

# Colombia Internacional

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Special Issue

**Open and Simultaneous Presidential Primaries in Latin America**

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### Presentation

This special issue of *Colombia Internacional* aims to receive contributions that focus on analyzing the processes of simultaneous and open presidential primary elections in various Latin American countries that adopted them as a mechanism for nominating candidates, but also, particularly, as a formal electoral rule. In this sense, it is interesting to address especially those cases in which open primaries have been implemented, not only as a method of internal selection within the parties but also as an electoral norm, formally incorporated into the official legislation of the country, constituting an instance prior to presidential or general elections.

There is broad consensus in the discipline that the nomination of candidates to positions of power is a distinctive feature of political parties (Sartori 1976; Shattschneider 1942) and that how their selection is carried out has several consequences. On the one hand, candidate selection methods constitute a central aspect in intra-party democracy (Rahat and Hazan 2001). On the other hand, different forms of selection can affect electoral results (Colomer 2003), condition the behavior of elected leaders once in government (Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008), and/or influence the functioning of the political system as a whole (Gallagher and Marsh 1988).

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In Latin America—following the expansion of the use of open primaries to select presidential candidates voluntarily and unilaterally by parties and coalitions—the adoption of this practice in the electoral legislation of the respective countries has become widespread. In many cases, the mechanism became a formal instance, which is carried out simultaneously and, in general, enables the participation of the entire electorate in a procedure organized and controlled by national electoral bodies. In a sequence that seems to set the trend at the regional level—Uruguay (1997), Honduras (2004), Colombia (2006), Argentina (2009), Chile (2012), Paraguay (2014), Bolivia (2018), Dominican Republic (2018), and Peru (2019)—presidential primaries are held simultaneously, regulated officially by the country’s electoral body, and financed with public funds. Although there are relevant variations in the rules, the instance has become a first round of the presidential election process, which conditions and influences the rest of the cycle.

This special issue seeks to include articles that study the regime of presidential primaries in different countries of the continent, either as case studies or in a comparative way, aiming to observe regularities, particularities, and exceptions in diverse contexts where the mechanism has been incorporated, deepening the comparative study of cases in which the primaries have indeed been applied regularly in successive electoral processes.

Thus, the special issue looks to present various cases with significant similarities and differences to elucidate diverse topics, such as:

- The reasons explaining an apparent growing tendency to adopt this mechanism type, based on a characterization of the actors promoting these reforms and the motivations that led them to encourage it.
- The context and debate regarding the incorporation of the open and simultaneous primary regime, variations in the rules, specificities of the clauses incorporated, and the resulting design and type of incentives provided by these clauses.

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- The type of political groupings participating in the primary, whether unified or factionalized parties, pre-existing coalitions, *ad hoc* alliances, or independent movements and leaders.
- The form of using the mechanism by parties or groupings, concerning in particular the decision to appear in the primaries and the type of competition established in them: effective (with at least two candidates with chances), symbolic (with only one competitive candidate), or non-existent (with single candidacies).
- The results of the primaries held, observing in particular electoral participation levels, voter types, campaigns, the degree of conflict in the contest, characteristics of the winning candidates, and the situation of the losing candidates.
- The relationship between the presidential primary and the appointment of other candidates, in the same instance or after the primary, in particular, the vice president.
- The analysis of presidential election cycles in their successive phases, including primaries, the general election or first round, and the eventual second round.
- The effects observed as a result of using open primaries on the political parties themselves in terms of benefits or harms, on the one hand, and electoral competition and the party system in general, on the other.

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