

# THE DIALOGUE

## Latin America Advisor

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### FEATURED Q&A

## What Explains Mottley's Sweeping Win in Barbados?



Barbados' Labour Party won a sweeping victory in the country's general election last month, giving Mia Mottley a third term as prime minister // File Photo: U.N. Trade and Development via Flickr [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).

**Q** Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley won a third term in office on Feb. 12, with her Labour Party winning all 30 parliamentary seats in the Caribbean nation's general election. Mottley's re-election came after a series of victories by right-wing and conservative presidential candidates in votes last year across Latin America and the Caribbean, including in Chile, Honduras and Bolivia. What factors best explain Mottley's election victory, and what is the significance of her victory? What can Barbados expect during Mottley's third term? What does the Labour Party's win reflect about shifting voter sentiment elsewhere in the region?

**A** Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, founding fellow of the Caribbean Policy Consortium and senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies: "With her sweeping electoral victory on Feb. 12, Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley entered the small pantheon of vaunted leaders—which includes Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the United States, Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Keith Mitchell of Grenada and Narendra Modi of India—who won three consecutive victories at the polls. Even more notable, and unlike others in the shared pantheon, Mottley's party won all the parliamentary seats on each occasion, in elections that were incontrovertibly free and fair. How come, one may ask? Four explanatory factors come to mind. First, over the years, the 60-year-old distinguished attorney has displayed exceptional charm, persuasiveness and visionary leadership that have established her as a charismatic leader. Yet, while charisma might have been necessary,

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### TODAY'S NEWS

#### ECONOMIC

### Pipeline Leak Leads to Natural Gas Shortage in Peru

Taxi drivers and others faced long lines Tuesday amid a shortage of natural gas in Peru that was caused by a pipeline leak.

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#### BUSINESS

### Owner of Brazil's Failed Banco Master Arrested

Daniel Vorcaro, the owner of Brazil's Banco Master, which was liquidated last November, was arrested today in an investigation into the failed bank.

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#### POLITICAL

### U.S., Ecuador Launch Joint Operation Against Gangs

U.S. and Ecuadorean authorities on Tuesday launched a joint operation against gangs in the South American country. The operation began a day after General Francis L. Donovan, the commander of the U.S. Southern Command, met with Ecuador's president.

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Donovan // File Photo: U.S. Marine Corps.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## U.S., Ecuador Launch Joint Operations Against Drug Gangs

U.S. and Ecuadorean forces on Tuesday launched joint military operations against “Designated Terrorist Organizations” in the South American country, the U.S. military said in a post on social media site X. “The operations are a powerful example of the commitment of partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to combat the scourge of narco-terrorism,” the U.S. Southern Command said in the post. “Together, we are taking decisive action to confront narco-terrorists who have long inflicted terror, violence and corruption on citizens throughout the hemisphere,” it added. The military did not give additional details about which groups were targeted in the operations, but the U.S. State Department last September designated the Los Choneros and Los Lobos drug trafficking groups as terrorist organizations.

The joint military operations were launched a day after General Francis L. Donovan, the commander of the U.S. Southern Command, met in Quito with Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa and top Ecuadorean defense officials. “The leaders discussed continued collaboration to address common threats and explore opportunities to expand the bilateral security partnership,” the U.S. Southern Command said Monday in a statement. “Ecuador is one of the United States’ strongest partners in disrupting and dismantling Designated Terrorist Organizations in the region,” Donovan said Monday in a statement. The U.S. Special Forces are providing advice and support to Ecuadorean commandos as they carry out raids across the South American country against drug-related facilities including locations from which they are shipped, The New York Times reported Tuesday, citing an unnamed U.S. official. U.S. forces are not likely taking part in the raids themselves, but are supplying Ecuadorean forces with logistics support and intelligence, the official told the newspaper. [Editor’s note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Jan. 29 issue of the Advisor.]

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it has not been sufficient. A second factor is that Mottley’s leadership has coincided with notable improvements in the lives and livelihoods of Bajan citizens, notwithstanding persistent challenges such as crime and violence. Some of that leadership was made manifest during the Covid pandemic and in leading the nation’s graduation from a monarchy to a republic almost five years ago. Important, too, is the weak functional and organizational aspects of the main opposition party, the Democratic Labor Party, which was established in 1955 by the country’s founding prime minister, Errol Walton Barrow. Finally, over time and with understandable pride, Bajans have observed their prime minister navigate rough international diplomatic waters with the dexterity of a seasoned admiral of the high seas, notably in terms of climate change and climate financing for small island developing states, dealings with Nicolás Maduro, strengthening

engagement with the African continent and relations with the United States of America. Indeed, Mottley’s name has surfaced in a list of possible nominees for the next secretary-general of the United Nations.”

