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## Santos assembles Colombia's peace cabinet

Colombia's President Juan Manuel Santos reached out beyond his ruling Unidad Nacional coalition this week to forge a "post-conflict cabinet" that features members of almost all of the country's parties across the political divide. The incorporation of the seven new cabinet ministers was also designed to represent all of the regions in the country and end the long-standing public perception of Colombian governments serving the interests of Bogotá first and foremost. The reshuffle is also an attempt by Santos to regain the initiative in the wake of public disillusionment with the failure to conclude peace talks with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Farc) in Cuba by the deadline of 24 March.

President Santos said the overriding purpose of his cabinet reshuffle was to appoint people who had "decisively supported the peace process" and could play a key role in implementing it. "For this reason [the cabinet] will be composed of people from all the regions, of all political leanings, people that represent the diversity and the peace that can only be consolidated in the provinces, in every corner of our country," Santos said. The right-wing Centro Democrático (CD) of Senator Alvaro Uribe (president 2002-2010) is alone among major parties not to be represented in the new-look cabinet.

The most striking aspect of the reshuffle undertaken by Santos for the final two years of his term in office was his appointment of Clara López, the president of the left-wing Polo Democrático Alternativo (PDA), as his new labour minister to replace Luis Eduardo 'Lucho' Garzón, a leftist former mayor of Bogotá. It is the first time in the PDA's history that it has held a cabinet ministry, and her appointment was an indirect gesture to the Farc. López, a staunch advocate of peace who came fourth in the presidential elections in 2014, resigned as president of the party on 26 April shortly after accepting the position. This followed internal censure within the PDA of her decision. PDA Senator Jorge Robledo publicly criticised López and promised that the party would continue providing opposition to the Santos administration.

Santos also appointed a member of the centre-left opposition Alianza Verde (AV), Jorge Eduardo Londoño, a former senator and governor of the central department of Boyacá, to the cabinet. Londoño replaces Yesid Reyes (nominated by Santos on a shortlist for attorney general) as justice minister. AV Senator Claudia López denounced Londoño's decision, saying he was representing himself and not the party. "Our support for peace is free," Claudia López said, "but we're not going to support a government that administers with corruption and clientelism". The spokesman for the AV, Antonio

## Ecuador

Colombia's President Juan Manuel Santos visited his Ecuadorean peer Rafael Correa this week in the northern coastal city of Manta, which was impacted by the devastating earthquake of 16 April. Santos expressed his complete solidarity and promised any assistance Colombia could provide. Correa thanked him for the "impressive" help already provided by Ecuador's northern neighbour in the form of 25 tonnes of food, thousands of tents and 177 members of its rescue services who he said had "saved several lives".

Sanguino, however, highlighted the significance of a member of the party getting to articulate the transitional justice system envisaged in the peace process with the Farc.

While these two appointments ruffled some feathers within the opposition, the mainstays within the Unidad Nacional were none too impressed with their treatment either. The Partido Liberal (PL) retains more ministries than any other party in the 16-strong cabinet but it had hoped to see its unwavering support of the Santos administration rewarded with further positions. Instead the PL saw its quota of ministries drop from six to five, including the major portfolios of interior (Juan Fernando Cristo); foreign affairs (María Ángela Holguín); defence (Luis Carlos Villegas); and health (Alejandro Gaviria).

The Partido de la U (PU) is the next-best-represented party with four ministries. María Claudia Lacouture, the director of ProColombia, picked up the industry, foreign trade and tourism ministry from fellow PU politician Cecilia Álvarez. The PU also gained the transport ministry from Natalia Abello, a member of Cambio Radical (CR), the third party in the coalition led by Vice-President Germán Vargas Lleras, through Jorge Eduardo Rojas, a former mayor of Manizales, the capital of the central department of Caldas. But the PU lost the environment and sustainable development ministry held by Gabriel Vallejo to the CR's Luis Gilberto Murillo.

Murillo's appointment is the prime example of Santos's attempt to forge a more diverse cabinet, and to make the consolidation of peace a nationwide effort, rendering his government less centralist and closer to the country's distant departments. An Afro-Colombian, Murillo was twice former governor of the poor north-westernmost department of Chocó; he was first elected in 1998 but fled the country in 2000 after being kidnapped by paramilitary groups. He was re-elected in 2012 but only served 18 months of his term before resigning after facing a disciplinary sanction. In 2014 Santos appointed him as head of an ambitious plan, entitled 'Todos Somos Pacífico', providing financial assistance to the population in the Pacific regions, with an emphasis on the cities of Buenaventura, Tumaco, Guapi and Quibdó, historically abandoned by the state, and ravaged by corruption and the armed conflict.

Other appointments saw the CR's Elsa Noguera, a former mayor of Barranquilla, the capital of the Caribbean department of Atlántico, replace Luis Felipe Henao, also a member of the party, as housing minister; and Germán Arce assume the position of mines and energy minister for the right-wing Partido Conservador (PC). Although no longer formally part of the ruling coalition, the PC has supported the Santos administration from congress.

Santos is banking on the reshuffle strengthening him politically. His popularity has declined in the wake of his failure to secure a peace deal with the Farc by the deadline of 24 March, and this has only been partially offset by the announcement of the formal launch of a peace process with the ELN [WR-16-13].

There is also mounting public concern about what will happen in Colombia after a potential deal with the guerrillas. The ombudsman handed a report to the defence ministry last week revealing that the largest of the emerging criminal groups (Bacrim) in Colombia, Clan Úsuga, also known as Los Urabeños and Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC), is present in 22 of the country's 32 departments, with its primary sphere of influence being the Caribbean coast and the border with Venezuela. Despite a massive military offensive, 'Operation Agamemnon', to apprehend the maximum leader of the group, 'Otoniel' (Dairo Antonio Úsuga David), he remains at large more than a year later.

**Game on as Kuczynski overhauls Keiko****Fujimori dynastic squabble**

“In 2021 there will be no candidate with the surname Fujimori,” Keiko Fujimori said in an interview this week. Her intent was to assuage the concerns of voters fearful of a return of an authoritarian Fujimorismo. Her brother Kenji, elected with more votes than any other congressional deputy for the second straight election, openly contradicted Keiko, saying that if she failed to win, he would stand in 2021. “The decision is mine,” Kenji said, reinforcing in the eyes of detractors the idea that Fuerza Popular is not a democratic party but merely a vehicle for the Fujimorista dynasty. “Keiko and I believe in alternation of power and this alternation will have to be applied starting off at home,” he added.

