of Chilean state-owned copper miner Codelco has approved a budget of \$1.383 billion for the repairs of its old Salvador mine, the company said Tuesday, Reuters reported. The Rajo Inca project is set to convert the underground Salvador mine to an open-cast mine. It is scheduled to begin this year, with the initial job of stripping away rock covering the mineral deposits slated to take 22 months, the company said. Codelco said the overhauled mine could start operations by 2022 and produce 90,000 metric tons by 2023.

## Mexico's State Power Company Acknowledges Falsified Report

Mexican state power company CFE on Tuesday admitted to presenting a falsified brush fire report as an explanation for a widespread blackout in December, the Associated Press reported. The firm had said a fire caused a massive short-circuit that spread, denying incompetence as the reason for the Dec. 28 two-hour power outage that affected 25 percent of the country's customers.

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north from Central America. A 2019 audit by the DHS inspector general characterized the family separation process as chaotic, disorganized, poorly managed and lacking in traceability of families and children. Even today, an unknown number of children have not been reunited with families. But completing reunification of families will not be as easy as it might seem for the new administration. Many parents have been deported, while their children remain behind with an aunt or an older sibling—which is exactly where many parents would prefer to leave them, away from the violence, poverty and lack of opportunity at home. The first immi-

gration priority for the new administration will almost certainly be to give permanence to 'Dreamers'—young children brought to the United States by their parents who have grown up, gone to school and who are often employed in the United States—making them Americans in every way except legal status. Polls continue to show strong support for allowing Dreamers to remain in this country. Legislation to make DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), currently in executive orders, permanent will be a high priority and a real possibility. But more comprehensive immigration legislation has little or no chance of passage in the next Congress."

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Journal reported Tuesday. Saab is wanted in the United States on charges of laundering money for Maduro's government. An appeals court in the African island nation made the ruling after ignoring efforts by Venezuela's government to shield Saab through diplomatic immunity. On Christmas Eve, Maduro's government named Saab a special representative to the African Union, according to Saab's lawyers. Saab was arrested last June in Cape Verde after his private plane stopped there to refuel. Officials in the African country arrested Saab on a notice from Interpol after he was indicted in the United States on money laundering charges, according to the U.S. Justice Department. Saab's lawyers have said they will appeal the extradition ruling to Cape Verde's Supreme Court, The Wall Street Journal reported. Saab's defense team, led by Spanish lawyer Baltasar Garzón, said the appeals court's decision "was not surprising, considering the continuous deplorable series of decisions in which Cape Verdean courts systematically refuse to analyze the arguments presented by the defense of the special envoy, violating the law and constitution," the Voice of America reported.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

### Region Will See 3.7% Economic Growth in 2021: World Bank

Economic activity in Latin America and the Caribbean will grow 3.7 percent this year as lockdowns to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic are relaxed, vaccines against the virus are rolled out, commodity prices stabilize and external conditions improve, the World Bank said Tuesday in its Global Economic Prospects report. However, the rebound "will be muted" and comes amid a context of a decade of slow growth in the region. If vaccination efforts are delayed, economic growth could be even more sluggish, at 1.9 percent. Other risks include failure to contain the pandemic, strains related to debt and external financing, the resurgence of social unrest and disruption related to climate change and natural disasters,

## THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

### What Do Venezuela & Iran Have to Gain From Each Other?

**Q** **Iran has sent weapons and paramilitary operatives to Venezuela to help President Nicolás Maduro remain in power, Adm. Craig Faller, the head of the U.S. Southern Command, told reporters Dec. 2. The presence of military personnel from the elite Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, is particularly "alarming and concerning," said Faller. To what extent are Venezuela and Iran working together, and what does each country have to gain from the partnership? How important is Iran's support to Maduro remaining in power? What does the presence of Iranian personnel in Venezuela mean for other Latin American countries and the United States?**

**A** **R. Evan Ellis, Latin America research professor at the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute:** "Iran's collaboration with Venezuela is a partnership of mutual convenience for messaging, meeting particular needs and the enrichment of the businesspeople involved. Cooperation allows both regimes to appear as defying the United States, while not internationally isolated. The ability of the Quds Force to enter the region through Venezuela (which has been going on for some time) enhances Iran's limited ability to maintain networks in the region. Iran has been working through mosques and community centers, as well as groups such as Hezbollah. It has also been

