

2009 Elections in Latin America

The Legislative Dispute in Argentina and the primaries in the Uruguayan Political Parties

Introduction

This text presents an evaluation of the legislative election in Argentina and their impact on the presidential succession of 2011, as well as an evaluation of the presidential candidates in Uruguay, chosen through their parties' primaries. The presidential election is scheduled for October.

Research Team

Thiago de Aragao

Director of the Latin America Department of Arko Advice, is a researcher for the Foreign Policy Center (London) and the Institut de Relations Internationales et Strategiques (Paris) and the University of Shanghai.

Carlos Bellini

Political scientist and analyst for Arko Advice Latin America. Conducts lectures on political scenarios for the following states: Rio Grande do Sul, Bahia and Alagoas.

Daniel Lledo

Lawyer and analyst for Arko Advice Latin America. Has a Masters in Community Law from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in Spain.

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Main Analysis

An emblematic defeat

Kirchnerism, faction of the Peronist Party (PJ) led by the couple Nestor and Cristina Kirchner, suffered a tough defeat in the legislative elections that occurred last Sunday (28). It was the first defeat since former president Nestor Kirchner took power, in 2003.

In the province of Buenos Aires, which represents 38% of the national electorate, Nestor Kirchner managed to win a congressional seat. However, he was defeated by the Union Pro candidate – a coalition that unites Peronist dissidents and the Proposta Republicana (PRO)-, Francisco de Narvaez by 34.52% to 32.19%.

Thus, the government was not able to obtain a sufficient amount of votes to elect all the candidates on its list and maintain the majority in Congress. The defeat of Kirchnerism in Buenos Aires and other provinces, practically nullifies the chances of the ex-president running for the Casa Rosada in 2011.

In Santa Cruz, a Kirchner stronghold, victory belonged to the Acuerdo Civico y Social (ACyS), a center-left coalition formed by the Radical Civil Union and the Civic Coalition. The list headed by Eduardo Costa (UCR) obtained 42.5% of the votes against 41.2% of the government candidates.

In Cordoba, the list headed by Luis Juez (Frente Civico), former ally of Kirchner and archenemy of the presidential couple since 2007.

In Mendoza, the vice-president Julio Cobos left the voting booths strengthened by his candidates' victory, emboldening his aspirations to reach the Casa Rosada as president.

In Santa Fe, victory belonged to the senator Carlos Reutemann, formerly a Formula 1 driver and pre-candidate for the presidency. The list headed by Ruben Giustiniani (Frente Progressista, Civico y Social) came in second.

The result confirmed the retraction experienced by the Cristina Kirchner government. In one year, the president's popularity dropped from 52% to 25%. Not even the ex-president Nestor's prestige was enough to avoid the loss of the majority in Congress. The alliance between the peronist dissidents and the Proposta Republica (PRO) was strengthened with these legislative elections.

This is important for the project of power of the mayor of the autonomous city of Buenos Aires and former president of Boca Juniors, Mauricio Macri. Carols Reutmann (senator) and Julio Cobos (vice-president) also gained.

Results by Province

Province	Voters	Percentage of National Electorate	Elected Positions	Main Candidates
Chubut	321,000	1.2%	3 senators and 2 deputies	Frente por la Integracion: Marcelo uinle (senator), Mario Vargas (conressman) UCR: Mario Cimadevilla (senator), Gaston Acevedo (deputy)
Mendoza	1,141,000	3%	3 senators and 5 deputies	Frente para la Victoria: Adolfo Bernejo (senator), Omar Felix (deputy) Frente Civico Federal: Ernesto Sanz (senator), Ricardo Mansur (deputy)
Tucuman	950,000	2.5%	3 senators and 4 deputies	Frente para la Victoria: Beatriz R. de Alperovich

