



Bulletin of Advanced Spanish

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¡Bienvenidos al Boletín de verano de 2026!

End of year exams can be a satisfying way to bring together the different aspects of your studies and turn them into a coherent whole.

What's even better about them is that they're followed by the holidays – a time to refresh and re-set.

There are few better ways of doing that than by traveling to new places. Fitting, then, that this Summer Edition brings you a number of articles with a strong sense of place... such as Costa Rica. We look at what makes that country such a renowned refuge for rediscovering *la paz interna*. *[In Spanish]*



The Vatican Gardens are the venue for a similarly meaningful experience for our co-founder Stephen Hart, who huddles in the drizzle among Peruvian devotees awaiting the Pope's 'enthronement' of their [patron saint, Rosa](#). We hear his account of the occasion, and of the saint's life.

We return to the River Plate docklands of 130 years ago to find the [origins of tango](#), and how it became a global phenomenon.

We look back at the battleground for [Peru's 1991 struggle against cholera](#). Why did the epidemic hit Peru so hard then, and does the country remain vulnerable today?

We revisit the Barcelona streets of May 1937, where the [Republican cause imploded](#), shaping the outcome of the Spanish Civil War. We assess why that happened.

[Spain's population](#) is forecast to nudge above 50 million later this year. We take a look at how demographic trends shape the country.



The distinctiveness of [the Basque Country](#) has long been acknowledged. We explore key aspects of its history and culture. *[In Spanish]*

As it happens, [Los domingos](#), the film that triumphed in most major categories at the 2026 Goya Awards, is set in the Basque Country. We look at the issues it raises for family relationships and Catholic values.

Across the Atlantic the 2026 Grammys were an equally triumphant occasion for Puerto Rican singer and performer [Bad Bunny](#). He capped this career high with a breathtaking Super Bowl performance – while at home in Puerto Rico, he is recognised for promoting the language and culture of this Spanish-speaking island. We ask: is he the true face of America?



The repercussions of the US raid on Venezuela in January continue to reshape the power balance in the region. President Trump claims his *Escudo* (Shield) initiative will tackle crime and the drugs trade in Latin America. Our expert

analysts in Miami and Mexico City assess its likely impact on the region. *[In both [Spanish](#) and [English](#)]*

Oxford will be hosting the JLACS Latin American cultural conference this summer. Find the details [here](#).

And of course... our Summer Edition is where we announce details of the 2026 Bulletin of Advanced Spanish / University of Glasgow Sixth Form Essay Competition, now in its fourth year. Find all you need [here](#).

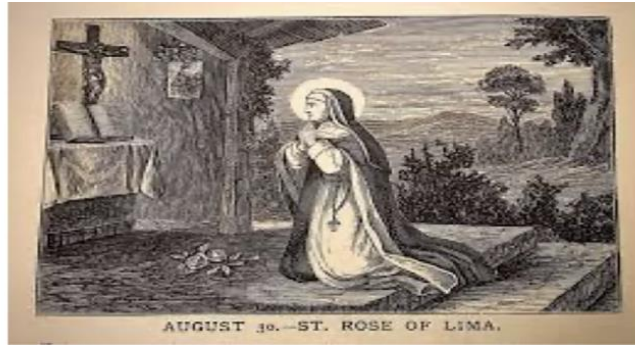
For insights into this edition of the Bulletin, and for a look forward to our tenth year starting in September, we invite you to join us [Behind the Scenes](#). The Bulletin of Advanced Spanish is a free, online resource, which is read on every continent. It is written by and for enthusiasts at all stages of their exploration of the language and culture of the Spanish-speaking world. Might you like to join our team? You can contact us via the tab above.

Please see the Guidelines tab if you would like to write for us. Articles for our Autumn edition should please reach us by 25 September 2026.

We wish our readers involved in exams an uplifting and successful experience.

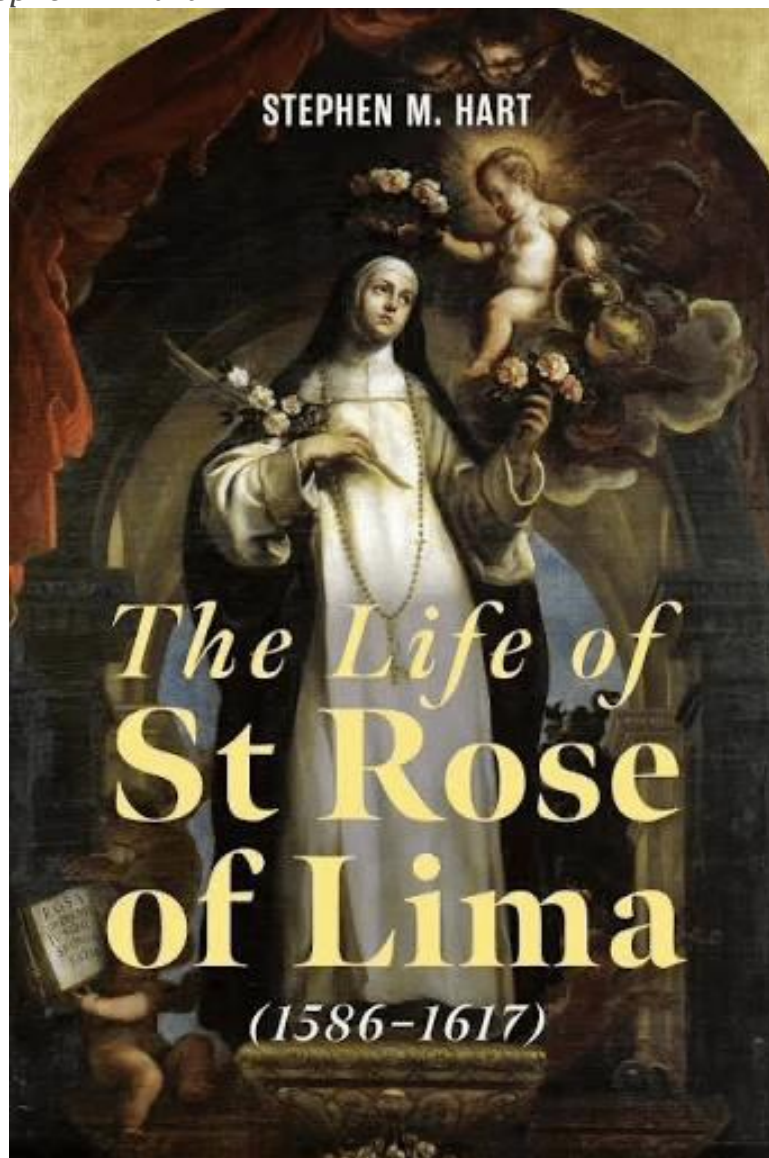
Felices vacaciones,

The BAS editorial team



The “Enthronement” of Saint Rose: Pope Leo honours Peru’s patron saint

BAS Editor Stephen M Hart



It feels almost surreal to find myself here in the Vatican Gardens awaiting the arrival of the Pope, this January day of 2026.