The dust has settled after Peru’s presidential and congressional elections on 10 April and the second round is now underway in earnest. Several opinion surveys indicate that Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, a distant second in the first round, has not only overturned the 19-percentage point margin of victory of Keiko Fujimori but also established a slight lead of his own ahead of the run-off on 5 June. If Kuczynski wins the second round, however, he could have a difficult time governing as the electoral authorities confirmed this week that Fujimori’s Fuerza Popular (FP) won an outright majority in congress.

A nationwide poll by Ipsos conducted in urban and rural areas revealed that Kuczynski, of Peruanos por el Cambio (PPK), received 43% of voting intentions to 39% for Fujimori. Keiko won 39.9% of the vote in the first round so the Ipsos poll suggests she has not managed to add any additional support whatsoever, while Kuczynski has more than doubled the 21% backing he had secured. The poll findings show that the anti-Fujimori vote, which was divided between several candidates in the first round, has firmly coalesced behind Kuczynski rather than being expressed through a sharp increase in the blank and void ballot intentions.

Another survey by the national pollster Datum gave Kuczynski a slender lead of 41.1% to 40.4%, a technical tie, while only CPI, last week, gave Fujimori the edge, by two points, 43.6% to 41.5%. Crucially, by moving alongside Fujimori right at the start of the run-off campaign, and even taking an early lead, Kuczynski has demonstrated that he can win, changing voter perceptions.

A rattled Fujimori has swiftly promised alliances and to adopt parts of the government plans of third candidates. She has also adopted a more aggressive tone, accusing Kuczynski of serving big business and offering nothing to the rural populace. In an interview with *El Comercio*, Kuczynski rejected this criticism. “If you look at our government plan, we speak a lot about small companies, which for the most part do not form part of Confiep [Peru’s largest private business federation],” Kuczynski said. While keen to stress that he had nothing against Confiep, Kuczynski said that he advocated “a social market economy, where there is a lot of investment in health, drinking water, and agriculture”.

Kuczynski has also struck back by focusing on the defence of democracy and the dangers of the concentration of power if Fujimori wins. But his tone has been moderate. Kuczynski needs to tap into the anti-Fujimori vote without alienating Keiko too much as he will need the FP’s support in congress in order to govern if he is elected.

Kuczynski’s PPK will not even be the main opposition party. It will have just 18 deputies, two fewer than Frente Amplio (FA), the left-wing party for which Verónica Mendoza narrowly missed out on reaching the second round, which will have 20 seats. Mendoza’s support was made up of a large anti-Fujimori vote prepared to transfer allegiance to Kuczynski but the leftist deputies elected for the FA, while they might view him as the lesser of two evils now, will oppose many of his policies if he takes power next July. Kuczynski has far more in common with the FP, which will have a simple majority of 73 in the 130-seat congress, than the FA, especially in terms of economic policies.

A breakdown of the final congressional results released by the electoral authorities this week shows that Kuczynski would have to seek an accom-

## Colombia joins OECD fisheries committee

The Colombian government announced last week that it had been notified by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that its application to join the group's Committee for Fisheries had been approved. An official statement said that the approval came after Colombia's agriculture & rural development ministry presented the advancements made by the country in developing its fishing production chain. The approval of the application brings Colombia one step closer to securing full OECD membership as part of the adhesion process that began in 2013. In order to achieve full OECD membership a country needs to join all 23 of the group's committees. Colombia has now joined 16.

modation with the FP because, with the FA out of the equation, he would be unable to muster the support of even a quarter of the deputies in congress. He could secure the backing of the five deputies which Acción Popular (AP) will have, and possibly the nine deputies for Alianza para el Progreso (APP), the party of César Acuña who was thrown out of the presidential race, but this would only bring him 32 out of 130 deputies. The five seats won by the Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP), the party of former president Alan García (1985-1990; 2006-2011), are more likely to join forces with the FP.

Composition of congress		
Party	Seats	
	2016	2011
Fuerza Popular (FP)	73	36
Frente Amplio (FA)	20	-
Peruanos por el Kambio (PPK)	18	-
Alianza para el Progreso (APP)	9	7
Acción Popular (AP)	5	8
Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP)	5	9
Others	0	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>130</b>

## TRACKING TRENDS

**COLOMBIA | Record shrimp production.** Colombia's agriculture ministry released a statement last week saying that so far this year shrimp fishermen in the country's Pacific regions have recorded their highest production for the last 15 years, catching approximately 40 tonnes (t) of shrimp per day since the beginning of April. According to the statement, Colombian fishermen have on average been bringing in around 2t of shrimp per day in the past few years but this year's average haul has been substantially larger thanks to the better management of fishing stocks.

Agriculture Minister Aurelio Iragorri explained that since 2015 industrial and traditional fisherman had agreed to work with the national fishing & aquaculture authority (Aunap) to protect stocks. As part of this agreement fishermen agreed to respect the seasonal ban on shrimp fishing (January-February), adhere to set quotas, and adopt best practices in order to ensure stock replenishment rates in Pacific waters. Iragorri said "we are not affecting marine ecosystems...but are achieving good fishing for the 9,500 families of industrial and traditional fishermen that depend on this activity". He added that "this achievement for the shrimp sector is aligned with President Juan Manuel Santos's directives, with which we are working to bring back hope to thousands of fishermen's families...This way, with abundant fishing resources, we are contributing to improve the living quality of fishermen and the Colombian population's food security". This message was echoed by President Santos, who *tweeted* that thousands of families living on the Pacific coast would benefit, using environmentally sustainable strategies.

**PERU | FTA negotiations with India.** On 25 April India's ambassador to Peru, Sandeep Chakravorty, told the Peruvian press that he expected India and Peru would sign a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) within a year thanks to "detailed and serious work" already being carried out between the two countries. Speaking to national daily *El Comercio*, Chakravorty said that India is close to concluding its preliminary analysis of the proposed FTA and that "a decision will be taken this week". Given the size of India's domestic market – 1.3bn people – this is a very good prospect for Peruvian businesses. According to *El Comercio*, there are currently only four Peruvian firms operating in India, with another two seeking to gain access to its domestic market. Trade between Peru and India reached US\$610m in 2015, a 124% increase on 2014, according to Peru's tax & customs authority (Sunat).

## Preparing for a bitter divorce

Fifty-one senators have stated their intention to submit President Dilma Rousseff to an impeachment trial, according to the daily newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*. Other newspapers differ in their tallies by one or two, but it now looks highly likely that Michel Temer, the vice-president, will be president of Brazil by mid-May. To open an impeachment trial, just a simple majority of senators – 41 – need to vote in favour. A vote is now expected by 11 May.