				(senator), Osvaldo Jaldo (senator) Union Pro-Federal: Fernando Juri (senator), Delia Pinchetti (deputy)
Salta	748,000	2%	3 deputies	Frente Federal: Walter Wayar Acuerdo Civico y Social: Ricardo Gomez Diez PJ: Fernando Yaradde
La Pampa	235,000	0.6%	3 senators and 3 deputies	Frente Justicialista para la Victoria: Carlos Verna (senator), Cristina Ragazzoli (deputy) Frente Pampeano Civico y Social: Juan Carlos Marino (senator), Ulises Forte (deputy)
Catamarca	242,000	0.6%	3 senators and 3 deputies	Frente Civico y Social: Oscar Castillo (senator), Genaro Collantes (deputy) Frente para la Victoria: Lucia Corpacci (senator) Partido Justicialista: Luis Barrionuevo (senator)
Corrientes	657,000	1.76%	3 senators and 3 deputies	Frente de Todos: Josefina Meabe (senator), Rodolfo Fernandez (deputy) Encuentro por Corrientes: Eugenio "Nito" Artaza (senator), Lucio Aspiazu (deputy) Partido Autonomista: Jose A. Romero Feris
Cordoba	2,366,000	8.7%	3 senators and 9 deputies	Union por Cordoba (PJ): Senators: Eduardo Mondino, Evelina Feraudo. Deputy: Francisco Fortuna Frente Civico: Senators: Luis Juez, Norma Morandini, Deputies: Gumersindo Alonso Frente para la Victoria: Senators: Eduardo Accastello, Victoria Flores. Deputies: Carmen Nebreda

				UCR: Senators: Ramon Mestre, Marta Borillo, Deputies: Oscar Aguad
La Rioja	211,000	0.7%	2 deputies	Frente Justicialista del Pueblo: Jorge Yoma, Griselda Herrera UCR: Julio Martinez Lealtad y Dignidad: Adrian Menem
Tierra del Fuego	88,000	0.3%	2 deputies	Partido Justicialista: Rosana Bertone, Sergio Andrade ARI: Leonardo Gorbacz, Marisa Montero
Santiago del Estero	560,000	2%	3 deputies	Frente Civico: Daniel Brue, Norma Abdala de Matarazzo, Cristian Oliva Smith Acuerdo Civico: Jose Luis Zavalía, Antônio Calabrese
Santa Cruz	160,000	0.6%	3 deputies	Frente para la Victoria: Fernando Cotillo, Bianca Blanco de peralta, Jose Manuel Cordoba UCR-ARI-Socialismo: Eduardo Costa, Elsa Alvarez, Walter Cifuentes
San Luis	289,000	1%	3 deputies	Frente Es Posible: Alberto Perez Kirchnerismo: Daniel Persico, Walter Medaglia Coalicion Civica: Daniel Rodriguez Saa
San Juan	439,000	1.6%	3 deputies	Frente para la Victoria: Daniel Tomas, Margarita Ferra, Edardo Sancassani Union por San Juan: Mauricio Ibarra, Adriana Marino, Wbaldino Acosta Zapata Partido de la Concordia: Alex Ziegler, Silvia Risko
Misiones	663,000	2.4%	3 deputies	UCR: Claudio Ramirez Union Pro Dignidad: Ramon Puerta
Entre Rios	872,000	3%	5 deputies	PJ: Raul Barranteguy, Cristina Cremer de Busti

				UCR-CC: Atilio Benedetti, Hilda Re Other Candidates: Augusto Alasino (Viva Entre Rios), Hector Maya (Frente Popular Dissidente)
Rio Negro	394,000	1.4%	2 deputies	Partido Justicialista: Oscar Albrieu, Maria Eugenia Martini Concertacion para el Desarrollo: Hugo Castanon, Nora Mancini
Neuquen	366,000	1.3%	3 deputies	Movimiento Popular Neuquino: Jose Brillo, Olga Guzman, Marcelo Pieroni Frente para la Victoria: Ramon Rioseca, Beatriz Gentile, Ariel Kogan
Formosa	333,000	1.2%	2 deputies	Alianza Frente para la Victoria: Juan Carlos Diaz Roig, Otilia Britez de Morales Acuerdo Civico y Social: Ricardo Buryaile, Maria Ines Delfino
Jujuy	411,000	1.5%	2 deputies	Frente para la Victoria: Marcelo Llanos Acuerdo Civico Social: Marco Fiad, Cristina Fernandez de Jorge Ortiz Frente Primero Jujuy: Carlos Daniel Snopek
Santa Fe	2,327,000	8%	3 senators and 9 deputies	Frente Santa Fe Federal: Carlos Reutemann (senator), Daniel Germano (deputy) Fte. Prgresista Civico y Social: Ruben Giustiniani(senator), Jorge Alvarez (deputy), Jorge Alvarez (deputy) Frente para la Victoria: Claudio Leoni (senator), Agustin Rossi (deputy)
Chaco	706,000	1.9%	4 deputies	Chaco Merece Mas: Maria Ines Pilatti Vergara, Sandra Mendoza, Ruben Sarasua

