

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Diego Arria

Director, Columbus Group

Devry Boughner Vorwerk

Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Grubhub

Joyce Chang

Global Head of Research, JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Paula Cifuentes

Director of Economic & Fiscal Affairs, Latin America & Canada, Philip Morris International

Marlene Fernández

Corporate Vice President for Government Relations, Arcos Dorados (McDonald's)

Peter Hakim

President Emeritus, Inter-American Dialogue

Donna Hrinak

Senior VP, Corporate Affairs, Royal Caribbean Group

Jon E. Huenemann

Former Corporate and Government Senior Executive

James R. Jones

Chairman, Monarch Global Strategies

Craig A. Kelly

Senior Director, Americas Int'l Gov't Relations, Exxon Mobil

John Maisto

Director, U.S. Education Finance Group

Nicolás Mariscal

Chairman, Grupo Marhnos

Thomas F. McLarty III

Chairman, McLarty Associates

Beatrice Rangel

Director, AMLA Consulting LLC

Jaana Remes

Partner, McKinsey Global Institute

Ernesto Revilla

Head of Latin American Economics, Citi

Gustavo Roosen

Chairman of the Board, Envases Venezolanos

Andrés Rozental

President, Rozental & Asociados

Shelly Shetty

Managing Director, Sovereigns Fitch Ratings

FEATURED Q&A

Do Social Media Platforms Have Too Much Power?



Some social media companies have banned former U.S. President Donald Trump from posting on their sites. The moves have been controversial in locations including Latin America. // File Photo: Today Testing via Wikimedia Commons.

Q In the wake of the deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, social media platforms including Twitter and Facebook respectively adopted permanent and temporary bans of former President Donald Trump from their sites over concerns that his posts were inciting violence. Critics including Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador have blasted the social media companies, calling their actions censorship. Other countries, including Brazil, have also grappled with politically charged misinformation circulating on social media. To what extent can—and should—social media sites take action against political figures in Latin America and the Caribbean? What differentiates free speech, the spread of misinformation and incitement of violence? Do big tech companies have too much power to censor speech and shape political debates in the region? How much are social media sites subject to government regulation in Latin America, and is the level of regulation they currently face appropriate?

A Edison Lanza, former special rapporteur for freedom of expression at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: "The assault on the U.S. Capitol, instigated by then-President Donald Trump and a group of high-profile supporters, had the Internet and social media as its main stage. In fact, when the connection between that inciting speech and the violence unleashed in Congress was conspicuous—with the result of five people killed—Twitter decided to first suspend and then permanently remove the president's personal account. There seems to be a consensus that Trump's speech, spread on various platforms, was characterized by increasing incitement

Continued on page 3

TODAY'S NEWS

BUSINESS

European Banks to Stop Financing Oil Trade in Ecuador

Switzerland's Credit Suisse, the Netherlands' ING and France's BNP Paribas said they would stop financing the trade in oil from Ecuador in response to advocacy campaigns to protect the Amazon rain forest.

Page 2

BUSINESS

Companies in Brazil Consider Purchase of Covid Vaccines

A group of Brazilian companies is considering the possibility of buying millions of doses of Covid-19 vaccines directly from pharmaceutical makers. The government has faced delays in vaccine rollout.

Page 3

POLITICAL

Peru's President Orders Lockdown Amid Covid Surge

Interim Peruvian President Francisco Sagasti ordered a sweeping lockdown amid a surge in Covid-19 cases.