According to sources inside the presidential palace Planalto, President Rousseff has privately accepted the end of her mandate is approaching. In public, the president gave another interview to the foreign press on 27 April, this time to *CNN*, in which she vowed to continue to fight to defend her mandate and to protect “the democratic principles that govern Brazilian political life”. Once again, she sought to highlight the nature of her accusers, “in particular the speaker of [the federal lower chamber of] congress [Eduardo Cunha],” who face serious charges of personal corruption.

Last week Rousseff travelled to New York to sign the agreements agreed at the Paris climate change conference in December last year. In fact, the trip was a pretext to make her case one more time at the United Nations General Assembly. Interestingly, however, in her eight-minute speech Rousseff did not refer to the “coup” against her (perhaps mindful of the criticism of many, including supreme court justices, of her use of the term). Instead, she talked about the “grave moment” in Brazil’s history, and expressed confidence that her fellow citizens would “avoid that backwards step”.

In other areas, however, Rousseff appears to be pursuing a scorched earth policy. She has made it clear that there is to be no cooperation with an incoming Temer administration, as might be expected during a democratic handover. “A transition is what happens when there is an elected government, which has legitimacy. This is not the case,” Ricardo Berzoini, the minister of the government secretariat, said.

Instead, Rousseff wants a “clearing out of the drawers”, according to *Folha de São Paulo*. She does not wish Temer to take credit for any of her own initiatives or policies. As such there may be a final flurry of activity as Rousseff prepares to take her leave. Among the measures expected are a national council for indigenous policies; the extension of the *Mais Medicos* programme; and a final handover of housing units as part of the *Minha Casa Minha Vida* social housing programme in the northern state of Pará. Next week, Rousseff will also be in attendance when the Olympic torch arrives in Brasília on 3 May.

On 25 April, Rousseff held a meeting with the Frente Brasil Popular, a melange of social movements and trade unions which has promised further demonstrations in support of the president. According to one account of the meeting, social movements have promised not to give Temer “one moment of peace” in the event that he takes office. Former president Lula da Silva (2003-2011) was also there, lending his support.

Rousseff remains confident that she can win the final battle; in other words that she can prevent the opposition from securing the two-thirds majority it needs to impeach her at the end of a six-month trial. However, there are also rumours that some within the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) may favour a strategic retreat; allowing the Temer government to take power while regrouping in preparation for the elections in 2018.

### Unpopular Temer

A recent survey by Datafolha, a respected polling organisation, found that only 2% of Brazilians would vote for Michel Temer in the 2018 elections, while 58% wish to see him impeached.

## Brazil under Temer

In contrast to Itamar Franco, the vice-president under Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992) who stayed silent throughout the impeachment process, Vice-President Michel Temer has been actively chasing the foreign and national media to deny charges that he is orchestrating a coup and to paint a picture of Brazil under his leadership. While the markets appear enthused by his promise of a more business-friendly agenda, changes to social programmes or tampering with the minimum wage may provoke more of a backlash than his already unpopular government can handle.

Temer has also given a strong indication that the battle against corruption will not be a focus of his presidency. Such hints have only strengthened the arguments among those on the Left in Brazil, who believe the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff is more about saving corrupt politicians than justly punishing a criminal president.

Henrique Meirelles, a former central bank governor appointed by former president Lula da Silva (2003-2011), looks set to be offered the finance ministry. Temer also plans to overhaul the board of the central bank, according to a report by *Reuters* on 26 April. The monetary policy committee of the central bank (Copom) is believed to be susceptible to political pressure to bolster economic activity at the cost of high inflation. Candidates for the new board include the chief economist of Itaú bank, Ilan Goldfajn; the former treasury chief, Carlos Kawall; two former central bankers Mario Mesquita and Luiz Fernando Figueiredo; as well as a Goldman Sachs executive, Paulo Leme.

Moreira Franco, a former governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, and a former minister of civil aviation under Rousseff, may be Temer's cabinet chief. Ricardo Paes de Barros, one of the creators of the Bolsa Família conditional-cash-transfer scheme, looks set to be offered a senior position. Among those mentioned as a possible foreign minister is Rubens Barbosa, a former ambassador to both the UK and the US. José Serra, a Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB) senator widely expected to run for the presidency in 2018, is tipped to be health minister.

Notably, the man tipped to be Temer's justice minister, Antônio Cláudio Mariz de Oliveira, gave an interview on the evening of 26 April in which he suggested that Brazil's federal police ought to have other priorities than the fight against corruption. Temer subsequently let it be known that Mariz was no longer likely to fill the position, but it seems the future president was more irritated by Mariz's media management skills than his opinion.

The lawyer's position was already known: he was one of several who signed an open letter in January comparing 'Operation Car Wash', the massive investigation into corruption involving the state oil company Petrobras, to a type of "Spanish inquisition". His law firm is particularly close to Eduardo Cunha, the speaker of the federal lower chamber of congress, accused of stealing millions of dollars via the Petrobras corruption scheme.

Significantly, there have been no new 'Operation Car Wash' revelations since the impeachment vote against Rousseff. Judge Sérgio Moro's only public appearance has been to accept a *Time* magazine award in New York as one of 'the world's top 100 most influential people'.

In interviews with the foreign media, Temer has made it quite clear that he has no intention of asking Cunha to resign, despite the fact he is now a

### New elections?

Former president Lula da Silva and Renan Calheiros, the PMDB senator who is one of President Rousseff's last powerful, remaining allies, have reportedly discussed the idea of pushing for new elections via a constitutional amendment. However, the scale of the hurdles it would have to face in congress mean that the idea is rapidly losing ground, despite its support among 62% of Brazilians.

## Mining sector

Between 2009 and 2013 a total of 45% of all foreign direct investment in Chile went to the mining sector, but this dropped to 11% in 2013 as a result of the uncertainty surrounding the sector globally, and the slump in demand from China. Copper prices reached US\$4 per pound (lb) in 2011 but fell to an average of just US\$2.5/lb in 2015. Chile's copper reserves are estimated at 209m tonnes, 30% of the world's reserves. Copper provides around 10% of the country's GDP.

defendant in a supreme court case with five separate corruption cases pending against him (as well as being the subject of congress's longest-ever ethics council deliberations). Cunha will be the next in line to the presidency when Temer takes over. Temer himself has been cited several times in plea-bargaining testimony relating to 'Operation Car Wash'.