I am here for the 'Enthronement' of St Rose of Lima (1586-1617), the first saint of the Americas. I've been invited because I recently wrote her biography.¹ Apparently this has not gone unnoticed by someone in high office...²

I first became interested in St Rose's life and work in the summer of 2012 when – while attending a conference on the Peruvian poet, César Vallejo – I happened to stumble on her Santuario in downtown Lima, only a few streets away from the Hotel Bolívar where I was staying. My imagination was caught by the Santuario guide's assertion that none of Lima's abundant population of mosquitos ever bit the future saint.



Later that day I visited the Archivo Arzobispal in Lima to look at the original copy of the Proceso Apostólico. That's how I became hooked on the Santa Rosa de Lima story. How did she become the first saint of the Americas (canonised in 1671), the patron saint of the Americas, Peru and the Philippines, as well as fervently revered in the south of Holland and southern Italy?

I went on to write a critical edition of her Apostolic Process,³ based on archives in the Vatican Library, as well as a new biography in Spanish.⁴ In doing so I discovered a 'second' Apostolic Process in the Vatican archives,

which I also published,⁵ as well as landing a Senior Research Fellowship funded by the Leverhulme Foundation.

And here I am, 14 years later, feeling distinctly nervous about the occasion. I have only just learned that Pope Leo himself will not only be attending the Enthronement, but also presiding over the event, an innovation for which – I am given to understand – special authorisation has been secured in the past week.

Ushered in through a small gate on the western side of St Peter's, guided up a steep incline, past a now defunct railway line and astonishing mazes, I finally arrive in the beautifully manicured gardens.



The front row of seating is already occupied by cardinals in their red *zucchetti* skullcaps. The other 400 or so *devotos* are mainly bishops, priests and nuns from Peru, along with civic dignitaries mainly of ambassadorial rank, high-ranking military officials, and staff members of the embassies accredited to the Holy See that have received an official invitation. Canopies have been erected to protect us from the rain that has been forecast.



You could cut with a knife the nervous anticipation hanging in the air. All at once the cloudburst comes, but swiftly recedes before the advance of His Holiness Leo XIV – and here he comes. Relaxed, debonair, smiling broadly at everyone he encounters, he even jokes about the “blessing” of a good downpour.

He then addresses the gathering:

“Queridos hermanos y hermanas, nos reúne hoy un feliz acontecimiento, la inauguración de un mosaico dedicado a la Santísima Virgen, y de una imagen de Santa Rosa de Lima, aquí en los jardines vaticanos. Este gesto renueva los profundos lazos de fe y amistad que unen al Perú, como ustedes saben, un país tan querido para mí, con la Santa Sede.”



("Dear brethren, we are gathered together today to witness a happy event, the inauguration of a mosaic dedicated to the Most Holy Virgin, and an image of St Rose of Lima, here in the Vatican Gardens. This gesture renews the profound links of faith and friendship which bring together Peru – as you know, a country I love so much – and the Holy See.")

The Peruvians in attendance nod appreciatively. "Our Pope is American," says one, "but his heart is Peruvian."

His Holiness goes on to affirm the continuing importance of the mission of the Catholic Church in the Americas, as epitomised by the figure of the Virgin Mary. To rapturous applause, he then unveils the mosaic and the statue.

Just as he is leaving, job done, a cry goes up. Could the Santo Padre bless the baby? His black limousine jerks to a halt, and out jumps the Pope. With another flash of that smile, he makes the sign of the cross over the child's head. Then, in an instant, he is gone again, leaving the beaming mother trying to take in what has just happened.

The proceedings conclude with a magical-real lunch of Peruvian cuisine – *ceviche* and *papas a la huancaína*. This gives me the opportunity to consult

no less an authority than the Archbishop of Lima about the theological meaning of the “enthronement”. Sipping our pisco sours, he explains to me that it signals the formal inauguration or exaltation of a spiritual figure, and is thus a worthy honour for the new Pope to confer on the Virgin Mary and St Rose of Lima.



1. Stephen M. Hart, *The Life of St Rose of Lima (1586-1617)* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2026). ↵
2. Stephen M. Hart, *The Life of St Rose of Lima (1586-1617)* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2026). ↵
3. Hart, *Edición crítica del Proceso Apostólico de Santa Rosa de Lima (1630-1632): Congr. Riti Processus 1573, Archivum Secretum Vaticanum* (Lima: Cátedra Vallejo, 2017). ↵
4. Hart, *Santa Rosa de Lima (1586-1617): La evolución de una santa* (Lima: Cátedra Vallejo, 2017). ↵
5. Hart, *Edición crítica del Segundo Proceso Apostólico de Santa Rosa de Lima “Rosa a Sancta Maria III Ord. S. Dominici: Supplementa Proc.” (1670): Congr. Riti Processus 2208, Archivum Secretum Vaticanum* (Lima: Cátedra Vallejo, 2019). ↵



El Escudo de las Américas: ¿la democracia fortalecida, o abandonada?

Clara Riveros recoge un análisis experto de la política de Trump hacia América Latina.



Eduardo Gamarra, profesor titular de Ciencias Políticas de la Universidad Internacional de Florida (FIU), no oculta su preocupación por el futuro de la democracia en Estados Unidos. En 2025 ya se preveía que una prioridad de la segunda presidencia Trump sería priorizar el hemisferio occidental. “En ese

sentido, el Escudo de las Américas y la Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional, presentada en diciembre de 2025, hacen que la política exterior estadounidense fuera previsible. Pero, tras los eventos de enero de 2026 en Venezuela, sobresalen cuestiones problemáticas, como el abandono total de la democracia como un valor de la política exterior estadounidense desde hace décadas”, destaca el profesor en entrevista para este *Bulletin (BAS)*.



Asimismo Mario Ojeda Revah, profesor de Relaciones Internacionales en la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), en enero de 2026 tildó la política exterior de la administración Trump de ‘chantajista’. Véanse los aranceles, entre otras medidas, como forma de una política ‘gansteril’, dijo.

Según esta perspectiva, el clima triunfalista, tras la captura del dictador Nicolás Maduro, afianzó a Trump en su sentir de omnipotencia. “La doctrina ‘Donroe’ es un fiel reflejo de Trump: justifica decisiones en razón de la seguridad nacional estadounidense y en el hecho de que el hemisferio

occidental es su área de influencia. Y bajo ese paradigma está alineando a América Latina. Trump no ha tenido contención externa efectiva que lo obligue a moderarse, los hechos recientes lo corroboran”, comenta Ojeda Revah en diálogo con el *BAS*.



Donald Trump no tiene problemas con la imagen que proyecta. Poco o nada ha dicho de democracia en relación con Venezuela. Tras la extracción del dictador del país andino ha convertido en ‘presidenta electa’ y fantástica colaboradora a la dictadora interina Delcy Rodríguez. La palabra petróleo es probablemente el término que más ha salido de la boca de Trump cuando habla de Venezuela. “Está muy claro qué es lo que interesa a la administración: una promoción de los intereses nacionales de Estados Unidos. El petróleo es definitivamente una prioridad, no así la transición a la democracia o el aparato represivo del régimen chavista”, precisa Gamarra.



