

## Key Upcoming Elections in Latin America and the Caribbean

In the next ten months, eleven Latin American and Caribbean countries will hold national elections. Some would say that these elections are proof of the “sea change” in Latin American and Caribbean politics since the authoritarian regimes of the 1980s. The commitment of the governments of the region to democratic rule appears to be firm. However, changes in governing parties, combined with continued threats to democracy, could mean significant shifts in national, sub-regional and regional policies (economic, social or policies on hemispheric integration).

FOCAL intends to publish brief annotated reports on upcoming elections in Latin America and the Caribbean on a periodic basis. The coverage will not be totally comprehensive, and will focus on key elections, candidates and major issues. FOCAL will also continue to prepare in-depth analyses of specific elections that are of particular interest to Canadians. These include, for example, Mexico (Mexico’s Presidential Elections, FOCAL Policy Paper 99-4), and Argentina (forthcoming). The following is FOCAL’s first regional election update, which sets out the basic facts available on each national election.

### ARGENTINA

**Type:** Presidential/Legislative

**Date:** October 24, 1999

#### Main Candidates:

- Partido Peronista, (Peronist Party also known as Justicialist Party, PJ), centre-left —

*Eduardo Duhalde*

Governor of province of Buenos Aires since 1995, Vice President of President Menem’s first administration (1989-1994). Duhalde, openly challenges President Menem’s power. His campaign is presently in disarray. Duhalde has shown an uncanny knack for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, such as a call for a debt moratorium which provoked alarm. He has also been hindered by lack of support from a number of prominent Peronists.

- Alianza UCR - FREPASO (Alliance of Union Civica Radical and FREPASO, a non-Menemist, Peronist dissident group) centre-left —

*Fernando de la Rúa*

Current mayor of city of Buenos Aires. De la Rúa is a UCR career politician with clean record, but lacking charisma. Polls in the last few weeks have given de la Rúa a solid lead over Duhalde.

**Main Issues:** Personal security, economic recession, high unemployment, allegations of corruption in the present Menem administration.



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## URUGUAY

**Type:** Presidential/Legislative

**Date:** October 31, 1999. Second round if necessary November 30, 1999

### Main Candidates:

- Frente Amplio (Wide Front), left-wing alliance —

*Tabare Vasquez*

Former mayor of Montevideo and a cancer specialist, Vasquez is presently leading the opinion polls with more than 30% support. The Frente Amplio consists of an array of parties ranging from traditional socialist and communists (including the former Tupamaro urban guerrillas), to more moderate centre-left parties. Vasquez is running a populist platform, tapping into widespread distrust of the free market and worries over unemployment. The alliance has presented an emergency economic plan calling for drastic tax cuts, increased state support for farmers and industry, and help for poor families.

- Partido Colorado Oficialista (Colorado Party), centre-right —

*Jorge Batlle*

A veteran politician, Batlle is running for the Presidency for the fourth time. He styles himself as the candidate who can build on the achievements of the outgoing government.

- Partido Nacional (National Party also known as the Blanco or White Party), centre-right —

*Luis Alberto Lacalle*

Former President Lacalle has been dogged by corruption allegations and has been unable to gain campaign momentum.

**Main Issues:** Economic recession caused by the Brazilian financial crisis, and rising unemployment. The agricultural sector has been hit especially hard since Brazil is the country's biggest trading partner. A recent Constitutional reform may result in two rounds of ballots for choosing the President. Some analysts argue that the Frente Amplio will win the first round, and that the Colorados will win the second backed by Blanco voters anxious to keep the left out of power.

## GUATEMALA

**Type:** Presidential/Legislative

**Date:** November 7, 1999

### Main Candidates:

- Partido de Avanzada Nacional (Party for National Advancement), PAN, right wing —

*Oscar Berger*

Former mayor of Guatemala City. Support remains strong in Guatemala City, and he has the backing of the powerful private sector associations. Berger identifies less strongly with the peace process than President Arzu did during his presidential election campaign. The PAN campaign will suffer from the government's current unpopularity.

- Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (Front of the Guatemalan Republic), FRG, far right —

*Alfonso Portillo*

Came a close second to President Arzu in the 1995 election. A nation wide poll conducted in June, 1999 gave Portillo a slight lead over Berger. The FRG campaign is very populist, and the party remains strongly identified with former dictator and evangelical Protestant Efraín Ríos Montt, who has strong support even

though his government was responsible for the country's worst period of repression. The FRG's tough line on law and order is likely to be a vote winner. Portillo has admitted to killing two students in Guerrero Mexico in a 1982 student protest. The candidate was a fugitive from the Mexican justice system until the case was deemed inactive in 1995.

