



Weekly

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Americas Weekly Summary - November 17-23, 2021

Highlights of the Week

This report reviews notable events this week in the Americas. This includes multiple demonstrations against the Coastal Gaslink pipeline in **Canada**; the first round of the presidential elections in **Chile**; the extension of a state of emergency in nine provinces in **Ecuador**; **Nicaragua** initiating the process to leave the OAS; Kyle Rittenhouse's acquittal in Kenosha, WI, **USA**; five individuals killed and 48 injured after an SUV drove through a parade in Waukesha, WI, **USA**; and the ruling PSUV winning 20 of 23 governorships in nationwide elections in **Venezuela**.

AMERICAS

November 17-23, 2021

- Multiple protests against the Coastal Gaslink pipeline were staged in **Canada**.
- The first-round of presidential elections was held in **Chile**.
- The government extended the ongoing state of emergency in nine provinces in **Ecuador**.
- **Nicaragua** initiated the process to leave the OAS.
- Kyle Rittenhouse's was acquitted in Kenosha, WI, **USA**.
- Five individuals were killed and 48 injured after an SUV drove through a parade in Waukesha, WI, **USA**.
- The ruling PSUV won 20 of 23 governorships in nationwide elections in **Venezuela**.



Canada

Notable Developments:

- Multiple demonstrations in support of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation's opposition to the Coastal Gaslink natural gas pipeline in British Columbia (BC) occurred in major urban areas on November 21-22.
- Protests in Edmonton and Toronto numbered in the low hundreds and blocked roadways, while a protest in Montreal's Mile End neighborhood blocked railway lines.
- On November 18-19, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) arrested 29 individuals, including two journalists, near Houston, BC for violating a 2019 BC Supreme Court injunction staging protests in the vicinity of the natural gas pipeline illegal.
- Protests and associated blockades in the vicinity of the pipeline construction had led to the rationing of water and unease regarding potential food shortages for the nearly 500 employees working on the site.

ANALYSIS: Given the heightened tensions regarding the construction of the pipeline and concerns over the treatment of First Nations communities, further protests and blockades are likely near term, especially in the vicinity of the Bulkley and Morice rivers near Houston, BC. Additional RCMP operations to clear road blockades, leading to arrests, are liable for the duration of the construction project. Escalations at demonstration sites between RCMP officers and protesters, potentially leading to violent clashes, cannot be ruled out given heightened sentiments regarding the protest issue. Furthermore, demonstrations led by climate activists and civil society organizations can be expected in major urban areas, including Montreal and Toronto, in the coming weeks potentially leading to disruptions to vehicular and train traffic as witnessed in similar protests in 2020.