El régimen chavista, por su parte, se ha adaptado y acomodado a las nuevas circunstancias. La estrategia estadounidense es, según se ha dicho, estabilizar Venezuela, luego vendrá la reconstrucción y, en tercer lugar, la transición todavía sin fecha. La administración estadounidense creyó que podía replicar esa operación en Cuba y también en Irán, pero, en Venezuela, la cúpula chavista traicionó a Maduro. Irán no es Venezuela y Cuba tampoco es Venezuela, coinciden Gamarra y Ojeda Revah.

¿Por qué tanta desmesura de la administración americana?

“Trump no puede reelegirse. Esto ayuda a entender, de alguna manera, por qué el presidente actúa como lo hace. De hecho, ya se advierte que en las elecciones de medio término, en noviembre de 2026, su partido podría perder en ambas Cámaras”, precisa Gamarra.



Desde 2025 las encuestas vienen mostrando que la desaprobación supera la aprobación de la gestión republicana. El profesor Gamarra ha presentado, el lunes 13 de abril, los resultados de una encuesta que realizó en 12 estados y que evidencia cómo los electores latinos desaprueban mayoritariamente las políticas y la gestión Trump. Incluso entre la comunidad cubana, siempre favorable a Trump, la aprobación ha descendido. También los electores independientes, no solo los demócratas, rechazan mayoritariamente la gestión republicana, precisa Gamarra.



Transcurre la segunda semana de abril. Hace cuarenta días que inició la guerra de Estados Unidos e Israel contra Irán. Donald Trump se muestra más incontinente que nunca. Ha amenazado con destruir la civilización iraní, si el régimen no atendía su ultimátum y abría el estrecho de Ormuz, lo hizo empleando un lenguaje grotesco y vulgar, restándole dignidad al cargo que ocupa. Analistas internacionales sugieren que la imagen y la credibilidad estadounidense se han afectado severamente. Estados Unidos, más allá de sus partes de victoria, está perdiendo esta guerra porque para ganarla precisa mucho más que victorias tácticas. Irán y China, en cambio, se han beneficiado y ganan posiciones en el tablero político internacional. China lo logra sin hacer mayor cosa para conseguirlo e Irán a pesar de sí mismo.

El Escudo de las Américas

A inicios de marzo se celebró en Miami la Cumbre del Escudo de las Américas. Asistieron doce mandatarios regionales, afines ideológicamente al presidente republicano.



La Cumbre acordó la creación de una coalición militar regional contra los carteles de la droga y el crimen organizado. También se pretende enfrentar la inmigración irregular masiva y alcanzar acuerdos con los países participantes para la recepción de inmigrantes deportados desde Estados Unidos. Un tercer objetivo es impedir que China logre convertir la región en su área de influencia.



“Acordamos usar fuerza militar letal para destruir estos siniestros cárteles y sus redes terroristas”, indicó el presidente [Trump](#) – anticipando así la celebración de más operaciones conjuntas como las que han tenido lugar en Ecuador con apoyo de fuerzas estadounidenses. México, Colombia y Brasil, con gobiernos de izquierda populista, estuvieron ausentes de la Cumbre, pese a ser algunos de los países más importantes y problemáticos, por los efectos de derrame que generan sobre las Américas, hablando de los cárteles narcotraficantes y agrupaciones criminales y terroristas que emergieron en esos territorios y se expandieron por la región.



Gamarra analiza que esta iniciativa del Escudo de las Américas se corresponde con la Estrategia de Seguridad Nacional de Estados Unidos y está en estrecha consonancia con la llamada ‘doctrina Donroe’. Puede ser, también, una respuesta ideológica a iniciativas y bloques de corte socialista que ha conocido América Latina en los años precedentes, con la particularidad de que ha sido promovida por una super potencia, Estados Unidos, el país más poderoso del mundo en términos militares. Sí es una coalición militar regional, como lo evidencia la celebración de la reunión de ministros de Defensa, previa a la Cumbre, en la que quedó claro que, si la región no actúa de manera suficiente contra las amenazas que representa el narcotráfico y el crimen transnacional, Estados Unidos sí lo hará. Estados Unidos tiene la capacidad tecnológica y la fuerza militar para hacerlo, precisa el profesor de FIU.

Gamarra y Ojeda Revah coinciden al observar las asimetrías existentes entre los países latinoamericanos, sus capacidades militares, tecnológicas y de inteligencia, así como los contextos políticos e históricos, sus crisis y colapsos, factores que inciden, explican y ayudan a entender las coyunturas y prioridades, así como el alineamiento estratégico con Estados Unidos en esta iniciativa del Escudo de las Américas.



Expulsar o aislar a China de América Latina, tal y como desea Estados Unidos, no será una tarea fácil debido al posicionamiento y a la presencia adquirida por la potencia asiática en varios países de la región, en las décadas recientes, cuando Estados Unidos no tenía como prioridad a América Latina. Dicha circunstancia, la presencia china, condiciona la confianza estadounidense frente a sus socios latinoamericanos, así como el fortalecimiento de las relaciones entre países latinoamericanos y los Estados Unidos tras el capítulo del Socialismo del Siglo XXI.

Respecto al impacto y a las reacciones en México, frente al hecho de que la presidenta Claudia Sheinbaum no fuera convocada, Ojeda Revah comenta que en algunos sectores hubo descalificaciones. “La iniciativa del Escudo de las Américas, vista desde México, un vecino con el cual se mantiene una relación cordial, pero no exenta de tensión, muestra la tendencia y afinidad ideológica de los asistentes. Este hecho limitaba la eventual invitación y participación de la presidenta mexicana”.



Sin embargo, agrega el profesor de la UNAM, “viendo a los ignorados o no invitados, especialmente a Sheinbaum, Lula y Petro, son mandatarios que persisten en sus discursos anacrónicos. Unos y otros les hablan a sus bases, más que a la ciudadanía o al país en su conjunto. Pero, también hay que decirlo, Trump ha doblado a Sheinbaum y a Petro, más allá de los discursos que estos mantienen para sus correligionarios y simpatizantes”. En línea similar, Gamarra nota que cada gobierno puede tener sus relatos, prioridades, objetivos e intereses, pero son conscientes de la inconveniencia de entrar en un conflicto abierto con el presidente Trump.

Ojeda Revah finaliza la entrevista, entre la risa y el horror, observando que las obscenidades expresadas por el presidente Trump ya sea hablando de sus amigos, como la reciente referencia al príncipe heredero saudí Mohammed Bin Salman, o de sus enemigos, los iraníes, son una suerte de evocación de Abdalá Bucaram, el otrora soez y locuaz presidente ecuatoriano que en 1997 fue destituido por “incapacidad mental”. Un Bucaram en la Casa Blanca, liderando el país más poderoso del mundo, no es una buena noticia.

