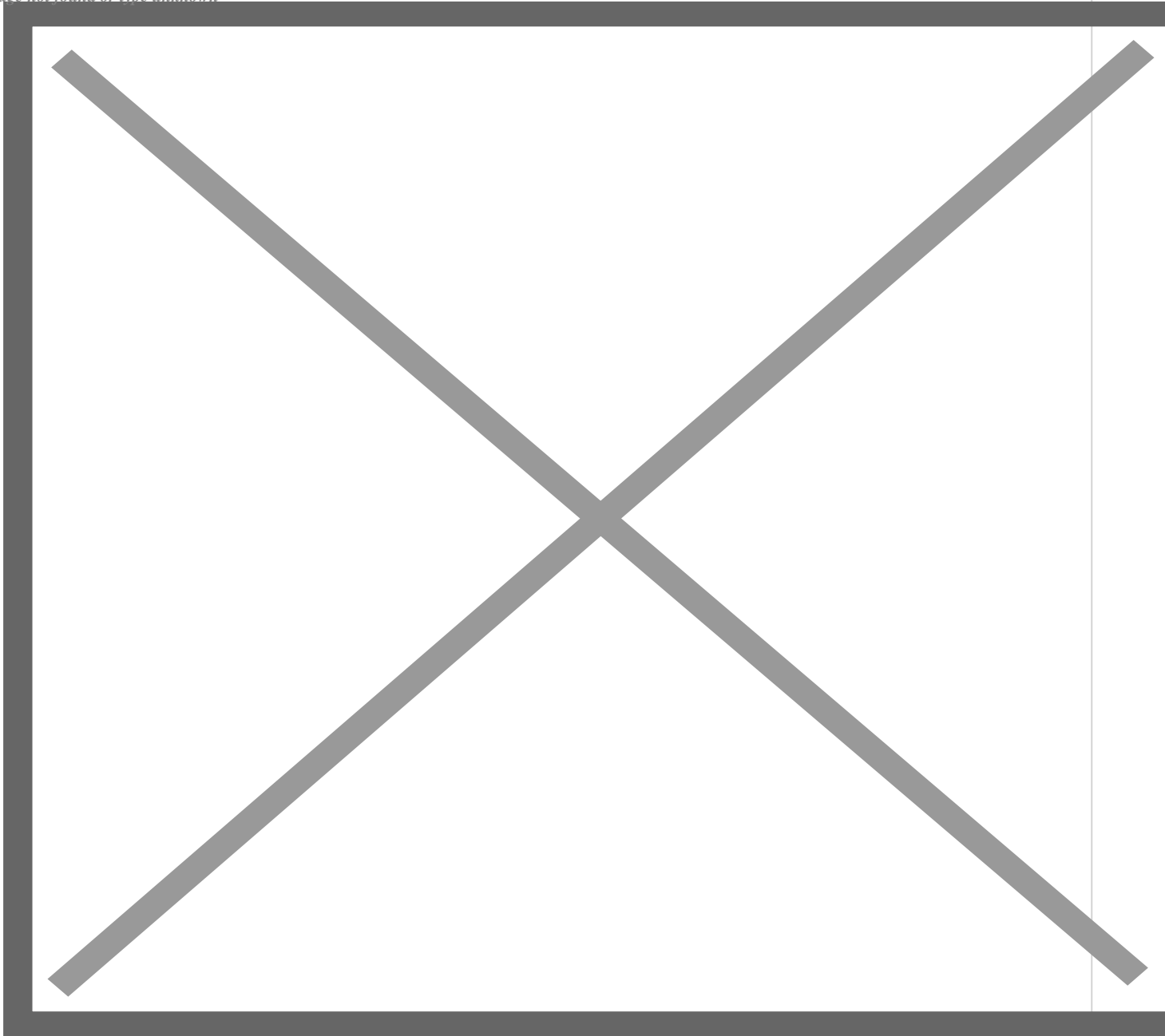


Appointment with the ballot box

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By Guillermo Alvarado

Quite unusual elections, with the extraordinary amount of 25 aspirants to be the president of a country.

Costa Rica will open this year's Latin American electoral calendar tomorrow, Sunday, after a campaign that failed to arouse the enthusiasm of the citizens and where the only certainty is that a second round will be needed to define who will be the future president of the Central American nation.

In reality, the elections are quite atypical, with the extraordinary number of 25 candidates aspiring to the first magistracy in a country with 5.2 million inhabitants, of which 3.5 million are legally entitled to vote.

There are candidates who are virtually unknown in most of the national territory, to the point that they do not reach one percent in the polls of voting intention and, nevertheless, they remain in the competition for really unknown reasons.

Few politicians appear with some possibilities, among them the former president José María Figueres, the evangelical preacher Fabricio Alvarado, who lost four years ago to the current president, Carlos Alvarado, and the former vice-president Lineth Saborío.

None of them exceed 17 percent of support in the polls, far from the 40 points needed to win.

Thus, the two who obtain the highest number of votes this Sunday will meet again on April 3, when the final round is scheduled.

It is a process that is obviously of great importance for these people, but with little impact on regional relations, unlike the other two to be held in 2022.

Colombia's presidential elections will follow, with the first round to be held on May 29 and an eventual runoff on June 19.

Voting will take place in the midst of a deep erosion of the Democratic Center party, founded by Álvaro Uribe and to which the current ruler, Iván Duque, belongs, affected by unstoppable violence and the deterioration of living conditions of a large part of the population.

In view of this scenario, the figure of Gustavo Petro, who could become the first leftist candidate to win the presidency in the South American country, has strengthened.

The case of Brazil is also very interesting, where a duel is anticipated on October 2 between Lula da Silva, favorite in the polls without having confirmed his candidacy, and Jair Bolsonaro, or whoever the right-wing leadership decides.

As can be seen, Costa Rica is an appetizer, but the main course will be in the south of our continent.

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