working with those involved in the 1992 and 1994 attacks against the Israeli embassy and AMIA Jewish community center in Argentina, those involved in the 2007 plot against JFK Airport and Muhammad Amadar, who was arrested in Lima in 2014 with explosives believed to be intended for use against Peru's Jewish community. The Mahan Air flights to Venezuela were mostly for transporting Chinese components and experts to get the Cardón refinery operating to solve Venezuela's fuel crisis, smuggling Venezuelan gold to Iran in return. The use of Iranian tankers to bring Venezuela gasoline and export its crude similarly helps keep the Maduro regime alive, providing fuel for trucks to distribute food to supporters, operate generators and run the repressive apparatus of the regime. Doing so props up the criminal economy that threatens Venezuela's neighbors, including narco-trafficking, illegal mining, money laundering and refuge for terrorist groups such as the ELN and FARC dissidents. Although the region has long since ceased giving credibility to Venezuela-issued passports, the exodus of millions from Venezuela through its porous borders also allows Iranian operatives to infiltrate the region."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The comment above is a continuation of the [Q&A](#) published in Monday's issue of the Advisor.

the World Bank said. Among the region's major economies, the bank expects Brazil to grow 3 percent this year, driven by improving consumer confidence and benign credit conditions, while Mexico is expected to grow 3.7 percent, based mainly on rebounding exports as the U.S. economy also recovers. Argentina's GDP is forecast to grow by 4.9 percent this year amid less uncertainty surrounding the country's

debt restructuring. The World Bank expects the global economy to expand 4 percent in 2021, assuming widespread Covid-19 vaccination plans, though it warned that the global recovery would be "subdued" without more effective policies to control the pandemic and implement investment-enhancing reforms. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Dec. 23 issue of the Advisor.]

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**A** Sarah Pierce, policy analyst in the U.S. Immigration Program at the Migration Policy Institute:

“If Democrats do not control the Senate, and if Congress remains averse to acting on immigration, the incoming administration’s options for immigration policy change will be limited to unilateral action. Undoing harms to the immigration system enacted under President Trump would drive much of this work. To address the consequences of Trump’s family separation policy, the Biden administration should support organizations working on the ground to find

“**The southwest border is particularly ripe for reform.**”

— Sarah Pierce

and reunite the families. The administration could also consider options to allow affected parents who are abroad and whose children are in the United States to enter the country and for all affected parents to clear or address prior immigration infractions, giving them the chance to apply for other immigration benefits. Even though the new administration’s bandwidth will be limited amid the pandemic and economic crisis, smart, forward-thinking changes could significantly improve the U.S. immigration system. The southwest border is particularly ripe for reform. Its outdated resources and procedures have left it ill-equipped to handle modern flows. In the near term, the Biden administration could increase the efficiency of asylum processing by allowing asylum officers to fully decide cases. To ensure fairness in such adjudications, the administration should restore the definition of asylum to include certain victims of gang and domestic violence, among others. Other changes can improve the safety and efficient processing of vulnerable populations, including the creation of reception centers at the border, expanded use of alternatives

to detention, remote refugee processing and increased regional cooperation.”

**A** Louis DeSipio, associate professor of political science and chair of Chicano/Latino studies at the University of California

Irvine: “One of the many challenges that Biden will face as president is the need to rebuild U.S. immigration policy after four years of scorched-earth policies by the Trump administration. The nation will not be able to rebuild its economy without a return to what has been the norm since the 1960s—large-scale legal immigration, guest worker programs to provide labor for sectors of the economy that cannot find workers in the domestic labor supply and a functioning naturalization program to allow long-term legal residents to join the polity. These policies are established in U.S. law and need to be rebuilt as the nation emerges from the Trump administration. More significant reforms are needed to build a 21st century immigration regime for the United States. The near-even division of both houses of Congress, however, makes comprehensive immigration reform unlikely in the early years of the Biden administration. Recognizing this, President Biden will need to use executive powers and oversight of the Department of Homeland Security to implement needed reforms (recognizing that a future president could reverse them). These include an end to family separation policies at the border, a rebuilding of U.S. asylum policies and an end to the ‘Remain in Mexico’ program, a re-establishment of DACA and a revised, more carefully crafted DAPA program to protect the undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and permanent residents. These reforms, which would be part of a comprehensive reform bill, are good policy and popular among many in U.S. society.”

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

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**Erik Brand**  
Publisher  
[ebrand@thedialogue.org](mailto:ebrand@thedialogue.org)

**Gene Kuleta**  
Editor  
[gene.kuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gene.kuleta@thedialogue.org)

**Anastasia Chacón González**  
Reporter & Associate Editor  
[achacon@thedialogue.org](mailto:achacon@thedialogue.org)



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