** Clara Riveros, Americas Bureau Chief, published author, journalist, opinion columnist, anchor and consultant. BA degree in Political Science from the National University of Colombia (Faculty of Law, Political and Social Sciences). A keen traveller, who has over the past ten years lived in the Americas, southern Europe and North Africa.*



The Shield of the Americas: democracy strengthened or abandoned?

Clara Riveros presents an expert analysis of Trump's plans for Latin America.



Eduardo Gamarra, Professor of Political Science at Florida International University (FIU), is a worried man.

It's been clear to him since the start of Trump's second term in 2025 that the Western Hemisphere would be a priority for this US Administration. The National Security Strategy, published in December 2025, confirmed that. Then came the events of January 2026 in Venezuela: for Professor Gamarra, what

has happened in Venezuela represents “the complete abandonment of democracy as the core value of US foreign policy for the past few decades”.

Talking to the Bulletin of Advanced Spanish, he does not hide his concern about the implications of this for the future of democracy in the United States.



His concerns are shared by Mario Ojeda Revah, Professor of International Relations at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). He regards aspects of Trump’s foreign policy, such as punitive tariffs, as a form of “blackmail,” akin to ‘gangsterism’.

The triumphalist aftermath to the capture of Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro has reinforced Trump’s sense of omnipotence. “The ‘Donroe’ doctrine is a true reflection of Trump,” Professor Ojeda Revah tells the Bulletin. “He

justifies decisions based on U.S. national security and his conviction that the Western Hemisphere is a US sphere of influence. And under this paradigm, he is lining Latin American states up with his position. There are no restraining influence to make him moderate his stance, as recent events have shown”.



Donald Trump is unconcerned about the image he projects. He has said little or nothing about democracy in relation to Venezuela. Instead, he has reinvented the interim dictator Delcy Rodríguez as the “elected president” and collaborator. ‘Oil’ is probably the term he uses most frequently when speaking about Venezuela. “It’s very clear what the administration is interested in,” Gamarra explains: “promoting U.S. national interests. Oil is their priority, not the transition to democracy or removing the repressive apparatus of the Chavista regime”.



That regime, for its part, has adapted and accommodated itself to the new circumstances. The US strategy has been announced as stabilisation of Venezuela, followed by reconstruction and transition, the date of which is still unknown. The US administration believed it could replicate this operation in Cuba and also in Iran. However, part of the reason it worked in Venezuela was that the Chavista leadership betrayed Maduro. Iran and Cuba present different challenges, Gamarra and Ojeda Revah agree.

Why such haste on the part of the American administration?

Professor Gamarra points out that “Trump cannot be re-elected. This helps to understand, to some extent, why the President acts as he does. In fact, it is already clear that in the mid-term elections in November 2026, his party could lose in both houses of Congress.”



Since 2025, polls have shown that disapproval of the Republican administration exceeds approval. On 13 April 2026 Professor Gamarra presented the results of a survey he conducted in 12 US states, which show that Latino voters overwhelmingly disapprove of Trump's Administration. Even among the Cuban community, historically supportive of Trump, approval has declined. Independent voters, not just Democrats, also largely reject the Republican Administration.



By the end of April 2026 sixty days have passed since the US and Israel launched their war on Iran. Trump is more unrestrained than ever. He has threatened to destroy Iranian civilization, used grotesque and vulgar language, and diminished the dignity of the office he holds. The image and credibility of the United States have been severely damaged.

Despite its claims of victory, the United States is losing its war on Iran because winning it requires much more than tactical victories. Iran and China, on the other hand, have benefited, and are gaining ground on the international political stage. China achieves this without much effort, and Iran in spite of itself.

The Shield of the Americas (*Escudo de las Américas*)

In early March, the Summit of the Shield of the Americas was held in Miami. Twelve regional leaders, ideologically aligned with the Republican US President, attended.



The Summit agreed to create a regional military coalition against drug cartels and organised crime. It also declared its intention to address mass irregular immigration and reach agreements with participating countries for the reception of immigrants deported from the United States. A third objective is to prevent China from establishing its sphere of influence in the region.



“We agreed to use lethal military force to destroy these sinister cartels and their terrorist networks,” President Trump announced, thus anticipating more joint operations like those that have taken place in Ecuador involving U.S. forces.

Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil, with their populist left-wing governments, were absent from the Summit, despite the major contribution of at least the first two mentioned to the drug trade and the criminal groups that have emerged in those territories and expanded across the region.



Professor Gamarra points out that this Shield of the Americas initiative aligns with the U.S. National Security Strategy and is consistent with the so-called Donroe Doctrine. It may also be an ideological response to the socialist-leaning initiatives and blocs that Latin America has experienced in recent years. It also has the distinction of having the backing of the United States, the world's leading military superpower. It is a regional military coalition, as evidenced by the meeting of Defense Ministers held prior to the Summit, where it became clear that if the region does not act decisively against the threats posed by drug-trafficking and transnational crime, the United States will.

Both professors Gamarra and Ojeda Revah regard the asymmetries among Latin American countries as a crucial factor in this new alignment under the 'Shield'. Their military, technological and intelligence capabilities, as well as their political and historical contexts, crises, and collapses all influence and help to understand their current predicaments and priorities, as well as their need for strategic alignment with the United States.



Expelling or isolating China from Latin America, as the United States desires, will not be an easy task due to the positioning and presence acquired by the Asian power in several countries of the region in recent decades, when the United States was paying less attention to Latin America and the Caribbean. This circumstance—the Chinese presence—complicates attempts to strengthen relations between regional countries and the United States after the era of 21st-century socialism.

Professor Ojeda Revah comments that in Mexico there was criticism in some sectors of President Claudia Sheinbaum not being invited to the Summit. “Mexico and the US are neighbouring states with a cordial but somewhat tense relationship. As far as the Shield of the Americas is concerned, the ideological leanings and affinities of the attendees made it difficult to invite the Mexican president, and would have made it difficult for her to attend.”



However, the UNAM professor adds, “Looking at those ignored or not invited, especially Sheinbaum, Lula, and Petro, they all have a propensity for outdated rhetoric. They speak to their base rather than to the citizenry or the country as a whole. But, it must also be said, Trump has actually influenced Sheinbaum and Petro, beyond the rhetoric they use for their supporters and sympathisers.” Similarly, Gamarra notes that each government may have its own narratives, priorities, objectives, and interests, but they are all aware of the inadvisability of entering into open conflict with President Trump.

Ojeda Revah concludes the interview on the borderline between comedy and horror, observing that the obscenities uttered by President Trump, whether speaking of his friends, as in the recent reference to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, or of his enemies, the Iranians, are a kind of evocation of Abdalá Bucaram, the once vulgar and loquacious Ecuadorian president. Bucaram’s brief presidency ended with his removal from office in 1997 for ‘mental incapacity.’ A Bucaram in the White House, leading the most powerful country in the world, would not be good news.

Clara Riveros, Americas Bureau Chief, published author, journalist, opinion columnist, anchor and consultant. BA degree in Political Science from the National University of Colombia (Faculty of Law, Political and Social Sciences). A keen traveller, who has over the past ten years lived in the Americas, southern Europe and North Africa.