## CHILE | POLITICS

### Support for constitutional change

**President Michelle Bachelet has announced the second phase of the process to reform or replace Chile's 1980 constitution. Last week the polling company Plaza Pública Cadem revealed the results of a survey showing 71% of respondents agree that the country needs a new constitution. This might suggest that Bachelet is on to a political winner: but the detail looks a little more complex.**

The history of President Bachelet's second presidency is that although she was elected with a clear mandate to carry out education and tax reforms, putting them into practice has proved to be difficult. Those reforms are now done, but along the way Bachelet's popularity ratings have taken a beating because of controversy over the reforms themselves combined with a slowing economy and a number of corruption scandals. In theory at least, delivering Bachelet's third main electoral promise – that the government will reform the 1980 constitution – might prove a more straightforward and popular enterprise. In practice that may not be so.

The first phase of the constitutional reform process, focusing on 'civic education' was launched in October 2015. The second phase, described as "a process of dialogue with citizens in which everyone can take part" is now starting. The Cadem survey suggests public opinion is well-disposed towards the initiative. A total of 71% of respondents agreed that Chile needs a new constitution. Fifty-five per cent also agreed the issue should be a high priority for the country. And another majority – 52% – said the new constitution should introduce major changes relative to the 1980 document, which was written during the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. The details of the survey also showed that 28% believe the 1980 constitution is out of date, 14% believe it does not help solve the country's problems, and 14% say that it is not legitimate, as it was written during a period of non-democratic rule.

But the survey also picked up some worrying numbers for the government. A total of 67% of respondents did not know what the government was doing to publicise the initiative. An even larger 81% had no idea what the "process of dialogue with citizens" – the current phase – is about, or how it is supposed to work.

The survey also confirmed Bachelet's generally low popularity ratings, which have been tracked by other pollsters. In this case it picked up a 27% approval rating and a 63% disapproval rating for the President. Asked to put to one side an assessment of Bachelet as a person, and focus instead on whether her government has done a good or a bad job, 72% said it has done a bad job.

The specific difficulty appears to be that the government is failing to explain, or gather support for, a rather complex constitutional reform process. In the current phase individuals are invited to express their views online and through local meetings. After 23 June there will be deliberative meetings (known as *Cabildos*) at provincial and regional level. These will eventually lead to publication of a summary document in October, *Bases Ciudadanas para La Constitución*, which is to serve as the basis for drafting the new Constitution.

### Major challenge

Joaquín Villarino, the head of the Consejo Minero de Chile, the mining council bringing together domestic and foreign-owned private and state copper, gold and silver producers operating in Chile, said that there was a “tremendous challenge” ahead. “The political class can’t live with a paralysed business class, and the business class can’t live with a political class with which it doesn’t speak,” he said.

The draft will then be handed on to the next Congress (elected in late 2017), which will choose one of various mechanisms for discussing and approving it: these include a bicameral commission and two different types of constituent assembly. The final document will then be submitted to a referendum for approval.

The right-wing opposition coalition Chile Vamos has already taken an adversarial stance. Senator Alberto Espina, of Renovación Nacional (RN), said, “We are not ready to allow the government to manipulate, hide, and distort the process so as to exclude citizens and ensure that only its ideas will be discussed”. On the left of the ruling Nueva Mayoría coalition, Deputy Karola Cariola of the Partido Comunista de Chile (PCCh) shot back “the Right is not really interested in the process or the mechanisms, it just doesn’t want the *pinochetista* constitution to be changed.”

On the positive side, despite likely ongoing criticisms of the process, it does seem that a number of stakeholders will engage in some way. The opposition parties are preparing their own separate suggestions. Andrés Allamand, another RN Senator, has broken ranks with the Chile Vamos coalition to propose what he calls a “semi-presidential” system where powers would be split between a President and a Prime Minister.

### Business rejects reform

The proposed constitutional reform (like the labour and education reforms undertaken by the Bachelet administration before it) has come in for some serious criticism, especially from the private sector. Alberto Salas, the head of the private mining association Sonami (as well as president of Chile’s main business confederation Confederación de la Producción y del Comercio [CPC]), condemned the planned constitutional reform for creating more uncertainty among investors. “This is, without doubt, worrisome for the country, our industry and especially for investors that require judicial and economic certainty to carry out their projects,” Salas said, while speaking at the opening ceremony of the XIV edition of Expomin, the most important mining expo in Latin America and one of the biggest in the world, on 25 April (*see below*).

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## TRACKING TRENDS

**BRAZIL | Unemployment.** According to the official statistics institute (Ibge), unemployment in the quarter ending in February 2016 increased to 10.2% or 10.4m people – up from 9.5% in the quarter ending in January 2016. The number of workers with official signed work contracts declined by 1.5%. Employment in the industrial sector was down by 5.9%. Average workers’ incomes fell from R\$1,954.00 to R\$1,934.00.

**CHILE | Preparing for “post-copper economy”.** President Michelle Bachelet used the XIV edition of the mining fair Expomin this week to propound her government’s plan for “a post-copper economy”. Bachelet stressed the need for significant diversification of the mining sector “to adapt to the new times, increasing productivity, reducing costs and innovating”. In this sense, she said the key for Chile was to aspire to global leadership “conquering international markets” through the export of goods and services linked to mining.

“Without question the challenges facing the industry are enormous,” Bachelet said, adding that “there is no doubt about it [implementing the necessary changes] will demand a big effort of dialogue and articulation between different actors...the public sector, companies, academia, employees and civil society”.



## Other CSJ justices facing impeachment

In addition to Justice Blanco, impeachment motions have been presented before the national congress against six other CSJ magistrates. These magistrates are: Oscar Bajac, César Garay Zucolillo, Antonio Fretes, Raúl Torres Kirmser, Gladys Bareiro de Mónica and Alicia Pucheta de Correa, who in February was elected as CSJ president to replace Fretes, who completed Víctor Núñez's term. While the motions of impeachment against Bajac (aligned with the PLRA) and Garay (ANR-PC) have been pending since 2014, the motions against Fretes (ANR-PC), Torres Kirmser (ANR-PC), Bareiro (PLRA) and Pucheta (ANR-PC) were presented by the leftist opposition parties Frente Guasú and Partido Democrático Progresista on 8 April.

## Congress begins purging supreme court

The impeachment proceedings against some long-questioned members of Paraguay's supreme court (CSJ) is finally coming to a head in the national congress. The trial of Justice Sindulfo Blanco began in the senate after making its way through the chamber of deputies and could now be completed before the end of April. Should Blanco, who stands accused of dereliction of duty, corruption and links with local criminal organisations, be impeached it is likely that other sitting CSJ justices will follow as congress seeks to purge the top court of unsuitable individuals. But this process is viewed with apprehension by those concerned that the main political parties could take advantage of the situation to fill the CSJ with allied justices.