**A** **G. Philip Hughes, former U.S. ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and adjunct professor of diplomacy at the Institute of World Politics:** “The Barbados Labour Party’s sweeping victory is attributable to two main things: Prime Minister Mia Mottley’s exceptional rhetorical and political skill and the opposing Democratic Labour Party’s near total ruination of its political ‘brand.’ It has nothing whatsoever to do with recent elections in Latin America—which, from a Bajan’s perspective, might as well be on another planet—nor even with last November’s opposition electoral sweep in nearby St. Vincent and the Grenadines. From

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## NEWS BRIEFS

## Colombian Authorities Arrest 121 in Raids Targeting Gang Members

Colombian federal police officers have captured 121 people in raids across Colombia that targeted members of the top organized criminal groups active in the country, authorities announced on Tuesday, the Associated Press reported. Police say the people captured belong to groups including the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Clan del Golfo and Tren de Aragua, the AP reported. The arrests came after President Gustavo Petro said last month that his government would resume peace talks with the Clan del Golfo drug cartel.

## Cuban Prosecutors Charge Six After Alleged Infiltration Attempt

Cuban prosecutors have filed terrorism charges against six people who were aboard a boat that agents intercepted last week in an alleged infiltration attempt, The Guardian reported today. In the incident, Cuban agents fatally shot four others aboard the speedboat, which was registered in the United States, near Cayo Falcones, an island about 185 miles east of Havana. At least two of the people aboard the boat were U.S. citizens; one was killed and the other was injured. The boat contained multiple weapons, Cuba’s interior ministry said last week.

## Exxon to Soon Send Team to Venezuela: Executive

U.S. oil supermajor ExxonMobil plans to send a technical team to Venezuela in the coming weeks to assess the logistical and security situation surrounding the South American country’s oil sector, Jack Williams, ExxonMobil’s senior vice president, said Tuesday at a conference in New York, Reuters reported. “We will be interested in going back” so long as certain investment terms are in place, Williams said, the wire service reported.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## Pipeline Leak Leads to Natural Gas Shortage in Peru

Taxi drivers in Lima and other Peruvian cities faced hours-long lines for fuel on Tuesday amid a natural gas emergency, Bloomberg News reported. Peru's Ministry of Energy and Mines declared an emergency on Monday after a leak was discovered in a key pipeline that funnels gas from fields in southern Peru that make up nearly all of the country's natural gas production, the news service reported. Transportadora de gas del Perú, the firm that operates the pipeline, said it would likely take until at least March 14 for repairs to be completed. The damaged section of pipeline is located in Peru's Megantoni district on the Amazon side of the Andean foothills and can only be reached by air, El País reported. In the meantime, Peru's government will halt pipeline transfers from the Camisea gas fields and implement fuel rationing; 30 percent of Peru's electricity came from natural gas last year, and forms of the fuel are widely used in taxis and buses across the country, according to Bloomberg News. During the gas emergency, Peru's government will also ban the export of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to prioritize domestic consumption. Peru exported approximately \$1.4 billion in LNG last year from the Pampa Melchorita terminal, which is located south of Lima and connects to the Camisea fields via pipelines operated by Transportadora de gas del Perú, Bloomberg News reported.

## BUSINESS NEWS

## Owner of Brazil's Failed Banco Master Arrested

Brazil's federal police today arrested Daniel Vorcaro, the owner of failed bank Banco Master, Reuters reported, citing a statement from

# THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES

## What Will a Trade Deal Mean for the U.S. & El Salvador?

**Q** **The United States and El Salvador on Jan. 29 signed an agreement to reduce trade barriers and promote bilateral investment. The deal, which is supplemental to the CAFTA-DR free trade agreement, comes as El Salvador seeks large-scale mining investment following a 2024 law that lifted a ban on metallic mining. How will the new trade agreement with the United States affect El Salvador's economy? Relative to other places in Central America, what risks exist for prospective investors in El Salvador's mining sector? What is the country's macroeconomic outlook for 2026 and beyond?**

