LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

A DAILY PUBLICATION OF THE DIALOGUE

www.thedialogue.org

Wednesday, July 19, 2023

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THEDIALOGUE

FEATURED Q&A

How Much Is Gálvez Shaking Up Mexico's Presidential Race?

Xóchitl Gálvez Ruiz announced her candidacy for Mexico's presidency on June 27. Since entering the race, her support has surged. // File Photo: Mexican Government.

Q Xochitl Gálvez Ruiz, a senator and member of the conservative National Action Party on June 27 announced her candidacy for Mexico's presidency. Since entering the race, her support has grown, bolstering the opposition's hopes of unseating the leftist ruling Morena party. Who is Gálvez Ruiz, and what kind of threat does she present to the ruling party? What appeal does she have with voters? Without much popularity outside of Mexico City but quickly developing a base of support, does Gálvez Ruiz actually stand a chance of being elected president?

A Arantza Alonso, senior analyst at Verisk Maplecroft: "Xóchitl Gálvez is a businessperson, a senator for the PAN, former mayor of Mexico City's Miguel Hidalgo district and now an inconvenient 'guest' in the presidential race. Gálvez is one of the public's favorite contenders to become the presidential candidate for the Va por México coalition–formed by the PAN, the almost-defunct left-wing PRD and the crumbling PRI. Gálvez's Indigenous roots and unprivileged background make her stand out from her colleagues in the PAN, whose origins make it almost too easy for President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to paint them as Mexico's oppressing bourgeoisie. Gálvez has pierced AMLO's divisive rhetoric by coming from one of Mexico's many marginalized sectors yet standing with the business-oriented/foreign investor-friendly opposition. Her plainspoken style has helped her connect with voters, trend on social media and climb in the polls. Her professionalism has earned her the public support of many PAN

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Venezuelan Ex-Spy Chief Extradited From Spain to U.S.

Hugo Carvajal, who ran Venezuela's military intelligence agency under then-President Hugo Chávez, was extradited today from Spain to the United States where he faces drug trafficking charges.

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BUSINESS

Enel Unit Starts Operations at Chile Solar Plant

A unit of Italian energy company Enel has started operations at Chile's largest single solar power facility by capacity.

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POLITICAL

Ex-Panamanian President Gets More Than 10 Years in Prison

A Panamanian court on Tuesday convicted and sentenced former President Ricardo Martinelli to more than 10 years in prison for money laundering. Martinelli has denied wrongdoing and says the charges are politically motivated.

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Martinelli // File Photo: @rmartinelli via Twitter.

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POLITICAL NEWS

Former Venezuelan Spy Chief Extradited From Spain to U.S.

Hugo Carvajal, a retired Venezuelan general who headed the country's military intelligence agency, is being extradited today from Spain to the United States, where he faces drug trafficking charges, the Associated Press reported today, citing his lawyer and a Spanish official with knowledge of the case. Carvajal left Spain and was due to arrive later in the day in New York, the wire service reported, citing a person at Spain's National Court. From 2004 to 2011, Carvajal advised then-Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez before breaking with Chávez's successor, current President Nicolás Maduro. Carvajal was arrested in Spain in April 2019 and had been fighting extradition since then. U.S. prosecutors allege that Carvajal used his office to coordinate the smuggling of some 5,600 kilograms of cocaine to Mexico from Venezuela in 2006, the AP reported. The U.S. Treasury also accuses Carvajal of providing weapons to members of the now-demobilized Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, rebel group and helped to fund the FARC's activities through drug trafficking. Carvajal denies wrongdoing. Carvajal's extradition came after the European Court of Human Rights last week denied Carvajal's motion to avoid extradition that Spain had previously authorized, Al Jazeera reported.

Panama's Martinelli Sentenced to More Than 10 Years

A court in Panama convicted and sentenced former President Ricardo Martinelli to more than 10 years in prison over money laundering charges, the attorney general's office said on Tuesday, BBC News reported. The judge also ordered Martinelli to pay a $19.2 million fine, in addition to serving 128 months in jail. The court found the former president and several others guilty of embezzling millions of dollars in public funds to buy a majority share in a major media group in the country. Martinelli, who was in office between 2009 and 2014, was selected last month by his Realizando Metas party as its candidate for the 2024 presidential election. He denies any wrongdoing and claims the charges are politically motivated, threatening his bid for another presidential term. "We all know they want to convict me out of political interest," Martinelli said in a video. "I have no ties to illicit funds," he added, Reuters reported. Two years ago, he was acquitted of embezzlement and spying allegations, but he still faces a court case related to from Brazilian firm Odebrecht, a sprawling scandal involving multiple public officials across Latin America, the news wire reported. The case is expected to go to court next month, BBC News reported. In January, the United States barred Martinelli from entering the country over accusations that he accepted bribes during his presidential term.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Denmark Set to Contribute to Brazil's Amazon Fund