Spain's population to hit 50 million

BAS editor William Chislett

Spain's population will reach 50 million this year, having grown more than 14 million over the last half century, the largest increase among the five biggest EU nations in relative terms (see Figure 1). The surge in population is almost entirely due to net international migration and not to an increase in the native-born population. Not that many decades ago, Spain was a net emigration country.

Figure 1. Population growth, 1975-2025 (million)

	1975	2025 (1)	Absolute change	% change
France	54.0	69.1	+ 15.1	+30.0
Germany (2)	78.7	84.1	+5.4	+6.8
Italy	55.4	59.0	+3.6	+6.3
Poland	34.0	37.3	+4.1	+9.7
Spain	35.7	49.6	+13.9	+38.9

(1) Year-end estimates

(2) East and West Germany for 1975.

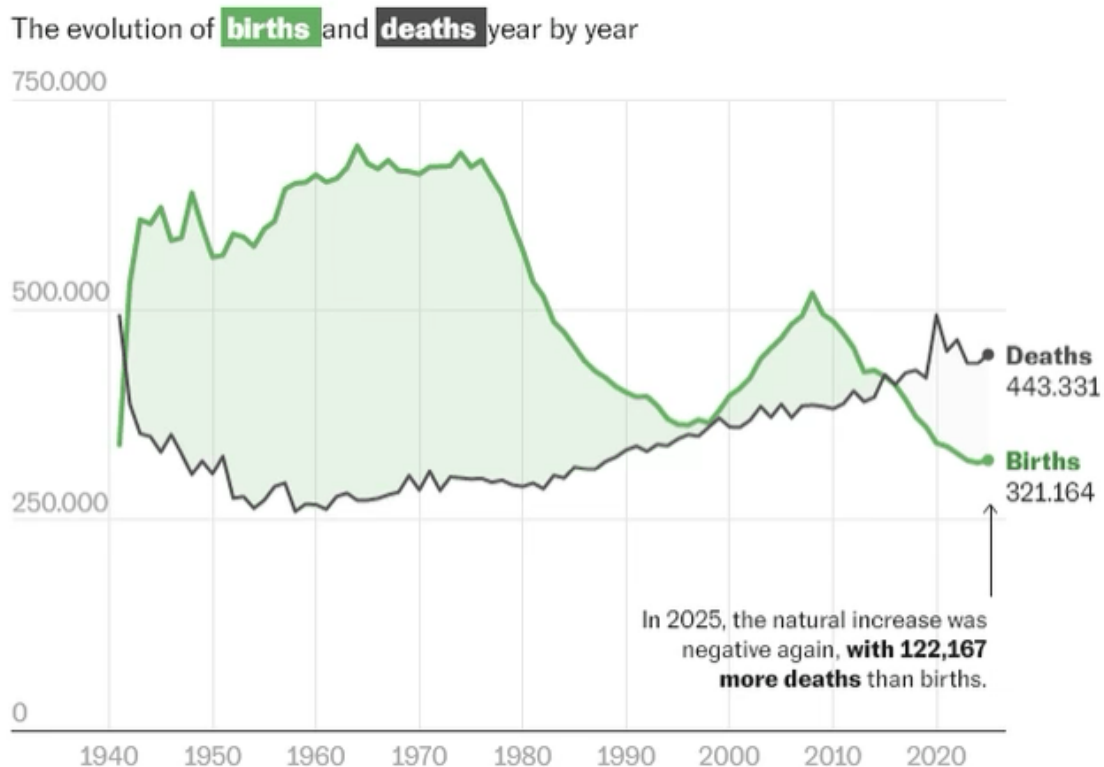
Source: World Bank Data & INE.

Such has been the growth in immigrants that the government began an amnesty in April until June for undocumented migrants, which is estimated will benefit more than 500,000 people. This "regularisation" is the seventh in 40 years, benefiting more than 1.7 million people. Applicants have to prove they do not have a criminal record and had lived in Spain for at least five months before 31 December 2025. The regularisation permit will be valid for one year –or five in the case of children– and renewable. After 10 years these

migrants will be eligible to become Spanish citizens. They will not be eligible to move to other EU countries and work there legally until they have permanent residency in Spain.

Spain's total fertility rate plummeted from 3 in 1964 to 2 in 1981 and to 1.2 in 2025, one of the lowest in the world and far short of the 2.1 at which existing population levels would be maintained in the absence of migration. Deaths have outnumbered births every year since 2015 (see Figure 2). This is a more recent trend in the UK.

Figure 2.



Source: INE / EL PAÍS

In 1996 the United Nations forecast that by 2050 the total population of Spain would fall from almost 40 million to 28-30 million unless trends changed. They did, and significantly: the foreign-born population surged from 542,314 in 1996 (1.4% of the total population) to just over 10 million in 2025 (20%, higher than in France and Italy, and comparable to Germany).

The first influx of immigrants took place between 1995 and 2008 during Spain's infrastructure and property boom, fuelled by cheap euro borrowing, low interest rates and lax lending by banks. An ageing population –Spain's average life expectancy has risen from 73.3 years in 1975 to 84 years now– and a dwindling 'native' labour force opened up numerous jobs for immigrants until the global financial crisis and the real-estate crash.

Immigrants are improving the shape of Spain's population pyramid, mitigating the ageing population. The fertility rate of foreigners (1.27), however, is not much higher than that of Spaniards (1.10).



The flow of immigrants dried up between 2009 and 2017 – a period of high unemployment and deep recession – but a second influx began as of 2018. Despite the devastating impact of COVID, this wave intensified after 2022. The foreign-born population has increased by more than 1.6 million since then, and is powering an economy which has been growing at more than double the euro-zone average.

Foreign workers now make up 14.4% of total employment (based on those contributing to the social security system), filling 44% of new jobs in 2025. The proportion of foreigners actively participating in the labour market is almost 70%, much higher than the 56.4% for Spain as whole. The total working population has risen by two million since 2020 to more than 25 million, a bigger increase than between 2005 and 2020, and the unemployment rate has come down from 16% in 2020 to an albeit still high 10%. Foreign workers contribute 10% of the social security system's revenue and are responsible for 1% of its costs, according to a recent report.

Migrants in a country with a rapidly ageing population are supporting key sectors such as household chores, hospitality and agriculture (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. The 10 main sectors where foreigners paying social security work, September 2025 (%)

	Foreigners	Spaniards (1)
Household chores	38	62

Hospitality	29	71
Agriculture, livestock farming, forestry and fishing	28	72
Construction	21	79
Administrative and support services	18	82
Transport and storage	17	83
Real estate	16	84
Other services	16	84
Information and communications	14	86
Car sales and repairs	13	87

(1) Including naturalised Spaniards.

Source: Ministry of the Presidency.

Estimates vary, but on current trends, all projections point to a big increase in the old-age dependency ratio. The statistics institute INE projects that there will be just 1.2 people of working age for every person over the age of 65 in 2050 compared with the current 2.6.