Page 2



Sagasti // File Photo: Peruvian Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Peru's President Orders Lockdown Amid Covid Surge

Interim Peruvian President Francisco Sagasti on Tuesday night ordered a strict lockdown for a third of the country, including Lima, as Covid-19 infections and deaths surge and hospitals have become overwhelmed, Agence France-Presse reported. The lockdown will run from Jan. 31 to Feb. 14, said Sagasti, who blamed the surge in Covid-19 cases on holiday gatherings at the end of last year. "We must all contribute so that the suffering does not extend to new people," said Sagasti. The lockdown will affect 16.4 million people, approximately half of the country's population. Only essential businesses, such as grocery stores, pharmacies and banks, will be allowed to remain open. Nonessential businesses and churches must close under the government's orders. The restrictions also include orders that company employees work from home and the suspension of land and air travel between affected regions of Peru, Reuters reported. Sagasti also banned flights from Brazil, which has the world's second-highest death toll from Covid-19, after the United States. Peru previously banned flights from Europe in an effort to keep out new, more contagious variants of the virus. On Tuesday alone, Peru reported 4,444 new cases of Covid-19. The country has more than 1.1 million confirmed cases and more than 40,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University. Sagasti said Tuesday that the first one million doses of an order for 38 million of the vaccine produced by China's Sinopharm would arrive in Peru "in the coming days," adding that a vaccination campaign would start next month. Peru also has an agreement to purchase 14 million doses of the vaccine developed by University of Oxford and AstraZeneca. Peruvian regulators are also considering emergency-use requests for the vaccines developed by U.S. pharmaceutical maker Pfizer and Russia's Gamaleya Institute, Reuters reported.

BUSINESS NEWS

European Banks to Stop Financing Oil Trade in Ecuador

Switzerland's Credit Suisse, Dutch lender ING and France's BNP Paribas will stop financing the trade in crude oil from Ecuador, the banks announced on Monday, in response to advocacy campaigns to protect the Amazon rain forest, Reuters reported. In total, the three banks are responsible for \$5.5 billion in Ecuadorean Amazon oil financing since 2008, Al Jazeera reported. In a report last year, advocacy groups Stand.earth and Amazon

“The banks should finance other forms of economic development, but not oil extraction.”

— Marlon Vargas

Watch named six European banks as major financiers of Ecuadorean oil exports to U.S. refineries, alleging that the banks' roles in the trading made them complicit in oil spills, violations of land rights and the destruction of the rain forest by the country's oil industry. "The banks' commitment is a milestone," Marlon Vargas, the president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorean Amazon, told Reuters. "The banks should finance other forms of economic development, but not oil extraction," he added. Among the banks included in last August's report were Credit Suisse, ING and BNP Paribas, as well as France's Natixis, Swiss bank UBS and Dutch lender Rabobank. On Tuesday, Ecuadorean state-run oil company Petroecuador responded to the banks' exit, saying it compensates communities that face environmental effects from infrastructure development, Reuters reported. The company said it "carries out exploration, production, transport, refining ... and marketing of hydrocarbons in rigorous compliance with

NEWS BRIEFS

López Obrador Took Commercial Flight Just Before Covid Diagnosis

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was on a commercial Aeroméxico flight just hours before testing positive for Covid-19, raising concerns that he may have infected others aboard the flight, Reuters reported Tuesday. López Obrador, who rarely is seen in public wearing a face mask, flew from San Luis Potosí to Mexico City on Sunday.

Blinken Sworn in as U.S. Secretary of State

Antony Blinken was sworn in as U.S. secretary of state on Tuesday. Blinken, who has worked alongside President Joe Biden for years, was approved by the Senate with a vote of 78-22 earlier in the day. His first phone calls as secretary of state were with top officials in Canada and Mexico, according to statements from the State Department. Blinken spoke with Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard and with Canadian Foreign Minister Marc Garneau. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Jan. 21 issue of the Advisor.]

Guyana, Venezuela Foreign Ministers Discuss Detained Fishermen

Guyana's minister of foreign affairs and his Venezuelan counterpart met virtually to discuss the arrest of 12 Guyanese fishermen who were detained by the Venezuelan navy last week in waters that both countries claim as their own, News Source Guyana reported Tuesday. Guyanese Minister Hugh Todd said the meeting was "cordial" and that Venezuela's Jorge Arreaza assured him the fishermen were being treated with utmost respect for their human rights, according to the report. Venezuela alleges the fishing vessels were in its "undisputed" waters, a claim Guyana has rejected.