				Acuerdo Civico y Social: Pablo Orsolini, Alicia terada, Jugo Dominguez Pro: Deputies: Gabriela Milchetti, Esteban Bullrich, Paula Bertol
Buenos Aires City	2,565,000	9.5%	13 deputies and 30 legislators	Legislators: Fernando de Andreeis Acuerdo Civico Social: Deputies: Alfonso Prat Gay, Ricardo Gil Lavedra, Elisa Carrio. Legislators: Fernando Sanchez Encuentro para la Victoria: Deputies: Carlos Heller, Noemi Rial, Julio Piumato. Legislators: Francisco Nenna Dialogo por Bs.As.: Deputies: Anibal Ibarra, Laura Moresi. Legislator: Maria Elena Naddeo Proyecto Sur: Fernando "Pino" Solanas
Buenos Aires	10,055,000	37.11%	35 deputies	Frente para la Victoria: Nestor Kirchner, Daniel Scioli, Nacha Guevara, Serio Massa, Hector Recalde, Diana Conti, Carlos Kunkel, Dulce Granados, Mariano West, Carlos Moreno Union Pro: Francisco de Narvaez, Gelipe Sola, Gladys Gonzalez, Claudia Rucci Acuerdo Civico y Social: Margarita Stolbizer, Ricardo Alfonsin, Mario Barbieri, Marcela Rodriguez Nuevo Encuentro:L Martin Sabatella, Graciela Iturraspe, Jorge Caballos, Carlos Raimundi Con vos Bs.As.: Luis Abelardo Patti,

				Mercedes Landa, Daniel Basile, Maximiliano Patti
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*As votes are still being counted, this table is a projection of the senators and deputies that will probably be elected.

The Political and Electoral Prospects of Kirchnerism

For the first time since 2003, the Frente para la Victoria party suffered an electoral defeat. In last Sunday's (28) legislative elections, the Partido Justicialista (PJ) faction, led by Cristina and Nestor Kirchner, was beat by the opposition in the country's major electoral colleges – Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Cordoba and Mendoza.

The low approval rating of Cristina Kirchner's government (25%), and a drop in the evolution of the GDP – private economist speak of a 1.0% retraction – added to the increase in unemployment left Kirchnerism in a delicate situation.

Given Cristina's low approval rating and her lack of support among the middle class, the Casa Rosada was forced to bet "all of its chips" on the candidacy of former president Nestor Kirchner. However, the leader of the PJ was defeated by Francisco de Narvaez, of the Union-Pro alliance, center-right.

Given the poorly evaluated administration and lacking a majority in Congress, Kirchnerism will be forced to give in further so as not to jeopardize the conditions of governance.

The threat to the government is not only political. As far as the economy, the tendency is for the situation to worsen. There is speculation regarding an increase in the cost of public services, a fact that will increase Cristina Kirchner's unpopularity.

With economic and political obstacles ahead and the wear on Nestor Kirchner's name given the adverse results in the Federal Capital, the government will have to bet on a makeover of Cristina's image should it wish to make it to 2011 – year of the presidential succession – with prospects.

Comparison of Kirchnerism Voting (2007-2009)

The conflict with the ruralists and the loss of allies within the Partido Justicialista (PJ), who aligned with the Mauricio Macri's Propuesta Republicana (PRO), led to a defeat for Kirchnerism in the legislative elections last Sunday.

