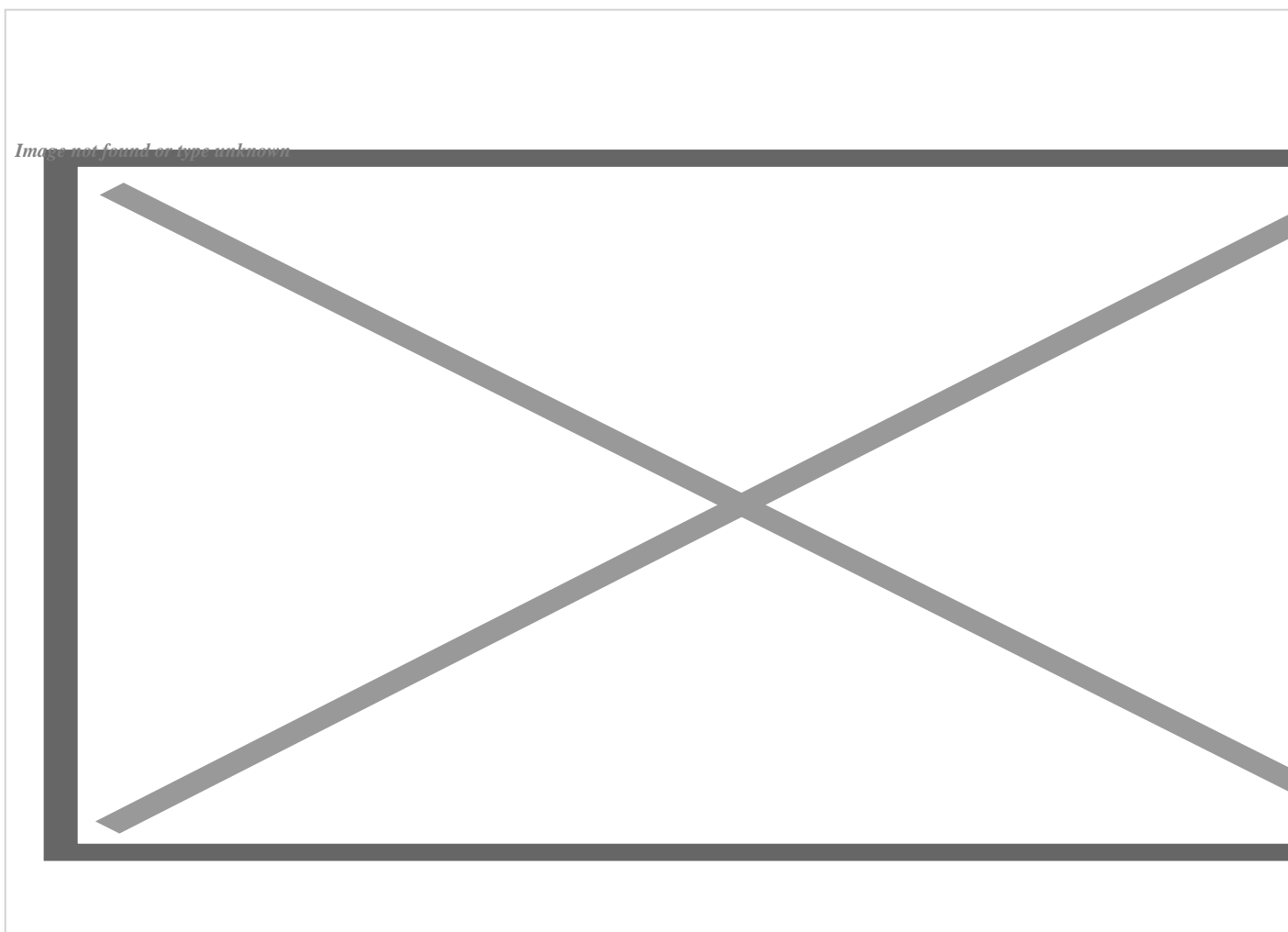


Elections in times of COVID



Several Latin American countries will hold important elections during 2021, which will be potentially shaped by the outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic and the discontent or indifference of the population towards the so-called "political class."

There are many people who lost everything due to the implementation of restrictive measures to stop the contagion, particularly those in the informal sector, the owners of micro and medium enterprises or service workers.

It is very common for them to blame their respective governments for not protecting them as they should, which might affect the poll results.

The first vote will take place on February 7th in Ecuador to elect the president, vice president, legislators and representatives to the Andean Parliament. There are 16 candidates in the race, but analysts agree that only three of them may have a winning vote. Economist Andrés Aráuz, for the progressive coalition Union for Hope; businessman Guillermo Lasso, for the center-right political movement Creating Opportunities; and indigenous leader Yaku Pérez Guartambel, representing the Pachakutik party.

Following, on April 11th, in Peru, 18 candidates will be contesting for presidency -- embracing the entire political spectrum of that nation that last year was immersed in a political turmoil with three temporary presidents: Martin Vizcarra; Manuel Merino, who lasted a few hours; and the last and current president, Francisco Sagasti. Although the pre- election polls give a slight advantage to George Forsyth for the National Restoration party, it's become very difficult to scrutinize among so many candidates, who has a better chance to win.

On the other hand, Chile's general elections will be held later this year -- on November 21st and no candidate has been set yet, albeit a large list of names to be considered. Thus far, the only certainty is that the ballots will be cast while the new Constitution is being drafted to replace the Augusto Pinochet model still in force.

Honduras and Nicaragua have also established November as an election month. In Nicaragua, an escalation of the U.S. aggression against the Sandinista National Liberation Front is expected, aimed at creating chaos and fostering counterrevolutionary groups.

In the meantime, the administrations of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico and Alberto Fernández in Argentina, will be dealing with legislative elections in June and October, respectively, which are crucial for the successful completion of their mandate.

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