Ecuadorian legislation on safety, health and environment.” Petroecuador added that any project licenses that are awarded require the participation of local communities, adding that “qualified environmental authorities” audit that participation biannually.

Brazilian Companies Consider Purchase of Covid-19 Vaccines

A group of Brazilian companies is considering the possibility of buying millions of doses of Covid-19 vaccines directly from drug makers in an attempt to accelerate the vaccination process in Latin America’s largest economy as the government’s rollout has faced delays and logistical challenges, the Financial Times reported Tuesday. President Jair Bolsonaro has supported the initiative, saying he was “in favor of this group bringing the vaccine here to



Bolsonaro // File Photo: Brazilian Government.

immunize 33 million people at zero cost to the federal government.” However, pharmaceuticals company AstraZeneca has dismissed the proposal, saying it was “not possible to make [its vaccine] available to the private market at this time,” the Financial Times reported. Brazil’s federal government has already reached an agreement with AstraZeneca for 100 million doses of the vaccine, which was developed in conjunction with the University of Oxford. An initial batch of two million doses arrived a week ago from India. The South American nation began its immunization program in mid-January amid delays and political spats, Reuters reported. Brazil has nearly nine million confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, and it has registered more than 218,000 deaths.

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 1

of violence and chaos and undermining the rule of law. Although the censorship did not come from a state agency, and the former president can express himself through other media, there is no doubt that these platforms are today’s most relevant public sphere. We face two issues that must be addressed separately. First, Trump and his followers must be held accountable for their coordinated action to provoke violence and chaos. Second, the U.S. Congress has an opportunity to undertake a review of the legal framework of these forums. Social media platforms should operate under precise legal obligations of transparency and diligence regarding the moderation of content. Likewise, the users, when they feel that their freedom of expression has been affected, should have a clear and expeditious appeal process available that is conducted under due process. Most importantly, any process should safeguard the possibility of judicial review.”

A Vanessa Rubio-Márquez, professor in practice at the London School of Economics and Political Science and former member of Mexico’s Senate and deputy government minister: “Social media is a ‘sub-space’ within the physical space we live in. This characteristic in itself poses a huge challenge in terms of competence to regulate the information, interactions and transactions that take place within it. Social media reflects society, with all its virtues, but also its pathologies. The problem is how to deal with these pathologies (such as false information, hate speech, violence and crime) in the sub-space in an effective, positive and objective way. The solution is ample dialogue and a collective response by governments, social media companies, the private sector, experts, NGOs, academics and society as whole. Any long-term measure that these actors take unilaterally will be insufficient and probably more harmful in the long run. While the industry’s reaction

was a specific act to ban, many governments have threatened to enact hasty new regulations. None of this will solve the structural problems.”

A Erich de la Fuente, chairman for the U.S. and Latin America regional office at LLYC: “Donald Trump’s ban from Twitter and Facebook reignited debate over a complex issue, one often discussed overemotionally in today’s polarized political landscape. But this debate must not focus on Trump, but rather on the question of whether banning controversial voices is a road we, as a society, wish to take. I am against the idea

“**The bans are lawful, but that does not make them right.**”

— Erich de la Fuente

of shutting down anyone’s account for the words they write, even when I disagree. If this becomes normal, where does it start, and where does it end? The bans are lawful, but that does not make them right. Justifying the ban by citing a rules violation reflects an unacceptable double standard. Human rights activists around the world receive constant death threats on social media from armies of trolls financed by authoritarian regimes or drug cartels; they are not banned. Ask Alexei Navalny, Venezuelan and Cuban dissidents, Mexican journalists or Uighur activists—the list is endless. Trump has tweeted irresponsible statements and false claims, but remember that Twitter’s active accounts include Putin, Maduro, Xi Jinping and Ayatollah Khamenei, who repressively silence their critics. The late dictator Hugo Chávez also claimed to use his Twitter account as an ‘online trench ... to wage the battle’ against his opponents. This debate underscores the tremendous power these companies hold, despite being largely insu-

Continued on page 4

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 3

lated from accountability and operating without transparency. In a democracy, deciding whether someone's words threaten society should be left to the courts, not the big tech companies that control social media. This will set a precedent for how communication is controlled and what censorship norms opponents of free speech can exploit."