Kirchnerism saw a decline in votes in 21 of the country's 24 provinces when compared to the votes received by Cristina Kirchner in 2007, then a presidential candidate. In the last two years, votes fell from 45% (a figure obtained by Cristina in the last presidential election) to 30% (the votes obtained by Frente para la Victoria in the legislative elections).

In Argentina's five largest electoral colleges, where 70% of the national votes are concentrated, Kirchnerism lost around two million votes. In 2007, the Frente para la Victoria party won in Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Mendoza. It came in second place in the Federal Capital and Cordoba. Last Sunday, it came in second place in Buenos Aires and Mendoza and in third in Santa Fe. In the Federal Capital and Cordoba it came in fourth.

Just in Buenos Aires, where dissident peronism and the PRO united, Kirchnerism lost around one million votes. In the Federal Capital, traditionally a stronghold of peronism opposition, the loss amounted to 50% of votes.

In Cordoba and Santa Fe, comparing 2007 to 2009, the government lost around 10 percentage points. One of the contributing factors was the loss of important peronist allies such as Juan Schiaretti and Carlos Reutemann.

In Mendoza, the rupture with Julio Cobos led to a 36% loss for the Casa Rosada (from 61% to 25%).

In Entre Rios and Tucuman, the loss in votes for the government hovered around 11%. Another relevant statistic was the Kirchner couple's defeat in Santa Cruz, a province where Nestor and Cristina built their political careers. There, votes went from 68% to 41%.

Congressional Scenario

The emblematic defeat suffered by Kirchnerism in the legislative elections weakened Cristina and Nestor Kirchner's prospects for 2011. However, the consequences of this political defeat will be felt sooner.

As shown in the tables below, the Casa Rosada lost its parliamentary majority. In Congress, Kirchnerism went from 135 seats to 114 (-21). On the other hand, the opposition gained 21 seats, going from 122 to 143 seats occupied by the Kirchner couples' political adversaries.

House of Representatives

Party or Faction	Actual Seats	Seats after the election
Frente para la Victoria	115	102
Kirchnerist Allies	20	12
Opposition	122	143

In the Senate, the number of seats occupied by the government dropped from 41 to 37. The opposition's seats went from 29 to 33.

Senate

Party or Faction	Actual Seats	Seats after the election
Frente para la Victoria	41	36
Kirchnerist Allies	0	1
Opposition	29	33
Independents	2	2

With two years left in her mandate, president Cristina Kirchner will have to negotiate with Congress if she wishes to regain control of the agenda and have any chance in running for reelection in 2011. With Nestor Kirchner practically out of the presidential race, Frente para la Victoria, a faction of the Partido Juticialista (PJ) controlled by the couple, must try and revert the Chief of State's current unpopularity and put her in the running.

Winners

Julio Cobos

Vice President: Diverges from president Cristina Kirchner. Is not currently a candidate. His ambitions are directed towards 2011.

Carlos Reutemann

Senator-elect in Santa Fe. Represents peronism dissidents. Is in the running for 2011.

Mauricio Macri

Mayor of Buenos Aires and president of the Proposta Republicana party. Despite the good results obtained by the Union-PRO candidates, Macri is not very popular outside of Buenos Aires.

Francisco de Narvaez

Leader of the peronism dissidents. His aspirations to the government of Buenos Aires grew after his victory in Buenos Aires. He is Colombian, and for him to be president a change in current electoral law would be necessary.

Losers

Nestor Kirchner

Former president of Argentina (2003-2007). Ran for Congress in the province of Buenos Aires. Despite being elected, could not get enough votes for Frente para la Victoria to maintain its majority in Congress. Leaves the election defeated.

Cristina Kirchner

Is the current president. In one year her popularity dropped from 52% to 25%. Given the mounting economic troubles and a loss of majority in Congress, will need to negotiate to regain control of the agenda.