Blanco's impeachment trial in the senate began on 6 April. The motion to impeach the magistrate was approved by the requisite two-thirds majority in the chamber of deputies late last year. While Blanco is not the only magistrate in the nine-seat CSJ who currently faces impeachment proceedings in congress (*see sidebar*), the fact that he is aligned with the main opposition Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico (PLRA) ostensibly helped to expedite the impeachment proceedings against him in the legislature where the ruling Asociación Nacional Republicana-Partido Colorado (ANR-PC) party holds simple majorities. The ANR-PC has adopted a party line in favour of impeaching Blanco, and has ordered all its legislators to vote accordingly.

But the decisive move against Blanco has also been prompted by the mounting evidence against him. The CSJ magistrates have come under intense scrutiny since 2014 when the case of the murder of the journalist Pablo Medina exposed the links that many CSJ judges allegedly have with local criminal organisations and/or corruption rings. Blanco himself admitted that back in 2004 when he was sworn-in by congress, he lied when he promised to serve only a five-year term after which he was to step down – in the full knowledge that under Paraguay's constitution CSJ justices can only be removed via impeachment by the legislature or upon retirement at age 75.

At the start of the impeachment trial in the senate, ANR-PC deputies Ramón Romero Roa and Miguel Angel del Puerto, who have been appointed to represent the plaintiffs, presented nine charges against Blanco and argued that his decisions and actions have shown that he is "not fit to be a magistrate". Roa and Del Puerto said that the fact that Blanco was prepared to lie to secure a promotion and that with some of his controversial rulings he had shown a distinct bias towards certain groups (including multinational firms, dubious local bureau de change firms and local banks) and individuals showed that he had acted "against the constitution and the general interest". The deputies even noted that in many of these controversial rulings, Blanco's opinions were similar to those of former CSJ president Víctor Núñez, who resigned in 2014 ahead of his impending impeachment over links to the suspected mastermind in Medina's murder.

Yet despite such accusations, Blanco's defence, which began presenting its case before the senate on 26 April, have said that the magistrate will not resign and will clear his name in the trial. Blanco's defence insists that the impeachment proceedings against him are politically motivated and the latest attempt by the political parties and ANR-PC in particular to fill the CSJ with pliant magistrates. With Blanco's impeachment trial set to end before the end of the month, it is still unclear if the requisite two-thirds of the 45-seat senate will vote to impeach him. But what is clear is that his case could set a significant precedent.

**Marijuana move overshadowed by Iguala report**

President Enrique Peña Nieto submitted two bills to the federal senate this week to legalise marijuana for medicinal use and to relax the laws relating to recreational use of the drug. Peña Nieto stressed that the overriding motivation for the reforms was “to define better solutions from a perspective of human rights, prevention and public health to put people’s welfare at the centre [of our agenda]”. His government’s purported commitment to human rights and people’s welfare again came into question days later, however, when the committee of forensic experts appointed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) released its final report into the abduction and presumed murder of 43 trainee teachers in Iguala, Guerrero, in September 2014, providing a withering assessment of the government’s handling of the case.

President Peña Nieto set aside his own scruples over moving towards decriminalisation of marijuana by sending a bill to the senate which would amend the penal code to increase the quantity of marijuana permitted for personal use from five grams to 28 grams in line with various developed countries. “This would be an action by congress that would have a direct impact,” Peña Nieto said. “Consuming drugs is not good, I don’t recommend it, but those who consume them are not criminals and should not be in prison for it”. Peña Nieto said the bill would permit the release of prisoners serving “genuinely disproportionate sentences” for having been arrested with small quantities of marijuana in their possession (*see sidebar*).

The other bill sent to the senate would reform the federal health law to allow the import of marijuana and its derivatives for medicinal use. There is support for this bill across the political spectrum, and steps towards decriminalisation are also viewed favourably, although the left-wing Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) would like to see bigger strides.

It is becoming increasingly common for the Peña Nieto administration to announce major initiatives only to have them swiftly obscured by negative developments, none more so than Iguala. The IACHR’s Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) argued in its final 605-page report, presented on 24 April, six days before its mission ends [WR-16-14], that there was no scientific evidence for the government’s conclusion that the bodies of the students had been incinerated in a rubbish dump in nearby Cocula by the local drug gang Guerreros Unidos. It also alleged that the government had obtained confessions from five suspects “under torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment” to uphold its conclusions.

The GIEI reiterated the frustration with the authorities it expressed in the first of its two reports last September, for obstructing its efforts to get to the bottom of the case by denying it access to key witnesses, including members of the military from the 27<sup>th</sup> battalion in Iguala, as well as requests for some documents and testimonies. The report also suggested there was new evidence pointing to the involvement of the federal police (PF) rather than just complicity between the local police and Guerreros Unidos, and urged the government to investigate this. “You must look for not only the direct authors of an action but also for those who led, supported or ignored the signs of human rights violations,” it wrote.

The US State Department reacted to the report by appealing to the Mexican authorities to “carefully consider the report’s recommendations [and] evaluate suggested actions to address the issue of forced disappearances”.

**Marijuana**

The draft bill to increase the quantity of marijuana permitted for personal use should also assist with the government’s efforts to reduce overcrowding in prisons; one eminent contributor to the national forums on marijuana use in recent months argued that “there are hundreds of thousands of Mexicans in jails nationwide”.

## Cooperation

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) urged the government to engage with the ‘follow-up mechanism’ that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has said it will establish when the experts conclude their work on 30 April. The OHCHR also highlighted the “crucial role that international cooperation can play in helping states to fight impunity for serious human rights violations”.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) followed suit, commending the “invaluable work” of the GIEI and urging the government to act “decisively” on the group’s recommendations. It expressed concern at the “many challenges and obstacles” reported by the GIEI that may have blocked certain lines of inquiry from being explored. The OHCHR said the government should “ensure effective follow-up to the investigation report and to tackle the broader structural challenges it has exposed” (*see sidebar*).

Peña Nieto said the federal attorney general’s office (PGR) would “carefully analyse” the report’s findings. Eber Omar Betanzos, the deputy attorney general for human rights, elaborated by promising that “the investigation will not conclude until everyone responsible has been punished”. He also said the torture allegations were being investigated. But Betanzos sought to rebut the allegations that the PGR had obstructed the GIEI’s work. He claimed that the PGR had responded to “the 941 requests by the GIEI, 85% of which have been fulfilled in their entirety with the rest close to completion”. Betanzos was also adamant that “to allow the military [in Iguala] to be interviewed in the way requested by the GIEI would violate due process”.