A **Silvina Moschini, president and founder of TransparentBusiness:** "Social media serves as an important communications platform, allowing individuals—including political figures—to broadcast their ideas on a global stage that has the potential to reach millions. Participation on this global stage is contingent on the responsible use of these platforms and compliance with

“Participation on this global stage is contingent on the responsible use of these platforms...”

— Silvina Moschini

private policies of use and applicable laws. When social media is used as an instrument for misinformation or a tool to incite violence, or when it intentionally breaks laws or threatens national security, it represents a threat to society. Therefore, social media companies have the right and the responsibility to act in accordance with their policies and take action."

[Editor's note: A Latin America public policy spokesperson for Twitter submitted the following statement to the Advisor: "Our public interest framework exists to enable the public to hear from elected officials and world leaders directly. It is built on the principle that the people have a right to hold

power to account in the open and to see what their elected leaders are saying. We enforce these policies judiciously for all and never on the basis of political ideology. The principles we use to empower a healthy public conversation through our product, policies and enforcement are based on the decrease of potential for likely harm, harmful bias and incentives, and decrease reliance on content removal followed by increasing diverse perspectives and public accountability. We believe that healthy public conversation is an important element to enable the achievement of universal #HumanRights. These principles connect to everything for us—from our decision to ban paid political ads, to our policy around public-interest notices and how we label content to offer context to the public. That is how we aim to provide direct insight into our enforcement decision-making and to protect the public's right to hear from their leaders but hold them to account. It is worth mentioning that Twitter actively participates across the region in different regulatory discussion forums, to collaborate in a broad and democratic debate on digital platforms in Latin America. These efforts are pursued both with government and with civil society. Much of the work that we've been doing over the last weeks is work that we've built on previously in different markets or regions of the world. We are now focused on understanding the scale and enforcement of our policies specifically with a deep dive on our civic integrity policy and our policy on misleading information about Covid-19, on how we can keep offering context and how we can serve to scale this approach effectively in multiple markets. We will continue to be transparent around changes on these policies and their enforcement.]

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 © 2021

Erik Brand

Publisher
ebrand@thedialogue.org

Gene Kuleta

Editor
gkuleta@thedialogue.org

Anastasia Chacón González

Reporter & Associate Editor
achacon@thedialogue.org



Michael Shifter, President

Rebecca Bill Chavez, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Sergio Bitar, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Joan Caivano, Senior Advisor

Michael Camilleri, Director, Rule of Law Program

Kevin Casas-Zamora, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Héctor Castro Vizcarra, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Julia Dias Leite, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Ariel Fiszbein, Director, Education Program

Peter Hakim, President Emeritus

Nora Lustig, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Margaret Myers, Director, Asia and Latin America Program

Manuel Orozco, Senior Fellow

Xiaoyu Pu, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Jeffrey Puryear, Senior Fellow

Mateo Samper, Nonresident Senior Fellow

Tamar Solnik, Director, Finance & Administration

Lisa Viscidi, Director, Energy Program

Denisse Yanovich, Director of Development, External Relations & Special Projects

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

The opinions expressed by the members of the Board of Advisors and by guest commentators do not necessarily represent those of the publisher. The analysis is the sole view of each commentator and does not necessarily represent the views of their respective employers or firms. The information in this report has been obtained from reliable sources, but neither its accuracy and completeness, nor the opinions based thereon, are guaranteed. If you have any questions relating to the contents of this publication, contact the editorial offices of the Inter-American Dialogue. Contents of this report may not be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted without prior written permission from the publisher.