Such a demographic shift, unless countered by migration, will reduce labour supply, slow potential output growth, weigh on government and public services with an ageing civil service, and place growing pressures on public finances, particularly the pay-as-you-go pension and healthcare systems.



Over the past 25 years Spain has become, like many other EU countries, a much more diverse society. Spain has more Latin Americans (4.2 million in 2024) than the rest of the EU together (around 3 million). Latin Americans bring with them the Spanish language (except for Brazil) and, generally, the Roman Catholic religion, easing their integration into Spanish society.

Most Latin Americans do not need a visa to come to Spain (one has to ask whether this policy can last for ever). For them, the process of obtaining Spanish nationality is easier than for other countries. Indeed, 45% of Latin American immigrants have already acquired Spanish nationality. Their level of educational attainment is generally low, but higher than that for immigrants from Asia and Africa. Those with higher educational attainment, such as lawyers, doctors and engineers, find it more difficult to get a job because of the long time it takes to get their professional qualifications officially validated.

While assimilation has been largely successful, it is striking how very few MPs in Spain are foreign-born (only 45 of the almost 4,000 MPs between 1993 and the last election in 2023, far lower than the UK, the Netherlands and Germany, according to a study by Proyecto Repchance). Anti-migrant demonstrations and violence have also been comparatively infrequent. The worst recently was last July in Torre-Pacheco in Murcia, when an attack on a pensioner sparked anti-migrant unrest.



Of those who do not have Spanish nationality, the largest country group is from Morocco, followed by Romania. Moroccans, because of language and cultural issues, have not assimilated as easily. Romanians, on the other hand, pick up Spanish quickly as both languages are descended from Vulgar Latin.

While polls show immigrants are viewed as playing a positive role in powering the economy, they also present challenges and the need for greater long-term planning.

While by far the main negative aspect of immigration for young adults (18-24-year olds) is greater insecurity, which is more perceived than real as Spain is a relatively safe country with low violent crime, the main concern for those aged 45 to 74 is the greater pressure on public services, according to a [report](#) by Opina360.

The insecurity issue is linked to the sharp increase in young adults supporting the hard-right, anti-immigrant VOX, whose claims draw on misinformation rather than reliable evidence. Only 7% of respondents identifying themselves as on the left said insecurity was greater now, compared with 50% on the right. VOX has been campaigning against the regularisation under the slogan *¡Ni uno más!* (not a single one more).



One of Spain's most pressing social problems is the lack of new affordable housing. The economy needs immigrant labour, and those immigrants need homes, adding further to the housing shortage. The supply of properties cannot keep up with the influx of new arrivals, let alone with the resident population. Surveys by the state pollster CIS show immigration is one of the main concerns after the housing shortage (20.3% of respondents in the February survey, compared with 42.8% for housing).

Approximately 140,000 new households are established each year, but only around 80,000 new homes are built. The situation today is a far cry from that in 2008, before the crash of the housing boom, when there was a huge oversupply of properties. In 2006 the number of housing starts (664,923) was more than that of Germany, France and Italy combined.

Furthermore, Spain's stock of social rental dwellings (2.5% of the total housing stock, compared with an EU average of 9%) is the lowest among the 38 OECD countries. The housing bottleneck raises questions over whether immigrant arrivals can continue at the current pace. Yet without immigrants Spain would, over the next decade, have many unfilled job vacancies.



The OECD points out that there are an estimated 3.8 million empty properties in Spain, but these are mostly located in places where people do not want to live because job prospects are limited and basic services and amenities are not close at hand. One-third of empty properties are in towns with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants, in what is known as *la España vaciada* (emptied-out Spain), and only 18% in cities. It has been noted that the Catholic Church has unused buildings and the Ministry of Defence empty barracks and land that could be used for housing.

The demographic issues in the broadest sense need to be tackled through consensus between the main political parties, but in today's Spain, with its deeply ideological differences and polarisation, that, sadly, is a pipe dream.

Adapted from two reports originally published by the Elcano Royal Institute.



Forms of Love: Faith and Family in ‘Los domingos’ by Alauda Ruiz de Azúa

Dr Azariah Alfante, Lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the University of Glasgow



At the 40th Goya Awards ceremony in February 2026, Basque filmmaker Alauda Ruiz de Azúa’s film *Los domingos* (2025) reaped five major awards:

Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Actress (Patricia López Arnaiz), and Best Supporting Actress (Nagore Aranburu).

This film was one of a kind, boasting a terrific script and featuring renowned actors and a promising new star, Blanca Soroa, in her film debut. Ruiz de Azúa previously won a Best New Director Goya for *Cinco lobitos* (2022), another great film set in the Basque Country about the relationship between a mother and her daughter.

A film about cloistered nuns? The last such one I saw was *The Nun* (2018).

And that was a horror movie. A fresh and more accurate addition therefore to contemporary cinema, *Los domingos* tells the story of Ainara (Soroa), a seventeen-year-old high school student, who is pondering what to do with her life. She's normal. She has friends. They hang out. They sing in the school choir. She likes a guy called Mikel. He also sings in the choir.



At the start of the film, Ainara rises early one morning during a religious youth retreat to watch the nuns sing the Divine Office in the church. Her heart is set on joining them and she quietly prepares herself to be a part of this tight-knit community.

Her aunt, Maite (López Arnaiz), and her father, Iñaki (Miguel Garcés), disagree with her plan to enter the convent for various reasons, chief amongst them being that no girl in her right mind would join a group of elderly, cloistered nuns. "*Parece una locura*," the mildly anticlerical Maite tells her brother, later suggesting that Ainara see a psychologist. Both mean well, despite their disapproval; after all, Maite has watched over Ainara ever since the death of the latter's mother, when she was very young.



Their misunderstandings mirror modern-day stereotypes and prejudices towards Catholic practices and consecrated life. Ainara acknowledges the nearness of the Virgin Mary by wearing her medal, a gift from her mother before her death; Maite, however, regards this as an attempt to cope with loss. First Communion, funerals, hymns and prayers all feature in the family's life to varying degrees, from religious devotion for Ainara to cultural observance for the likes of Iñaki and Maite. The story thus serves as a prism that presents societal and familial perspectives that conflict with Ainara's dream.

In her interviews, Ruiz de Azúa highlights the process of trying to understand how practising believers view love and faith, coming from a non-religious perspective herself. The film's title encapsulates the encounter of the spiritual and the worldly, as familial, platonic, romantic, and religious expressions of love cleave and clash. The secular and religious music in the soundtrack blend well. The depiction of daily, family life adds a dose of humour.

Ruiz de Azúa's depiction of proximate spaces speaks volumes; the apartment, the church, and the school are the main sites where the drama unfolds. When Maite attempts to convince Ainara of the world of dazzling experiences that awaits her outside the cloister—university, friends, travel, relationships—Ainara asks her if she could describe her love for her partner, Pablo. Maite is taken aback. It's as if she can't answer – or possibly there is more to this love than she can explain to her young niece.