The assurances offered by Betanzos will not placate families of the trainee teachers and human-rights groups, especially as the government has rejected their request to extend the GIEI’s mandate. They will try and ratchet up the pressure on the government over this emblematic case over the coming months.

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## TRACKING TRENDS

**MEXICO | Promoting business and investments with Italy.** Italy’s Prime Minister Matteo Renzi carried out a one-day official visit to Mexico on 20 April, agreeing to promote bilateral business cooperation and investments. During a joint press conference with President Enrique Peña Nieto, the two leaders highlighted the increase in bilateral investments.

“[Italy’s] historic relationship with Mexico, until recently, would not account for more than US\$1bn,” Peña Nieto said adding that bilateral investment in the energy sector alone in 2016-2017 is expected to reach over US\$2bn. Peña Nieto noted that Italian tyre manufacturer Pirelli has committed to invest US\$600m in Mexico by 2017. Renzi, who was accompanied by Italian business leaders, noted that some 2,000 firms with Italian capital currently operate in Mexico and that Italy’s state-owned export credit agency (Sace) has offices in the country.

The two leaders announced the re-establishment, from June 2016, of a direct flight linking Rome with Mexico City, serviced by Italy’s national air carrier, Alitalia, to improve business and cultural exchanges and boost tourism. Peña Nieto also thanked Renzi for Italy’s support for Mexico’s efforts to update its economic cooperation and trade agreement with the European Union (EU). Italy is Mexico’s third biggest trade partner in the EU and eleventh worldwide.

**MEXICO | Sener issues fuel import licences.** The energy ministry (Sener) issued its first ever licences for the import of petrol and diesel to Mexico this month in the wake of the flagship energy sector reform ending the 75-year monopoly on oil production and refined fuel distribution in the country enjoyed by the state-owned oil firm, Pemex.

Allowing the import of refined fuels is another step in this process and Sener’s announcement came after the government announced its plans to bring forward the date for the liberalisation of petrol distribution to April. According to a Sener statement, since then 32 firms had presented 62 requests to import refined fuels to the country, and the ministry has now approved 11 licences to import petrol and 21 to import diesel to 22 national and foreign firms. The statement added that the volume of approved fuel imports was equal to 11.5% of total petrol consumption and 30% of total diesel consumption in Mexico in 2015.

## Seventh party congress comes and goes

The ruling Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) held its seventh congress in Havana between 16 and 19 April. Compared to the last congress in 2011, it was a disappointingly routine affair, marked above all by a renewed sense that the old guard is reluctant to give way to the next generation without leaving everything 'just so'.

Anyone hoping for a fresh round of reforms – including within the PCC – had their expectations dashed as the gerontocracy looked backwards and seemed more concerned about preserving the Revolution in aspic rather than evolving it to suit the needs of modern Cuba. Fidel Castro's farewell appearance at the closing ceremony only served to reinforce that feeling – declaring that his life was drawing to a close, he reiterated the Revolution's achievements and stressed the need to preserve them, including from nefarious US influence. The 89-year old Fidel was clear: "changes cannot be rushed, as that will lead to failure".

In his opening address on 16 April, Fidel's younger brother and successor President Raúl Castro – who at the last (6<sup>th</sup>) congress in 2011 set in motion the current economic liberalisation process – presented a 12,000-word central report in which he railed at bureaucratic inertia, "outdated mentalities" and the failure to progress sufficiently some of the reforms announced in 2011. "The development of the national economy, together with the struggle for peace and ideological resolve, constitute the main missions of the Party," Castro declared. "The economy continues to be the key unresolved task, and political-ideological work is a permanent issue intimately linked with the economic battle."

To this end, the congress was tasked with reviewing the 313 guidelines drafted by the 2011 congress – known as *lineamientos* – whose objective was 'updating' the Cuban economy. According to Castro, only a fifth (21%) of those guidelines have been implemented to date, with 77% currently in the implementation phase, another 2% not yet initiated. Thus the tone was set for discussion of the guidelines and ways to improve their implementation. The 993 attending delegates were put into four committees with typically cumbersome names: (1) 'Project for Conceptualising the Cuban Social and Economic Model of Socialist Development', (2) 'National Plan of Social and Economic Development to 2030' (3) 'Results of Implementation of the Social and Economic Guidelines' and (4) 'Fulfilment of recommendations put forth by the first party conference in 2012 for improving party work'.

Castro also identified specific problems at ground level, citing low wages and pensions, tax evasion by some of the new private-sector businesses, insufficient domestic food production to replace imports, and the dual currency system – all of which he said was impeding growth, which had averaged an insufficient 2.8% in recent years. "This serious distortion must be resolved as soon as possible and a single currency re-established," Castro said, adding, "this anomaly, in addition to the modest performance of our national economy, has prevented us from making substantial progress in the implementation of guidelines linked to the gradual elimination of unnecessary gratuities and excessive subsidies, bearing in mind that a general salary increase for all workers has still not been achieved, nor has the stable supply of certain goods in the unregulated market." In plain language – 'this stuff really needs to be sorted out'.

Yet several days later there was little indication – at least in the excerpts of the closed-door event published by state media – of how the Communist authorities actually intend to tackle these obstacles. And crucially, there was still no

“The introduction of the rules of supply and demand is not at odds with the principle of planning. Both concepts can coexist and complement each other for the benefit of the country, as has been successfully shown by China's reform process and the renovation process in Vietnam, as they call it. We have used the term updating to describe our process, as we are not changing the fundamental objectives of the Revolution.”

– Raúl Castro opens the 7<sup>th</sup> PCC congress.

“Our National Hero, José Martí, asserted that ‘to govern is to foresee’. What simple words, only three [in Spanish]! Is it possible that some of our officials really find it that difficult to learn these three words from Martí’s teachings?...We must learn to anticipate in order to avoid a plethora of problems. I must point out that, in general we have not anticipated enough, or reacted quickly enough to rectify shortcomings...In addition to not foreseeing, later we began to think about how to resolve the problem that was created, and we do not have the necessary agility...I am speaking with all frankness, as appropriate in a congress.”

– *President Castro laments inefficiencies in implementing the economic reform guidelines drafted in 2011.*

timetable forthcoming for currency reform, without which the Cuban economy can never hope to post stronger, investment-led growth.

