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Your analysis of the global political and security situation



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The Shadow of Hezbollah in Latin America

Source: BBC, 2024

Since its founding in Lebanon, Hezbollah has operated as a pro-Iranian militia that has successfully expanded its global influence.

In Latin America, its visibility began to escalate in the nineties through terrorist attacks targeting Jewish and Israeli interests in the Tri-Border Area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay ¹. Over time, this area has become a key hub for their funding. More recently, the border regions shared by Colombia, Panama, and Venezuela have gained strategic importance due to Hezbollah's connections with illicit economies—particularly drug trafficking—and its collaboration with local militant groups.

In this manner, Hezbollah's presence in Latin America has largely developed as an extension of Iran's strategic interests in the region, operating on terms that extend beyond the military to include a significant component of financing and the expansion of its political project. Indeed, certain countries are pivotal for Hezbollah. Venezuela, for instance, has provided support for more than two decades, with Hezbollah reportedly establishing training centers there for paramilitary activities.

This is crucial given the existing evidence confirming the group's operational presence in the region and its verifiable links to Latin American organized crime structures². This means the group possesses an operating capability, especially in regions with low state presence or where it benefits from the support and tolerance of local authorities, thereby facilitating the expansion of its influence and activities through its connection with criminal actors.

Organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and various academic studies have also documented the convergence between terrorism and organized crime in the region. They highlight how Hezbollah has adapted its strategies in Latin America to sustain links with drug trafficking, money laundering, and arms smuggling — even though the group has consistently denied any involvement in the drug trade, citing religious prohibitions against it³. There has even been evidence of the use of falsified documents and Venezuelan naturalization to facilitate illicit operations and conceal Hezbollah's presence in several countries, including Paraguay, Ecuador, and Venezuela⁴.



The first reported incident occurred in November 2023 in Brazil, where alleged members linked to the group were detained while planning terrorist attacks in the Southern Cone. More recently, Argentina's Minister of Security, Patricia Bullrich, announced the identification and arrest of the main figure responsible for Hezbollah's terrorist operations and attacks in Argentina, including the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. She also reported the movement of senior commanders traveling from Lebanon to Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador⁵. Finally, in October, international terrorism experts warned the U.S. Senate about the growing presence of this group in the region, emphasizing its connections to the Nicolás Maduro regime and its involvement in Venezuelan paramilitary centers.

The events described above fit within the context of emerging routes of Transnational Organized Crime (TOC), which, for instance, link groups such as the ELN and Hezbollah as part of narcotics trafficking networks reaching Europe. In this context, Hezbollah operates as a financial and logistical intermediary along these routes, often through Iranian front companies registered as exporters of textiles or agricultural products. This not only fuels ongoing armed conflicts and creates new challenges for regional counternarcotics efforts but also highlights the need for stronger international cooperation — a key capability that governments across the Americas and beyond must reinforce to confront TOC effectively and directly.





Regional

The outcome of Bolivia's 2025 presidential elections marks a turning point in Latin America's regional politics, signaling the

the end of a political cycle and a shift toward right-leaning leadership. The historic defeat of the Movement for Socialism (MAS), which had maintained nearly two decades of dominance, is expected to reshape regional political dynamics — reflecting a broader trend toward conservative models that increasingly influence the rhetoric and campaigns of other nations. This transition unfolds amid a context of deep political fragmentation, polarization, and governance challenges both regionally and nationally, accompanied by a weakening of domestic institutions⁶.

This shift carries significant implications for Bolivia's foreign policy, signaling a realignment of its historical alliances and security strategies with Latin American nations — and, most notably, with the United States. Since 2008, bilateral relations had been maintained only at the chargé d'affaires level, following former President Evo Morales's decision to expel the U.S. ambassador and anti-narcotics cooperation agencies from the country⁷.

