



Elections in Argentina: A Follow Up

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Mr. Mauricio Macri, the former Mayor of Buenos Aires, on 22 November 2015 won the Presidential elections in Argentina after getting more than 51 percent of the votes in the second round of voting.¹ By defeating the ruling party's candidate, Mr Daniel Scioli (48.56 percent), he ends twelve years of Presidency of the Peronist Party led by President Cristina Fernandez Kirchner.

The President-elect, Mr Macri's election campaign, "Let's Change: Change is Possible", has resonated with the Argentinian voters. Largely focusing on domestic needs, his campaign identified four challenges that would be the focus of the new Presidency.

- 1) One of the challenges identified in his manifesto was the goal of achieving zero poverty. Stating that he would expand the national programmes for poverty alleviation, he underlined that this goal can only be achieved if the economy is robust. He stressed that his government would create more job opportunities and reduce informal employment. The economic plan also includes reducing inflation and a return to international markets to do commerce. During his campaign, he stated that he would negotiate with international investors to work towards an amicable solution to the loan repayment disagreement.

Apart from economic revival, building on the future is also important for the President-elect, Mr Macri. The need to provide children with quality education is identified as a means to achieving the goal of zero poverty. To achieve this, he has stated that he would create a Grand National Pact with the help of teachers to improve the education sector. The government intends to make schooling mandatory from age three until the end of secondary school with the pledge that within four years, 100 percent of three-year-olds will be enrolled in primary schools. It also wants to build 3,000 classrooms and primary schools around the country. Affordable housing is the third leg of this goal. The manifesto states that affordable housing programmes would be launched, and the government will regularise the titles of land and homes so that people could have the ownership of the houses they have lived in for years. The government will also offer one million 30-year mortgage loans financed by ANSES, whose fees will be similar to those of a rental.²

- 2) 'Plan Belgrano' is an infrastructure programme aimed at connecting and developing the country's Northern provinces. The project will cost an estimated US\$ 16bn.³
- 3) End the Drug Trade: He has stressed that there is a need to end the drug trade in Argentina to save the future of the country. As more and more children get involved in drugs and drug related crimes or become members of criminal organisations trafficking in drugs, they become targets for exploitation and abuse. Drug abuse damages the body and the future of children. He stated that drug trafficking was a security threat for Argentina and the State would take visible steps to address the problem. The borders will be controlled and patrolled better, corrupt government officials would be prosecuted and the police would be modernised. His manifesto also addressed the issue of treatment for addicts; thus, stating that it was an approach of prevention and treatment.⁴

- 4) Unite Argentina: The new government would stress on transparency and accountability. He stressed that the new government will be the one that will be accountable for their actions to defend the freedom of expression and enhancing the federal tradition of how they organize themselves. It will also allow the judiciary to function independently.⁵

It is expected that the new presidency would bring about some changes in Argentina's international policies, especially within its neighbourhood. During his campaign, the President-elect had promised to strengthen institutions, introduce more pro-business policies, reach amicable understandings with foreign creditors and realign Argentina's foreign policy away from those of Venezuela and Iran and move closer to the US and Europe. He has stated that he will move a proposal to expel Venezuela from MERCOSUR due to the political crisis in the nation and the arrest of opposition leaders. He has also indicated that he will adopt a less confrontational stance over the Falkland Islands.⁶ This has been in contrast to the policies that Argentina has been following under the leadership of President Cristina Kirchner and one that Mr Scioli had promised to continue, if elected.

Nonetheless, the low margin, (about three percent) in the winning votes indicates that the Peronist Party is a strong political contender outside the Parliament and would be an effective opposition party within the Parliament too. The Peronist Party has the support of the powerful trade unions of Argentina. The move to build a more pro-business government is a welcome change; however, the new President would have to maintain a fine balance between welfare programmes and the pro-business policies. He would have to find the policies of the current government that are pro-poor and bind them with his vision for Argentina.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed are of author and do not reflect the views of the Council.

End Notes

¹ To win the Presidency, a candidate needs to take 45 percent of the votes or at least 40 percent with a 10 percent lead over the runner-up. Failing that, a secondary runoff vote is conducted.

² Mauricio Macri, "POBREZA CERO", <http://mauriciomacri.com.ar/propuestas/pobreza-cero/>, (Accessed on 27 November 2015).

³ Reilly Ryan, The Argentinean Independent, 21 October 2015 "Argentina's Presidential Candidates: Mauricio Macri", <http://www.argentinaindependent.com/currentaffairs/analysis/argentinas-presidential-candidates-mauricio-macri/>, (Accessed on 27 November 2015).

⁴ Mauricio Macri, "TERMINAR CON EL NARCOTRÁFICO", <http://mauriciomacri.com.ar/propuestas/narcotrafico/>, (Accessed on 27 November 2015).

⁵ Mauricio Macri, "UNIR A LOS ARGENTINOS", <http://mauriciomacri.com.ar/propuestas/unir/> (Accessed on 27 November 2015).

⁶ Jonathan Watts and Uki Goñi, "Argentina Shifts to the Right after Mauricio Macri Wins Presidential Runoff", *The Guardian*, 23 Nov. 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/22/argentina-election-exit-polls-buenos-aires-mauricio-macri>, (Accessed on 27 November 2015).