Uruguay

Main Analysis

Mujica, Lacalle and Bordaberry are presidential candidates

Confirming forecasts from previous studies, Jose Mujica, Luis Lacalle and Pedro Bordaberry were chosen as presidential candidates by their respective parties. In Frente Ampla, Senator Mujica beat the former Minister of the Economy, Danilo Astory by 53.03% against 46.97%. In the Partido Nacional, former president Lacalle defeated Jorge Larranaga by 57.61% against 42.39% and in the Partido Colorado party, Pedro Bordaberry defeated former vice-president Luis Hierro Lopez by 72.26% against 27.74%.

It can be said that the “real” campaign begins now. Up to this moment, the race was restricted to the winning over of party members. Thus, the trend is that there will be greater contrast among the candidacies leading to October 25th, date of the first round of elections.

The candidates’ posture remains unknown. Mujica represents the government of Tabare Vazquez, who is favored by the population. However, the senator’s guerrilla past will be an obstacle given the existing conservatism in Uruguayan society.

The election also brings challenges for the opposition. Trying to regain power and avoid a second term for Frente Ampla, the Nacional and Colorado parties do not have an easy road ahead of them. They need to, simultaneously, present proposals that make the electorate “buy” their ideas, and position themselves as the opposition to a favored government.

Electoral Results

Parties	Percentage of the national electorate	Main candidates
Frente Ampla	53.03%	Jose Mujica
	46.97%	Danilo Astori
Partido Nacional	57.61%	Luis Lacalle
	42.39%	Jorge Larranaga
Partido Colorado	72.26%	Pedro Bordaberry
	27.74%	Luis Hierro Lopez

Prospects for the Presidential Election in October

With the end of the primaries, presidential candidates Jose Mujica (Frente Ampla), Luis Lacalle (Partido Nacional) and Pedro Bordaberry (Partido Colorado) will intensify their campaigns. Given the popularity of the Tabare Vazquez administration – 56% approval rating – Mujica enters the race as the favorite. Trying to soften resistance along more conservative sectors, Mujica – a former guerilla leader – has been promising income redistribution policies in conjunction with responsible management of the economy. His candidacy favors Frente Ampla, for he was a critic of the current government at various stages, and is therefore able to sidestep unfavorable opinions regarding the current president, Tabare Vazquez. On the other hand, he is seen as a “radical” by the voters in the center and the right.

Evidence indicates that Mujica’s main opponent will be former president Luis Lacalle, of the Partido Nacional, a member of the opposition. He is the furthest to the right in the Uruguayan political spectrum. Unlike Frente Ampla, which is traditionally more geared towards interventionism, Lacalle’s party hosts more liberal ideas.

Because he disputes the same electorate as the Partido Nacional, Pedro Bordaberry, of the Partido Colorado, will have difficulties in this election. The race is expected to come down to Frente Ampla and Partido Nacional. As the Nacional and Colorado parties should both be in the race in the eventual 2nd round, Frente Ampla’s strategy is to win the election in the first round, so as to avoid risk.

In 2004, in the last presidential dispute, Tabare Vazquez received 50.45% of valid votes and was elected in the 1st round. Partido Nacional came in second place with 34.30% and Partido Colorado came in third with 10.36%.

As was the case that year, the trend is that if Frente Ampla wins in the 1st round, it will be by a small margin. Though it is still early for projections, backstage in the Uruguayan political scene, many feel that if the election heads to the 2nd round, the government coalition can be defeated by Partido Nacional.

Profiles of the Presidential Candidates

Jose Mujica

The senator, 74 years old, was a member of the tupamaro guerilla and Minister of Farming, Agriculture and Fishing in the current administration. Despite being known for his more radical positions, classified by his critics as a populist, he has managed to swing to the right efficiently, gaining the trust of conservative sectors. The central focus of his message is the mixing of economic policy that is considered right-of-center – marked by orthodoxy – with social policies historically defended by the left – more income distribution. Intends to instill in Uruguay a government similar to that of Lula's in Brazil.

Luis Lacalle

Former president of Uruguay (1990-1995), 67 years old, represents liberal ideals and the corporate world.

Pedro Bordaberry

Former minister of Tourism and son of the former dictator Juan Maria Bordaberry (1972-1976), dominated political life in Uruguay for years. His father was arrested for human rights violations and currently awaits trial.