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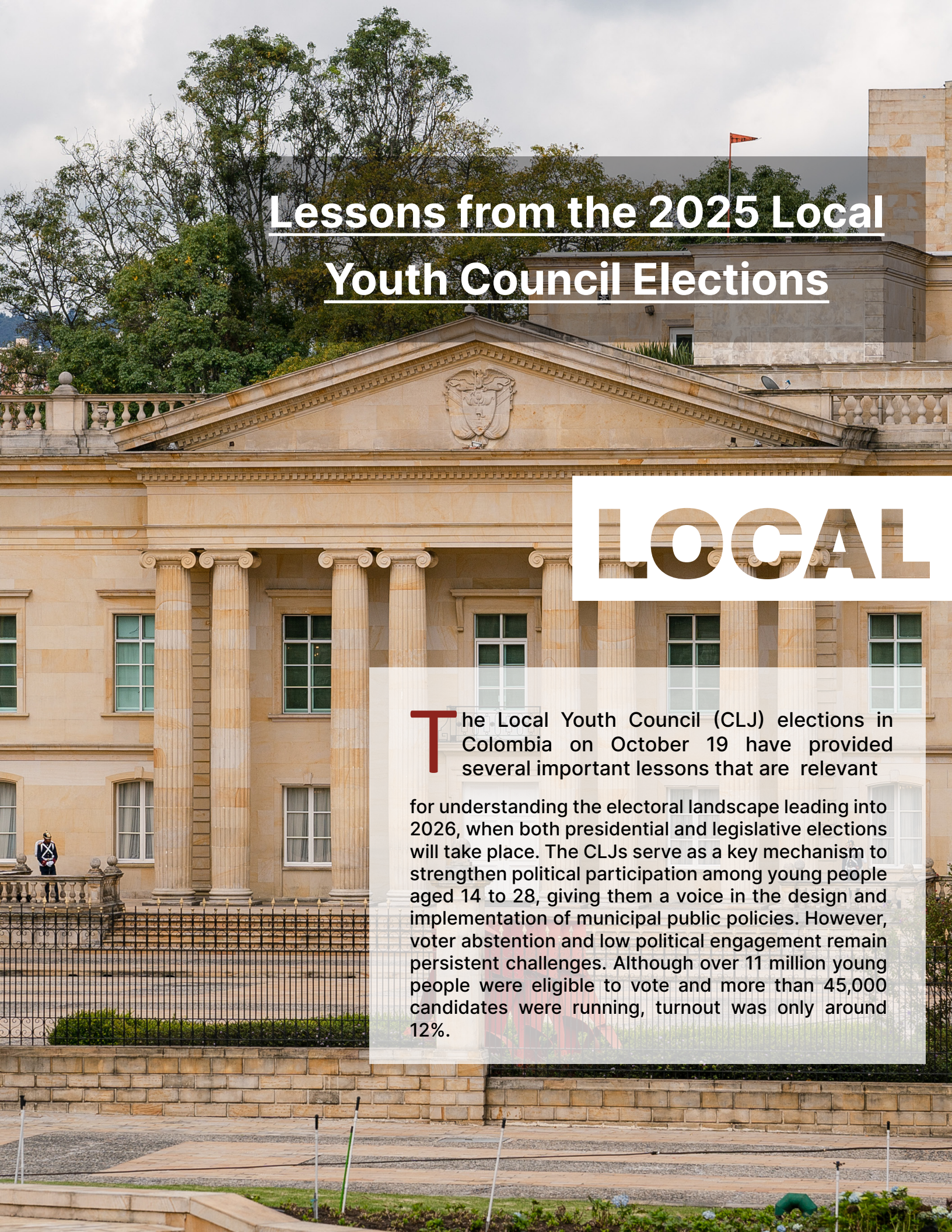
Source: BBC, 2025

These new shifts in regional security alliances and strategies stem from Bolivia's redefined foreign policy toward international organizations, the United States, other major powers such as China, and — critically — neighboring countries like Chile.

However, left-leaning sectors within Bolivia have voiced concern over the potential return of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), as the president has expressed his willingness to cooperate with international entities that support Bolivia in matters of security and the fight against organized crime⁸. As a result, strong discontent has emerged among left-wing groups, who describe the situation as a “betrayal of national identity” and “servitude to foreign interests over national sovereignty”⁹. This stance is rooted primarily in the campaign slogan of the newly elected president — “Capitalism for Everyone” — reflecting his intention to open Bolivia to the global market.

His platform includes measures such as providing low-interest loans for entrepreneurs, reducing taxes and import tariffs on vehicles and technology, and decentralizing governance by allocating 50% of the national budget directly to the nine regions that make up the country¹⁰.

In terms of security, the drastic changes the President may implement could require constitutional reforms with broad judicial backing and may politically pose risks of instability, potentially affecting cooperation on issues such as organized crime, drug trafficking, and social violence. In other words, political and social fragmentation in Bolivia, combined with weakened institutions, increases the likelihood of internal conflicts and could even have destabilizing effects on neighboring countries. While the magnitude of the forthcoming changes remains uncertain, it is even less clear whether this model will be sustainable over time¹¹.



Lessons from the 2025 Local Youth Council Elections

LOCAL

The Local Youth Council (CLJ) elections in Colombia on October 19 have provided several important lessons that are relevant

for understanding the electoral landscape leading into 2026, when both presidential and legislative elections will take place. The CLJs serve as a key mechanism to strengthen political participation among young people aged 14 to 28, giving them a voice in the design and implementation of municipal public policies. However, voter abstention and low political engagement remain persistent challenges. Although over 11 million young people were eligible to vote and more than 45,000 candidates were running, turnout was only around 12%.

While slightly higher than the roughly 10% recorded in 2021, this highlights significant challenges in civic education and in motivating young people to participate in the electoral process¹². Nonetheless, one of the key takeaways from these elections is that young voters who did turn out showed a stronger preference for traditional parties, with 53% supporting them over independent movements. This outcome likely reflects the established structures and organizational capacity of parties that have traditionally been strong in certain regions, such as the Liberal, Conservative, Centro Democrático, and Cambio Radical parties.

These parties account for nearly 30% of registered voters and 60% of candidates fielded by political parties. As a result, traditional parties continue to leverage these platforms as strategic spaces for political positioning and influence¹³. It is important to note, for example, that the Pacto Histórico did not participate in these elections in a cohesive or unified manner. Each of its constituent parties—Colombia Humana, the Polo Democrático Alternativo, and other affiliated groups—fielded their own separate candidates¹⁴. Thus, for these elections, the main challenge does not appear to lie solely in the results or the performance of

‘Young people who did decide to vote are more inclined towards traditional parties.’

one political current over another, but rather in the creation of robust and lasting political alliances that foster unity between parties and independent movements. The ultimate goal is to overcome the real “winner” of the elections: voter abstention. This context reflects an ongoing process of political and social building that must be expanded and deepened to achieve greater impact in the national electoral landscape of 2026—particularly in terms of mobilizing and representing Colombian youth, who played a decisive role in the previous presidential elections.



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