Among the limited reforms that were mentioned, Castro said that 4,000 private entrepreneurs (mainly former state workers who came together into new cooperatives) would be given access to State wholesale suppliers. However, given that just over half a million Cubans are now registered as self-employed, this leaves most of the private sector still without access to wholesale supplies, creating a thriving black market in goods brought over from Miami. The president also said that Cuba hoped to have some 108,000 extra hotel rooms available by 2030, acknowledging the critical importance of tourism (including medical tourism) to the island economy.

Castro was very clear that Western-style casino capitalism would never be allowed under the Communist government, pointing to China and Vietnam as the more appropriate models for Cuba. “Neoliberal policies which encourage the accelerated privatisation of state property and social services, such as health, education and social security, will never be applied under Cuba’s socialist model. Even with its current economic limitations, Cuba has preserved and perfected social services for the population in the spheres of education, health, culture, sports and social security. However, we must continue to stress the importance of progressively improving the quality of these services,” Castro noted, stressing that “shock therapies” would “never be allowed”. This concern underlines the difficulties of currency unification, in which inevitably there will be winners and losers, and which appears to have the Cuban authorities somewhat stumped.

On the political side, the mood was also one of caution. President Castro, who turns 85 in June, did emphasise that he and his generation must soon hand over the reins of power, but aside from his own pledge to step aside in 2018, there was very little publicly announced as to how this change might be effected in the medium term, save for imposing an age ceiling of 60 and a retirement age of 70 for future members of the party leadership. This change was due for further debate after the congress, and thus most likely will not be implemented until the next (8<sup>th</sup>) party congress, due in 2021.

There had been some expectation of electoral and constitutional reforms to make the internal party election process more public and transparent; for changes to boost the power of the national assembly to allow it to debate and amend rather than merely rubberstamp legislation; and for reforms to decentralise and devolve more power to municipalities and local authorities. There was even a suggestion that a popular vote might be contemplated to choose Castro’s successor, which would be unprecedented in the life of the Cuban Revolution. In the end, none of these reforms appear to have been contemplated.

The risk for the leadership is that all those Cubans who were moved by the rousing message of hope and ‘change from within’ delivered by the visiting US President Barack Obama last month, may feel that the PCC, in its rigidity and its apparent reluctance to adapt to the times, is detached from the reality on the ground. And that could harden resentment. Partly due to demographic factors, the PCC is shrinking, dropping from 800,000 members in 2011 to 671,344 in 2015. The congress stressed the need to recruit and train up new leaders, but if the old guard refuses to get out of the way (until biological factors intervene), the younger generation, inevitably, risks drift.

Castro and his number two, José Ramón Machado Ventura (85), were re-elected as first and second party secretaries, while the PCC also confirmed the powerful politburo for the next five years, expanding it by two to 17. Of five new faces on the politburo, three have a background in health, while two were drawn from the unions and the women’s movement. Despite Raúl’s call for more women in senior decision-making positions (he said they were “more mature and better managers”) of the 17 politburo members to 2021, just four are women.

## More worrying signs ahead of November

### Polls

The most recent poll on voting intentions, released on 20 April by M&R Consultores, showed that President Daniel Ortega, who has yet to declare his candidacy, would receive the vote of 50.2% of respondents, compared to just 5.9% for the combined opposition parties. The remaining 43.9% said they were undecided or chose not to respond. The Partido Liberal Independiente (PLI) and Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC) party of disgraced former president Arnoldo Alemán (1997-2002) have yet to unveil their presidential candidates ahead of November's elections.

The recent murder of Andrés Cerrato, a member of the main opposition party, Partido Liberal Independiente (PLI), which the PLI suggests was politically motivated, is fuelling existing concerns regarding political violence. This comes ahead of the November 2016 general elections in which President Daniel Ortega of the ruling Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) is expected to seek and win a third consecutive term.

The PLI has linked the murder of Cerrato, a member of the San Martín de Daka community in the northern department of Jinotega, to the fact that a month earlier he had told the national daily *La Prensa* that he had received death threats from the military, who searched his home and interrogated him about armed opposition groups reportedly active in the area. The local press cited PLI members as saying that armed individuals broke into Cerrato's house and kidnapped him. He was found shot dead 5km away. The PLI has since filed a complaint before local human-rights NGO Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (Cenidh).

Cerrato's murder attracted particular attention given the February attack on a leading opposition activist, Carlos Bonilla, the coordinator of the Movimiento Democrático Nicaragüense (MDN) party, and his wife, Gabriela García [WR-16-09]. The near fatal incident was condemned by the PLI, Cenidh, US Ambassador to Nicaragua Laura Dogu, as well as international organisations like the World Organisation Against Torture, a global coalition of NGOs. Also attracting more general concern vis-à-vis civil rights was the local authorities' refusal in February to allow Carlos Ponce, the Latin America Programs Director of US-based political and human rights advocacy NGO Freedom House, to enter the country. Nicaraguan officials said that Ponce, who had travelled to Nicaragua to meet local civil-society organisations and diplomatic and government officials, was denied entry due to an administrative decision. Freedom House issued a press release stating that "We are appalled by the Nicaraguan government's decision" noting that "Barring the representative of a human rights organization signals the deteriorating protections for civil society in Nicaragua".

### Another source of conflict

Against this backdrop of heightened concerns regarding political violence, on 22 April hundreds of *campesinos* travelled from Managua and elsewhere to Nueva Guinea municipality, in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (Raas) to protest the US\$50bn 'Gran Canal' project which is to link the country's Caribbean and Pacific coasts.

Organised by a local civil-society group Consejo Nacional en Defensa de Nuestra Tierra, Lago y Soberanía (Consejo Nacional), this was the fourth national demonstration against the project – part of more than 60 demonstrations of its kind that have been held throughout the country.

On 18 April the directorate of the 92-member national assembly threw out an appeal against its decision a week earlier to reject a citizens' initiative to repeal the June 2013 law (840) granting the Hong Kong-based HKND Group the 50-year build-operate concession for the 'Gran Canal'.

Presented by the Consejo Nacional on 7 April, the citizens' initiative was backed by 28,600 signatures, well over the requisite 6,000 necessary to submit a citizens' bill. However this was rejected by the legislature's directorate on the grounds that it lacked jurisdiction.

In November 2015, the 16-member governmental 'Gran Canal' committee announced that it had approved the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) for the project although the official launch of the major work, which is expected to take five years to complete, has been postponed until the end of 2016.