**A** **Armando Alvarez, visiting lecturer in economics at Trinity College:** "El Salvador's macroeconomic outlook for the coming years is closely related to the growing behavior of public debt and interest payments. In 2025, El Salvador requested support from the International Monetary Fund for \$1.4 billion. Part of the agreement consists of a 'growth-friendly adjustment of the primary balance of 3.5 percent of GDP over three years.' The adjustment started in 2025, and during the first review the IMF was satisfied with the government's progress. The second review was scheduled for September 2025; however, both the formal review and the corresponding disbursement are on hold. Although neither the Salvadoran government nor the IMF have clarified the

reasons, the lack of pension reform and continued Bitcoin purchases—both part of the agreement—seem to be contributing factors. The macroeconomic outlook will be closely connected to the development of this agreement. The potential scenarios are not encouraging. On the one hand, if the IMF agreement continues, this implies fiscal consolidation measures that could lead to higher unemployment or underemployment and lower growth. On the other hand, if it does not continue, the government may face reduced access to low-cost financing and declining bond prices, effectively forcing adjustment. Finally, there is speculation about direct financial support from the United States, linked to the close relationship between both presidents. On Jan. 29, both countries signed an agreement to reduce trade barriers, and on Feb. 5, it was announced that the Export-Import Bank of the United States is operating in El Salvador, offering long-term finance to support imports from the United States. While some scenarios offer partial relief, none address El Salvador's structural problems: low productivity, a persistent current account deficit, unemployment and underemployment, limited fiscal space and continued emigration."

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The comment above is a continuation of the Q&A published in the Feb. 18 issue of the Advisor.

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Brazil's supreme court. Vorcaro was previously arrested in November in connection with authorities' investigation of allegedly fraudulent credit securities issued by the bank. However, he was later released, the wire service reported. Brazilian supreme court Justice André Mendonça had ordered Vorcaro's arrest, saying there was a risk that he would interfere in

investigations into the failed bank, Bloomberg News reported. An attorney representing Vorcaro said Vorcaro is innocent of wrongdoing and never sought to interfere with authorities' investigations, Bloomberg News reported. In all, the federal police said they were executing four arrest warrants and 15 search warrants in the case, Reuters reported.

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its 1966 independence through the mid-1990s, the Democratic Labour Party—which brought the country to independence—had established itself as the island’s ‘natural majority’ party, much to the chagrin of the older and ‘original’ Labour party, the BLP. That all changed in 1994, when a ‘Dem’ government lost re-election in a landslide to BLP economist Owen Arthur over the economic hardships of an IMF adjustment program and the outgoing prime minister’s attempt to install his mistress in a key role, to which others objected. The result: damage to the DLP ‘brand,’ and three consecutive election wins for Prime Minister Arthur and his deputy prime minister, Mia Mottley. With time, the BLP’s popularity wore thin and the ‘Dems’ returned to power. But, in their next time around, DLP corruption and thievery were so blatant—fatally damaging their once ascendant ‘brand’—that Mottley’s BLP swept ‘Dem’ out, winning all the seats in Parliament. And she has just kept winning ever since. Barbados and the region can expect the same serious and responsible leadership from Mottley that she has delivered so far. The key question is: Might she succeed in her reported ambition for leadership of a major international organization, affording a far bigger stage for her formidable talents?”

**A** **Marla Dukharan, Caribbean-based economist and advisor:** “Mia Mottley won a third term in office in Barbados’ third general election in less than eight years, in which she won all 30 parliamentary seats each time. However, this does not necessarily mean that the prime minister has the longstanding support of the majority of the electorate. Mottley won with fewer votes in this election compared to 2022, while the opposition DLP secured 1,300 additional votes, suggesting an erosion in the support base for the existing government. Voter turnout was around 40 percent, which was roughly similar to 2022. Low voter partic-

ipation in this instance in Barbados could reflect: 1.) a perception that the outcome is predetermined—some voters may conclude their vote will not alter the balance of power; 2.) a weak or uncompetitive opposition, which is definitely the case with the DLP in

“I would characterize the outcome in Barbados as political disengagement combined with limited viable alternatives.”

— Marla Dukharan

Barbados; or 3.) political disengagement or apathy and dissatisfaction with democracy in general, which seems to be a global trend. It’s interesting that Barbados will introduce anti-defection legislation to ban or restrict elected members from ‘crossing the floor,’ which one would not normally expect in an environment with no meaningful opposition. In Mottley’s first term, soon after winning the election in 2018, she amended the constitution to allow some opposition-like senators to be introduced. It is challenging to compare Barbados to countries in Latin America where right-wing leaders were elected recently—in the Caribbean, almost all political parties are effectively left-leaning, even if they do not identify as such. I would characterize the outcome in Barbados as political disengagement combined with limited viable alternatives. This was not necessarily a ringing endorsement—it may be closer to passive consent. The problem is likely here to stay, though, as campaign financing reform is overdue and the DLP/opposition is so disorganized.”

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

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