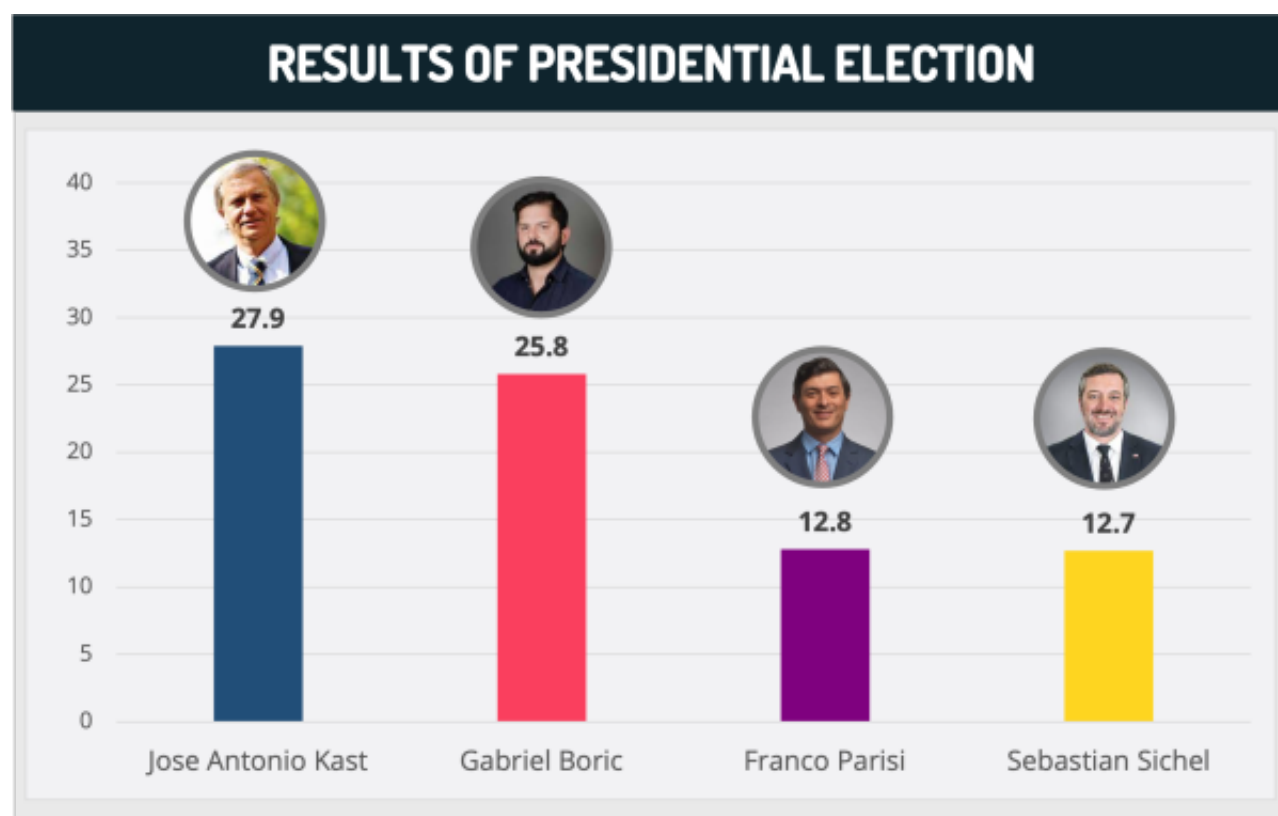
Chile

Notable Developments:

- Far-right Partido Republicano's (PLR) candidate Jose Antonio Kast won the highest votes in the November 21 presidential elections, securing 27.91 percent of the vote share. Left-wing Apruebo Dignidad's (AD) Gabriel Boric obtained 25.82 percent, Partido de la Gente's (PDG) Franco Parisi 12.81 percent, and the ruling Chile Podemos Mas (CP+) coalition-backed candidate Sebastian Sichel 12.77 percent.
- Kast and Boric, who failed to secure a simple majority, will proceed to the runoff elections on December 19. Union Demócrata Independiente (UDI) of the CP+ has confirmed support for Kast, while Sichel and the center-right Renovación Nacional (RN) are open to talks with him. The center-left Partido Liberal de Chile and Nuevo Trato have announced support for Boric.

ANALYSIS: That a far-right and a left-wing candidate obtained most votes is reflective of the vastly polarized political landscape. Additionally, Sichel's defeat highlights the heightened anti-incumbency sentiments, owing largely to the economic challenges,

tensions with the Mapuche, and corruption charges against President Sebastian Pinera. While Kast and Boric are likely to get support from some center-right and center-left parties respectively, the political uncertainty will likely persist amid the polarized landscape. Moreover, considering that Pinera will remain in his position until the end of his term in March 2022, renewed calls to impeach him and associated protests are likely in the coming months. Given increasing demands to steer Chile through a transition period, the winner of the December runoff will be expected to significantly influence the transition process, failing which, widespread anti-government discontent will persist.



Ecuador

Notable Developments:

- President Guillermo Lasso extended the 'State of Emergency' (SoE) in nine provinces including Esmeraldas, El Oro, Guayas, Los Rios, Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, Manabi, Santa Elena, Pichincha, and Sucumbios through December 18.
- The SoE is in place to combat the surge in drug trafficking activity. 16 tons of drugs were seized during the SoE, while 28 gangs were dismantled and over 1,000 arrested in Guayas alone.

ANALYSIS: The relative success of the initial SoE, which was instated on October 18 for a period of 60 days then reduced to 30, is likely to have prompted President Lasso to extend the measure, as evidenced by the dismantling of several gangs. Additional arrests

and seizures likely to continue through the emergency. That said, there remains a potential for armed confrontations between security personnel and drug gangs due to the increased security deployment. Additionally, given Ecuador's importance as a major transit hub and warehouse for drug trafficking, organized criminal activity and associated inter-gang clashes over control of export routes are likely to continue despite increased security efforts. The uptick in large drug seizures is likely due to an increase in cocaine production in Colombia, with drugs often entering from Esmeraldas province and being transported through Manabi and Guayas provinces. This is supported by UN reports indicating that Ecuador has become, along with Colombia, one of the main hubs for drug shipments bound for the USA via the eastern Pacific route, with drug seizures up by 60 percent compared to 2021.

Nicaragua

Notable Developments:

- On November 19, the Minister of International Relations initiated the process to withdraw the country from the Organization of American States (OAS). The decision comes after the OAS General Assembly denounced the November 7 general elections as non-democratic and urged for future action against the government.
- Previously on November 15, the US Department of Treasury added nine officials to its Specially Designated Nationals List consisting of entities sanctioned by the USA, including the first lady and Vice President, energy minister, and vice-minister of finance, precluding US nationals and businesses from engaging in transactions with them. Canada and the UK implemented similar measures.

ANALYSIS: Given that the OAS has been threatening to suspend Nicaragua's membership from the organization in recent years, the government's decision likely comes in anticipation of such a move. The withdrawal is likely to deepen the country's political isolation at the international level and may impede access to international credit, including from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). While the measures by the USA, Canada, and the UK are reflective of the international community's opposition to the re-election of President Ortega, given precedent, these measures are unlikely to deter him from staying in power or from cracking down on the opposition. The developments are also liable to worsen the country's economic situation, which could trigger intermittent anti-government protests and lead to a continued domestic crackdown on dissent.