- Alianza Nueva Nación (New Nation Alliance), ANN, a coalition of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity), URNG (the former guerrillas), the moderate left/green/indigenous Frente Democrático Nueva Guatemala (New Guatemala Democratic Front), FDNG, and two smaller parties —

*Alvaro Colom*

The coalition is extremely low in current polls, but nonetheless represents a potential political force. This year's election is the first in which the former guerrillas will participate, representing a step forward in the slow process of democratization which began in the mid 1980s. However, the political spectrum remains heavily weighed towards the right and far right. The left is still divided.

**Main Issues:** Personal security and economic recession. Lack of consensus surrounding indigenous rights within the Peace Accord. Tensions between the military, the right wing government and the left wing parties will be factors.

## HAITI

**Date:** November 1999; postponed to 2000

The election process in Haiti has been delayed largely due to logistical problems relating to the complexity of the Legislative/Regional/Municipal elections, political and administrative problems, including the requirement to complete voter registration lists. The first round of the Legislative/Regional/Municipal elections is now scheduled for March 2000. A Presidential election could be held around November 2000 with the Presidential inauguration planned for February 2001. Candidates have not yet been announced for the Legislative/Regional/Municipal Elections, and for the Presidential Election only Jean Bertrand Aristide has re-emerged as a candidate.

## CHILE

**Type:** Presidential

**Date:** December 12, 1999

**Main Candidates:**

- Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Concertation of Parties for Democracy), a coalition of four parties centre and left —

*Ricardo Lagos*

Former Secretary General of the Universidad de Chile, founder of the Partido por la Democracia (Party for Democracy), Minister of Education in the Aylwin administration, Minister of Obras Pùblicas in the Frei Ruiz-Tagle administration.

- Unión Demócrata Independiente (Independent Democratic Union) —

*Joaquín Lavín*

Present mayor of the Municipality of Las Condes.

**Main Issues:** Economic recession, personal security, and rising unemployment. The Communist Party of Gladys Marin and the candidatures of three others, a humanist, an environmentalist and a disgruntled former coalition member have no hope of winning, but their added votes may prevent one of the first two candidates of winning a majority in the first ballot and forcing a second which could occur January 16, 2000. It is not clear if the Pinochet arrest and extradition case has become a significant issue in this campaign.

## PERU

**Type:** Presidential/Legislative

**Date:** April 2000

### Main Candidates:

- Somos Peru (We Are Peru), centre-right —

*Alberto Andrade*

Current mayor of Lima and founder of political party Somos Peru. Well known and well supported in Lima. Andrade's main electorate is the urban upper and middle classes.

- Solidaridad Nacional (National Solidarity), centre-right —

*Luis Castañeda*

Former head of the Peruvian Social Security Institute (IPSS). Castañeda's main electorate is also the urban upper and middle classes.

- Name of Party still unknown, was called Cambio '90 (Change '90) —

*Alberto Fujimori* (presently in power)

President Fujimori has yet to say whether he plans to run for re-election next year. A re-election will require a further change to Peru's Constitutional rules, since the amended 1993 Constitution allows an incumbent President to be re-elected only once. President Fujimori was first elected in 1990, under an earlier Constitution (which he later suspended, with the army's help). His supporters in Congress and the courts have ruled that this term should not be counted. With only 7 months to go before the election, he appears not only to be campaigning but to be having considerable success in boosting his popularity ratings. Observers hold that President Fujimori's campaign will target the poor, the social sector where his popularity has held up most strongly. Given the country's highly skewed income structure, this sector represents the majority of voters. President Fujimori enjoys great loyalty amongst the rural poor. A large proportion of the government's aid program is oriented to rural areas.

**Main Issues:** Depressed economy, personal security, re-election fever, Fujimori's manipulation of Congress and his crackdown on journalists. The return of APRA's Alan Garcia is also an issue. Although still in exile, the populist leader still has the ability to gather a great deal of popular support in Peru against President Fujimori's policies.

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

**Type:** Presidential

**Date:** May 16, 2000

- Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (Dominican Revolutionary Party), PRD —

*Hipólito Mejía*

Brings an urban versus rural debate to the campaign. A former Minister of Agriculture, Mejía is from the countryside and advocates the rights of farmers. He is presently leading the polls.