During her period of discernment at the convent, where she lives alongside the Mother Prioress Isabel (Aranburu) and her fellow Sisters, Ainara learns about the duties of consecrated life and its emphasis on love for God and love for one another. “*Este amor no existe*,” Maite warns Ainara, yet an aged nun tells Iñaki and Maite that she entered her vocation in her late teens and has lived it ever since.

What stands out is the film’s focus on multiple perspectives and questions of faith. Ruiz de Azúa thereby prompts us to ponder the impact of faith on present and future generations. After all, while a 2025 survey showed that 53% of Spain’s population is Catholic, only 17% of the population practises the faith (EFE).

The careful characterisation of Ainara reflects the similarities and differences between herself, her peers, and her immediate and extended family. At her grandmother’s funeral, Ainara prays earnestly to God at the altar. Her father and aunt watch her silently, struggling to understand, but seeking to love, too – illustrating, perhaps, that dealing with barriers between people who love one another is all part of a process of personal and spiritual development.



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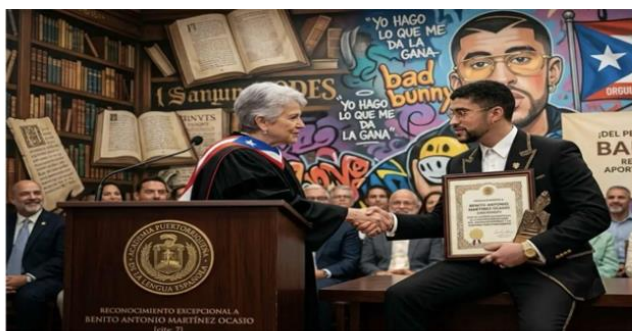
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Bad Bunny: champion of the Grammys, Puerto Rico... and Spanish

Colin Harding

The onward march of Spanish as an international language continues, with Bad Bunny leading the way. In the above photograph he is seen receiving an award from the Puerto Rican Academy of the Spanish Language for ‘projecting the Puerto Rican dialect, with all its idioms and urban cadence, on an unprecedented transcontinental scale, overcoming prejudices and stigmas towards the communication forms of young people and popular communities, and demonstrating that language is a living organism that beats in the street’.



On 1 February 2026 the 31-year-old Puerto Rican rapper and reggaeton star (real name: Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio) made history at the Grammy awards in Los Angeles, when his *Debí tirar más fotos* [*I should have taken more photos*], entirely in Spanish, won Best Album of the year. His acceptance speech was almost all in Spanish, too. “*No existe nada que no podamos lograr* [*There’s nothing we can’t do*],” he told his wildly applauding audience. That’s not all – far from it. The following week Bad Bunny headlined the half-time show at the Super Bowl in Santa Clara, California. The Super Bowl is said

to be the most-watched annual sporting event in the world, broadcast in more than 130 countries. His 13-minute performance was almost entirely in Spanish, again for the first time, and was a breathtakingly audacious celebration of Puerto Rican, and *latino*, history and culture.



As the *Miami Herald* commented: “Bad Bunny’s half-time show reminds the world there is more to ‘America’ than just the US”.

In addition to Best Album, Bad Bunny also took home from the Grammys the award for best Música Urbana Album of the year (*Debí tirar más fotos* again). His reggaeton number *Eoo* was proclaimed Best Global Music Performance. This is not the first time that Bad Bunny has won an award for Spanish-language albums at the Grammys. He won the Música Urbana category for *Un verano sin ti* (2023) and *El último tour del mundo* (2022), and the best Latin pop album for *YHLQMDLG* (2021). In case you’re wondering, YHLQMDLG stands for *Yo Hago Lo Que Me Da La Gana* [I do what I feel like].



The rise of Bad Bunny, a *boricua*¹ (ie Puerto Rican) nationalist and outspoken critic of President Donald Trump's immigration policies, has predictably caused uproar in MAGA circles. Trump complained on Truth Social that "the Grammy Awards are the WORST, virtually unwatchable". The monolingual President was equally outraged by Bad Bunny's Super Bowl performance (which he did not attend), describing it as "one of the worst EVER", and claiming that "nobody understands a word this guy is saying" – except, perhaps, the millions of US citizens whose first language is Spanish or who learn it at school. Trump had earlier said that "I don't know who he is. I don't know why they're doing it. It's like, crazy."

The conservative pressure group Turning Point USA (founded by assassinated right-wing commentator Charlie Kirk) put on an "alternative half-time show" for "underserved" English-speaking Americans, featuring Kid Rock and a trio of country musicians. It was streamed on YouTube at the same time as Bad Bunny's Super Bowl act, and was watched by between five and six million viewers, according to most estimates. Bad Bunny, whose show also featured Ricky Martin and Lady Gaga, was watched by more than 128 million.

In March 2025 Trump had signed an executive order declaring English to be the official language of the United States, shortly after the White House had taken down the Spanish-language version of its website. Until then, throughout its history, the US government had avoided adopting an official language.



The former editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine, Noah Shachtman, commented: “English is no longer the lingua franca of culture in the US”. Bad Bunny has a global impact: he was the most-streamed artist in the world on Spotify last year. On 18 February he was ranked fifth-most popular artist in the world in 2025 by global music-industry body IFPI.

So the Puerto Rican’s popularity goes way beyond the growing number of Spanish-speakers in the US. The online language-learning site Duolingo says that almost 49 million people worldwide are learning Spanish.

Another indication that the President and his supporters may be fighting a losing battle was a poll taken shortly after the Super Bowl show: more of the 1,700 adults questioned by Yahoo/YouGov said that Bad Bunny represents the US better than Trump – 42% to 39%.

Spanish is the biggest minority language in the US, with about 13-14% of the population speaking Spanish at home. Not only that, according to some estimates the United States now has the second-largest Spanish-speaking population in the world. The World Population Review puts the number at 65.5 million, surpassing Colombia, which has 53.1 million. Mexico is the most populous Spanish-speaking country, with 138.1 million.

The number of Spanish speakers in the US has increased more than fivefold in the last 40 years, from about 10 million in the early 1980s.



Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony for more than 400 years. It has a population of about 3.2 million, most of whom speak Spanish. Only 22% of Puerto Ricans claim to speak English “very well”, according to the most recent census. Puerto Rican Spanish can be tricky for non-*boricuas*, and has its own vocabulary, including *pichear* (to ignore) and *jaguear* (to hang out). The island changed hands at the end of the brief Spanish-American War of 1898. In 1917 it was declared a territory of the United States, and in 1952 became a commonwealth (*estado libre asociado*), with its own constitution. Puerto Ricans’ status has been uncertain under US rule: they were granted US citizenship in 1917 and can be drafted into the US armed forces, but cannot vote in US general and presidential elections. The issue of whether Puerto Rico should remain a commonwealth of the US, become a full state of the Union or achieve independence is still a hot topic. The current governor, Jenniffer González-Colón, is pro-statehood, and aligns with the US Republican Party.