USA

Notable Developments:

- On November 19, a court in Kenosha, Wisconsin acquitted Kyle Rittenhouse on all charges related to the fatal shooting of two individuals and injuring of one on August 25, 2020, during anti-police

brutality protests and riots in the city.

- Rittenhouse's defense claimed he went to Kenosha to protect businesses from looters and that he shot the victims in self-defense. The National Guard remains deployed in Kenosha as of writing. Protests around the courthouse were reported during and after the verdict.
- Protests were also reported in New York City, NY, and Chicago, IL on November 19. Another protest in Portland, OR was declared a riot.

ANALYSIS: Given that reactions to the case and the verdict have been split, protests in support of and against the verdict are likely over the coming days, attracting gun control campaigners, second amendment supporters, BLM groups, and far-right activists. As seen on November 19, these protests are highly likely to be disruptive, with instances of clashes between opposing groups, vandalism, and property damage expected. In the event of widespread unrest, individuals adhering to extremist ideologies are liable to attempt to take advantage of the chaos as seen in Kenosha in August 2020. Going forward, the potential for individuals emulating Rittenhouse at future protests and riots in major urban areas nationwide cannot be ruled out.

USA

Notable Developments:

- At least six individuals were killed and 48 injured after a suspect drove a sport utility vehicle (SUV) into the Waukesha Christmas Parade in Waukesha, Wisconsin on November 21.
- The SUV drove through police barriers at high speed before striking participants and spectators, including minors. The suspect has an extensive criminal record, including an open court case related to domestic violence, and was released on bail earlier in the week.
- Law enforcement authorities have stated that the suspect had been at the scene of an altercation with a knife before driving into the parade. The suspect has been charged with first-degree intentional homicide.

ANALYSIS: Based on current information, it appears that the attack was not directly militant-related or pre-meditated, although it cannot be ruled out that the suspect adhered to an extremist political ideology. Given the recent verdict in the Kyle Rittenhouse trial, Waukesha's proximity to Kenosha, WI, and that various individuals and groups have already framed the incident within their own ideologies and rhetoric, protests in the Waukesha area and in major cities nationwide in the near-term are liable to manifest in the coming days. Protests have the potential to witness unrest and violence between groups of opposing political standings, and with deployed law enforcement personnel. The event reiterates the effectiveness of vehicular rammings and has the potential to spur copycat attacks during the holiday season. A higher than normal security presence can be expected in the vicinity of significant holiday events and parades nationwide in the coming weeks.

Venezuela

Notable Developments:

- On November 21, the ruling Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) won 20 of the 23 disputed governorships, including the capital Caracas, during the nationwide elections. Voters were eligible to elect governors, mayors, regional, and local legislators across 23 federal entities and 355 municipalities.
- The main opposition Plataforma Unitaria (PU) participated in the elections following three years of abstention over electoral fraud concerns, winning the states of Cojedes, Nueva Esparta, and Zulia.
- In addition, 130 incidents of violence were recorded on the election day across 100 polling stations nationwide.

ANALYSIS: The elections strengthen President Nicolas Maduro's control over the country, further complicating opposition leader Juan Guaido's claim over the presidency in the near term. However, the results may be partly explained by the 41 percent participation rate, with a majority of eligible voters not casting their ballots. Regardless, the election results are also reflective of the continued support for President Maduro and the PSUV. As such, the results are likely to heighten political tensions between the ruling PSUV and opposition parties especially amid concerns over electoral fraud. This is likely to lead to spontaneous protests, with the potential for violent clashes between opposing groups and authorities to remain. Separately, that incidents of violence were recorded outside polling stations despite police enforcement is indicative of the critical security landscape in the country, with the incidence of the overall criminal activity liable to persist at elevated levels going forward.

Other Developments

- In **Argentina**, a local Mapuche group blocked Route 40 and attacked one passerby near El Bolson, Rio Negro.
- In **Brazil**, hundreds were arrested nationwide in 'Operation Voleur' aimed at combating drug crimes and armed robberies, per November 17 reports.
- In **Canada**, authorities in British Columbia imposed temporary restrictions on fuel and non-essential travel in areas hit by ongoing floods on November 19.
- On November 17, the US Embassy in Bogota, **Colombia** issued a security alert for increased criminal activity in Cartagena, Bolivar, stating that there has been a rise in crime across the city following the easing of COVID-19-related restrictions.
- In **Colombia**, authorities detained over 22 members of Clan del Golfo (CDG), including one of the group's leaders Cesar Hernan Mejia Galindo, alias 'Marlon', in Bolivar on November 21.
- In the **USA**, several luxury goods stores were targeted by "smash-and-grab" robberies in separate incidents in San Francisco, CA on November 19 and in Oak Brook, IL, a suburb of Chicago on November 17.

The Week Ahead

- **November 25:** Thanksgiving Day in the **USA**; Unionized health workers to strike nationwide in **Colombia**
- **November 27:** Anti-government protest march in Lima, **Peru**
- **November 28:** General elections in **Honduras**
- **November 30:** Independence Day in **Barbados**