Brazilian President Luíz Inácio Lula da Silva on Tuesday said that Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has notified him that Denmark is interested in contributing to the Amazon Fund, a Brazil-led initiative to combat deforestation, Reuters reported. Frederiksen made these comments at a meeting between the two leaders during the E.U.-CELAC summit in Brussels, according to the Brazilian government. Although the amount Denmark would like to contribute has not been disclosed, Lula wrote in a posting on Twitter that he "was happy to meet her and we will work to improve the relationship between our countries," adding, "She told me of her country's intention to approve in its budget a contribution to the Amazon Fund, and I invited her to visit." The initiative, which was first

NEWS BRIEFS

More Than a Dozen People Missing After Landslide Southeast of Bogotá

Rescue workers in Colombia are looking for more than a dozen people who are missing after a landslide devastated an area southeast of the capital, Bogotá, BBC News reported today. Since the heavy rains on Monday, 15 deaths have been recorded. The worst-hit area by the flooding was El Naranjal, where at least 20 homes were swept away and buried under mud. Firefighters halted their efforts at nightfall but will resume their search once there is enough light.

Two Workers Killed in Coal Mine Incident in Mexico's Coahuila State

An accident on Tuesday at a coal mine in the state of Coahuila in Mexico killed two workers, the country's labor ministry said, Reuters reported. Another two workers were rescued shortly after, the ministry added in a statement. It did not specify the cause of the incident. The Minera Fuga mining company had been reported for safety concerns in August.

Honduras Lifts Curfews Imposed After Wave of Violence in Two Cities

Honduras' government has lifted curfews that it imposed last month in two cities following a wave of violence there, Reuters reported Tuesday, citing an announcement by Security Minister Gustavo Sánchez. The curfews were put in place in the cities of Choloma and San Pedro Sula. The government ordered the restrictions after incidents that left 24 people dead in one day in the Sula Valley, where the cities are located. "Indicators show us a significant drop of 74 percent in homicides in the area," Sánchez said at a news conference. Violence tied to organized crime results in about 10 deaths per day in Honduras, according to official data.

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launched in 2009 and which Lula reactivated this year after former President Jair Bolsonaro deactivated it in 2019, aims to fight deforestation and promote sustainable development. Denmark would be joining a list of contributors that includes Norway and Germany, the fund's initial benefactors, as well as the United States and the United Kingdom, whose leaders announced their countries would also be joining earlier this year. Since Lula took office in January, deforestation in his country has dropped 34 percent as compared with the previous year, according to government data.

BUSINESS NEWS

Enel Unit Begins Operations of Chile Solar Plant

A unit of Italian energy company Enel has begun commercial operations at Chile's largest single solar facility by capacity, PV Tech reported today. The unit, Enel Green Power Chile, started construction on the 398-megawatt Guanchoi solar plant in 2021. The facility is located in the Atacama region of northern Chile. Enel finished work on the plant this year, on Tuesday it received approval from Chile's National Electricity Coordinator to start commercial operations on the project. The plant uses bifacial photovoltaic panels, which collect sunlight on both sides and will generate 14 percent more electricity than conventional solar panels, according to Enel. The Atacama region has among the world's best solar irradiation levels, PV Tech reported. Guanchoi is Enel's third-largest solar plant, according to the company's Chilean unit, Renewables Now reported. In total, the plant has approximately 893,500 solar panels, and its production output will be enough to provide power to more than a million homes in Chile, Renewables Now reported, citing Enel Chile. The Chilean unit was launched in 2016 and has a total installed capacity of 8.4 gigawatts across its renewable and nonrenewable operations, PV Tech reported.

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members, and positive opinions from the left-wing Movimiento Ciudadano, a member of AMLO's coalition. This has rattled AMLO, who has escalated his verbal attacks against her in the past few weeks. Nevertheless, Gálvez faces an uphill battle. The coalition's entangled selection process is designed to favor candidates with an effective political machine and deep pockets, which Gálvez lacks. Moreover, she will have to distance herself from former PAN and PRI presidents and governments, which most voters perceive as corrupt, while convincing the leaderships of those same parties that she can take them over the finish line."