- Partido de Liberación Dominicana (Dominican Liberation Party), PLD —

*Daniilo Medina*

Well known political strategist and aid in the present Fernández administration.

- Partido Reformista de Social Cristiano (Social Christian Reformist Party), PRSC —

*Joaquin Balaguer* (age 93)

Former and perennial President of Dominican Republic. Balaguer's role is more likely that of kingmaker rather than aspirant to his old throne.

**Main Issue:** Although party platforms have not yet evolved around specific issues, in the end the influence of former President Balaguer could prove decisive. The economy is booming in the Dominican Republic thanks mainly to linkages to the U.S. economy and a successful tourist industry. For the third successive year the country should see GDP growth of more than 6% in 1999, the best recent performance of any country in the Americas.

## SURINAME

**Type:** General, 51 members will be elected to the General Assembly and they in turn will elect a new President.

**Date:** May 25, 2000

### Main Candidates:

Campaigning has not begun and candidates have not emerged. The New Democratic Party, (NDP) is still the nation's strongest party with its key figure, former strongman and President, Bouterse.

**Main Issues:** Suriname is still experiencing a serious economic crisis and lack of confidence in President Wijdenbosch. The government lacks the funds to pay public servants and there is a pension fund crisis. Under pressure from almost all sides, Wijdenbosch advanced the date of the election to try to defuse the crisis.

## DOMINICA

**Type:** Parliamentary

**Date:** June 12, 2000

### Main Candidates:

- United Workers Party, UWP — *Edison James* (presently in power )
- Dominica Labour Party, DLP — *Rosie Douglas*
- Democratic Freedom Party, DFP — *Charles Sabrin*

**Main Issues:** Lagging economy due to phasing out of EU banana subsidies. The United Workers Party has tried to place more emphasis on social-labour issues, particularly with regard to the crucial banana industry. Dominica is quickly earning a reputation as a haven for Internet gambling and easy economic citizenship (at least 1,000 "passports of convenience" have been issued by the UWP government).

## MEXICO

**Type:** Presidential/Legislative

**Date:** July 2, 2000

### Main Candidates (As yet unofficial)

- Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Party of the Institutional Revolution), PRI — has been in power for 70 years: On November 7, 1999, the ruling PRI will choose its presidential candidate in an open primary; the two frontrunners are:

1) *Francisco Labastida*

Former Minister of the Interior, also served as Minister of Energy, Mines, and Public Enterprises; Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development; and as the Governor of Sinaloa.

2) *Roberto Madrazo*

Former Governor of Tobasco, Madrazo is a party "traditionalist", as opposed to "technocrat". So far, public opinion polls suggest that Madrazo is the preferred PRI candidate.

- Partido de Acción Nacional (Party of National Action), PAN —

*Vicente Fox*

Former Governor of Guanajuato and former Coca-Cola Executive. Although the PAN is known as a centre-right party with roots in Clerical Catholicism, Fox is from the party's younger, pragmatic wing.

- Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution), PRD —

*Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas*

Just resigned as the first elected mayor of Mexico City. Prior to breaking off from the PRI, Cárdenas was the Governor of the state of Michoacán. He has fallen steadily in the polls in the past year.

**Main Issues:** Slight possibility of an end to PRI power or a split in the Ruling Party. The death of a much-hoped for opposition alliance, however, currently raises PRI chances for a return to power. The fight against poverty, unemployment and dissatisfaction with the neoliberal economic model are major campaign issues along with personal security. The election process will be carefully measured for success in consolidating democratic reforms, and for peaceful conduct.

## ST. KITTS & NEVIS

**Type:** Parliamentary

**Date:** July 2000

### Main Candidates:

- St. Kitts and Nevis Labour Party, SKNLP — *Denzil Douglas* (presently in power)
- People's Action Movement, PAM — *Kennedy Simmons*
- (Nevis) Concerned Citizens Movement, CCM — *Emery Nevis*
- Nevis Reform Party — *Joseph Perry*

**Main Issues:** Separatist sentiment in Nevis has been a long standing issue (proponents of separation say Nevis has always been neglected by St. Kitts and would be better off as an independent state with a population of 9,000). St. Kitts has become a significant narcotics trans-shipment point, drug lords are present and occasional violence occurs.

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