## De-escalating tensions

Days after the death of the Guatemalan minor which triggered the latest spat, President Jimmy Morales and Prime Minister Dean Barrow met on 22 April at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, during the signature ceremony for the Paris Agreement on climate change. After the meeting, the Belizean government issued a press release noting that “both agreed that there is immediate need to de-escalate the tension...that all measures will be taken to achieve that, and to ensure there are no breaches of the peace that currently exists between the two countries”. In a 22 April statement, the Organisation of American States (OAS) confirmed that the OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone “will investigate the incident at the request of both governments”. Once concluded, “the report with its results will be delivered to both Foreign Ministries for the appropriate actions.”

## Flare-up of bilateral tensions

Belize’s Prime Minister Dean Barrow this week reassured the public that “any immediate danger has passed”. This was reference to a flare-up of tensions with neighbouring Guatemala (with which Belize has a long-running territorial dispute) after a Guatemalan minor was shot dead on Belizean territory in an incident reportedly involving the Belize Defence Force (BDF). For all Barrow’s reassurances, both sides are sticking to their version of events – the Guatemalan government led by President Jimmy Morales said that it was an act of “aggression” and the Barrow administration that it was in self-defence. With the international community calling for calm and the Organization of American States (OAS) undertaking an investigation into the incident, the flare-up of tensions was hardly a huge surprise given aggressive statements made by Morales during his 2015 electoral campaign regarding the dispute with Belize.

In a confusing incident that also left his 11-year-old brother and father wounded, the 13-year-old Guatemalan national was shot dead on 20 April in the Cebada area of the Chiquibul National Park in western Belize. An initial statement by the Belizean government claims that the BDF was investigating illegal clearings in the Chiquibul protected area when, after detaining a 33-year-old Guatemalan national, it came under fire. According to the statement, the patrol “returned fire in self-defence” and departed from the location which is approximately 580 metres east of the border. Prior to departure the patrol “conducted their standard clearance procedure and discovered the seemingly lifeless body of a minor. The body was later identified as that of Julio Alvarado” who was subsequently transported to the nearest hospital where he was pronounced dead.

The Morales government was quick to respond, recalling its ambassador Manuel Roldán Barillas for consultations, while Defence Minister William Mansilla announced the deployment of troops to the area. Calling on the Barrow government to provide evidence that the BDF had been under attack, the Guatemalan foreign ministry issued a statement categorically rejecting what it dubbed Belize’s “aggressive attitude” against Guatemalans, citing as evidence, 10 Guatemalan *campesinos* killed by the BDF since 1999. The Belizean government in turn stuck to its story, maintaining that BDF “responded in justifiable self-defence” to a “shooting attack” that it described as “part of a continued pattern of aggression by Guatemalan civilians engaged in illegal activities on Belize’s side of the Adjacency Zone”.

Both leaders have since met and agreed to de-escalate tensions (*see sidebar*). However the incident once again exposes strained relations between the two, stemming from Guatemala’s historic claim to 12,772km<sup>2</sup> of adjacent land and sea (over half of Belize’s current territory) despite the start of an OAS-brokered dialogue process which began in 1995. Indeed, just over a month earlier, the Belize foreign ministry sent a protest note to Guatemala after tensions erupted in the Sarstoon River area where the BDF had been building a Forward Operating Base (FOB) to combat illicit cross-border activities. According to a Belizean foreign ministry press release, on 12 March “GAF [Guatemalan Armed Forces] approached the FOB [which was opened on 20 April]...in an extremely hostile and threatening manner, insisting that our troops should not be at the Sarstoon”. While the BDF stood their ground and the GAF withdrew, the ministry statement went on to warn that “Despite the ultimately peaceful end to the standoff, it is clear that tension with Guatemala over the Sarstoon and Belize’s insistence on its sovereignty rights in accordance with the 1859 Treaty demarcation of the river is at an all-time high.”

## POSTSCRIPT

### Quotes of the week

“If the idea prevails that we are some sort of horrible ogre representing a handful of multinationals then we will not do well, but this is not the truth...”

*Peruvian presidential candidate Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.*

“The few allies that [President Dilma] Rousseff has left are from the Bolivarian bloc which is in full decline. Rousseff is left with [President Nicolás] Maduro, who can't even get heard in Venezuela; [Rafael] Correa who has problems in Ecuador and is not the best example of democracy; and Evo Morales who just lost a referendum in Bolivia.”

*Brazilian senator Romero Jucá, president of the Partido do Movimento Democrático do Brasil (PMDB) of Vice-President Michel Temer.*

“Certain members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy should set up their own party, pro-imperialist and pro-capitalist.”

*Bolivia's President Evo Morales responds to criticism of the alleged influence of drug-trafficking on state institutions.*

### Brazilians losing faith in democracy

Support for democracy in Brazil has fallen to its lowest level in a decade. A survey by the Ibope polling institute found that only 40% of Brazilians agreed with the phrase “democracy is preferable to any other form of government”. A total of 49% of Brazilians agreed with either the idea that “an authoritarian government can sometimes be preferable to a democracy” or that “it makes no difference whether a government is democratic or not”. On a positive note, the actual percentage of those in favour of an authoritarian government fell from 20% in 2014 to 15% this year.

The face-to-face survey, of 2,002 Brazilians over the age of 16 in 142 municipalities across the country, has a margin of error of two percentage points. Men were slightly more in favour of democracy (43%) than women (37%); those who were better educated tended to be more supportive of elected governments. Among evangelicals, support for authoritarian forms of government was higher (17%) than for Catholics (13%). Only 2% of those surveyed expressed “great satisfaction” with democracy, while 49% said they were “not at all satisfied”.

As for Brazil's current political crisis, 62% of Brazilians favoured the resignation of both President Dilma Rousseff and Vice-President Michel Temer as well as the holding of new elections. A total of 25% of Brazilians believe that Rousseff should stay in power, while just 8% think that a Temer government will resolve Brazil's problems.

In the Ibope survey, Marina Silva (Rede Sustentabilidade) came first as a potential presidential candidate, with up to 39% of possible votes (12% would definitely vote for her, while 27% said they would consider her); Aécio Neves (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira [PSDB]) came second with 32% of potential votes, while former president Lula da Silva (2003-2011) of the ruling Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) came third, with 31%. José Serra and Geraldo Alckmin, both from the PSDB have 28% and 24% of potential votes, respectively, while the ultra-right congressman Jair Bolsonaro (Partido Social Cristão) has 11%. Though Lula had the highest number of “exclusive” voters – those who would only vote for him – he also had the highest rejection rate, with a total of 65% of Brazilians saying that they would never vote for him for president.

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