Lillian Briseño Senosiain, professor of history at Technological Institute of Monterrey: "Xochitl Gálvez has managed to connect with many Mexicans in a fresh way. I don't remember a single candidate that has been able to galvanize passions like this woman, and at such an incredible speed. From evening to morning, she has become the X Factor that has unsettled Morena's candidates within the public conversation, revealing Claudia Sheinbaum's, Marcelo Ebrard's and Adán Augusto's lack of charisma, ideas and originality. The timing could not be better. A wide sector of the populace sympathized with Ebrard, considering him the candidate that could bring together a good portion of the electorate within and outside of Morena. Nevertheless, when he offered to create the Secretary of the Fourth Transformation and place López Obrador's son as its figurehead, he lost a good part of the undecided and anti-Morena voters. This coincided with the president's political error of not receiving Xóchitl in his morning press conference, a moment that Gálvez Ruíz took advantage of masterfully to declare her intentions of running for president. Xóchitl has been, without doubt, a phenomenon that people like because of her charisma, simpleness, easy manger, clarity and courage, in addition to her intelligence. Her pre-candidacy has awakened huge hope within many Mexicans who see her as a powerful opponent. This, of course, should worry the official party, since what once looked like an internal election that was only about choosing a candidate has turned into a very interesting and fought-over contest. There's no doubt that Xóchitl Gálvez has everything to be a good candidate, but to achieve it, she would need to be able to count on necessary party support, create an impeccable campaign and win the election. The road is long, and she should not forget that slow and steady wins the race."

Roberta Lajous, former Mexican ambassador to Cuba, Bolivia and Spain: "I spoke with Xóchitl Gálvez in 2007, when I was appointed to be Mexico's ambassador to Bolivia. My objective was to better understand Mexico's policies toward the Indigenous communities and the constitutional changes to recognize more fully our national diversity, which had taken place on the wake of the Zapatista uprising of 1994. Xóchitl had just resigned from her cabinet position, where she was responsible for all programs aimed at raising the standard of living of Indigenous communities. She resigned because the new government was not assigning the budget that would have been needed to complete her tasks. I was impressed by the results she achieved in the past six years across the country, and her narrative helped me prepare for the forthcoming dialogue with Evo Morales on Indigenous issues. Xóchitl has always struck me, in her different capacities, as a very capable woman, with a strong character and a great sense of humor. I had a further opportunity to witness

> **"She is an icon for Mexican women."**
>
> **— Roberta Lajous**

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her work as the mayor of Miguel Hidalgo, the municipality where I live, and now as a senator for all of Mexico City. She has a broad appeal across the whole social spectrum because she is a self-made woman who, starting from a background of poverty and discrimination because of her Indigenous origin, was able to become a very successful entrepreneur with international recognition. She is an icon for Mexican women. By transmitting much-needed optimism about the changes that are needed for the future of the country, she is quickly making strides into the hearts of most Mexicans."

Raúl Benítez Manaut, researcher at the Center for Research on North America at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM): "Last month, President López Obrador denied Xóchitl Gálvez's entry to the National Palace. Since that day, for two weeks, the president became obsessed with Senator Xóchitl, and her popularity surged on social media. Due to her unexpected popularity and with the 'help' of the president, she decided to nominate herself to a pre-candidature for the presidency in the primaries for Frente Amplio por Mexico. She managed to lead in polls across the entire country for the whole month, and she will most likely be the candidate for the opposition coalition. She has no history of corruption in her political work. She is a woman with a lot of charisma. In the 'Poll of Polls' from Polls.mx, it was reported that she would likely face off against Claudia Sheinbaum, who leads the polls for incumbent candidates. According to the figures, Sheinbaum would get 48.7 percent of the votes and Gálvez 47.9 percent, which would be a technical tie. The problems Gálvez faces is that she will be competing with less financial resources, and against the tradition in which the governments of the parties financially support their candidates. Other problems include having to design a government that has credibility among the electorate. It's very difficult to compete with promises of social programs that support the elderly and the young. Morena's candidate will also receive the personal support of the president and most of the governors, which can lead to an uneven race. The president can transmit his own charisma to another Morena candidate. The opposition must lead and construct an image with few resources. Massive media campaigns are very expensive, and Mexico is considered one of the places with the most expensive campaigns in the whole world. Either way, it's possible for something new to happen, and that the election will be between the two women, assuming that at the convention Morena chooses Sheinbaum."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

Energy Advisor

The answers to questions that informed executives are asking ... every week.

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LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR
is published every business day by the Inter-American Dialogue ISSN 2163-7962

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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

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