Puerto Rico is much poorer than the poorest US state (Mississippi), with a 40% poverty rate. Hurricane Maria in 2017 devastated the island, destroying some 80% of its power transmission and distribution lines. Puerto Rico is still suffering from regular power cuts – a point underlined in Bad Bunny’s Super Bowl show, part of which was performed from the top of a utility pole. The Trump administration has cancelled most of the federal funding earmarked for strengthening the island’s power grid.

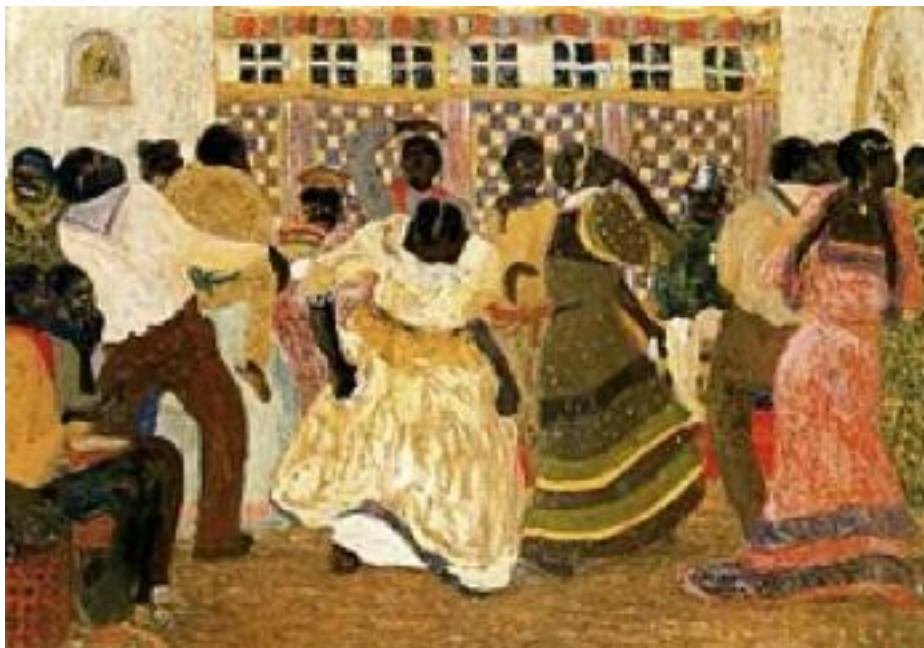
1. *boricua derives from the name given to the island by the indigenous Tainos, who were almost completely wiped out by the Spanish.* ↩



Why did tango emerge in the docklands of Buenos Aires and Montevideo?

Éva De Niro

The tango, born of hardship, struggle and aspiration, evolved as a dance so intense and intimate that it tempted and terrified in equal measure.



Buenos Aires' port neighbourhood La Boca is tango's ground zero. In this working-class ghetto, geographical positioning, class dynamics and societal expectations combined to nurture the tango's emergence in a way that could not have happened in a higher class city district or rural location. Tango's unique fusion of African candombe rhythms, Spanish flamenco and other folk traditions would have been impossible without the cultural diversity of the port neighbourhoods.

The Argentine tango emerged in bars and brothels within these neighbourhoods. It thrived with the mass immigration, booming agricultural trade, modernisation and expansion of Buenos Aires and Montevideo.¹ Around 220,000 immigrants settled in Buenos Aires in 1889, with around a third being Italian.



This huge influx made Buenos Aires the biggest city in South America.² It became the land of opportunity for merchants, travellers and immigrants who all brought their own dances, musics and traditions with them. It created a breeding ground for a fusion of styles: this then was fertile terrain for the tango, which could not have been the case in the countryside, with its lower levels of immigration and diversity.

Social mobility was barely a feature of the evolving *porteño* metropolis. You were born into a class and were expected to stay there. The pastimes which the lower classes created to entertain themselves evolved independently from the social hierarchy. The upper classes, clinging to the established order of European society ('Victorian values'), would have regarded the scandalous intimacy of the tango as proof of the labouring classes' social inferiority. It took decades for them to recognise and acknowledge the artistic qualities of the new dance, their curiosity piqued by the stories they heard from merchants passing through the ports on their way to meet the financiers and landowners with whom they transacted their business.



Given its origins among the lonely and the impecunious, the tango also evolved bearing a stamp of nostalgia and despair. While this aspect of tango may have counted as a stigma in the eyes of the social elite, it became part of tango's appeal to those far from home looking for an emotional release from the hardships of life. It also meant that, as the dance travelled up through society, becoming ever more sophisticated and distinct, it mutated from scandalous to socially acceptable. Ironically, it eventually travelled via these same port neighbourhoods to Europe, where it won, and continues to win, legions of admirers thanks to its high skill levels and evocative moods.



To conclude, this dance could only really have coalesced in the port neighbourhoods, with their perfect geographical position on the boundary between cultures and realities for those who danced the first steps. These *barrios* were potent hotspots for cultural fusion to occur, socially and economically. The people were poor and lonely, and expressed their longings in the way they needed to escape from their lives of hardship. The impassioned tango was their response.

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What were the causes of the 1991 cholera epidemic in Peru?

Dejan Filipas

Cholera is one of the most prevalent diseases to afflict our species. It has caused seven pandemics since the 19th century, with many of its victims in Latin America. This analysis will explore the 1991 outbreak in Peru, examining how the country's infrastructure, economy and culture contributed to the rapid spread of the disease.

Cholera is caused by the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae*. (1) This releases a toxin which affects the intestine's ability to regulate the uptake of water, with cells "being tricked" (3) into releasing water rather than absorbing it. This then leads to dehydration and possible death.



Cholera's devastating impact has mostly been due to the way it spreads, through unclean water supplies as well as crops and seafood (mostly raw shellfish). It has therefore been particularly prevalent in tropical climates and in countries with a high reliance on seafood, both of which apply to Peru, whose seafood consumption sector sustains over 200,000 jobs and is valued at over 5bn USD (2).

Paradoxically, cholera is fairly simple to treat, most commonly via Oral Rehydration Therapy. The patient is given a mixture made up of one litre of safe water, six teaspoons of sugar and a half teaspoon of salt (4). More severe cases are given a mixture of antibiotics and IV fluids.

So why was the 1991 epidemic so devastating for Peru specifically, with over 300,000 cases there alone (and another 230,000 elsewhere in the southern hemisphere)? (0)



According to a survey conducted by RE Quick, the combination of tropical weather, a high reliance on seafood and the overall macroeconomic environment led to 75% of respondents drinking untreated water and 91% eating unwashed produce (5).

Moreover, under President Alan García Pérez, the country was in an increasingly difficult economic position, with García limiting the payment of Peru's debt to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) to only 10% of exports, a measure that directly went against recommendations by international organisations (6). This led to Peru's credit score falling and to hyperinflation (7000%). By 1991 this had brought about a significant decrease in GDP per capita (8), with inflation being the highest in the region.

All of this resulted in public spending cuts, especially in the social and healthcare sectors, with the latter only receiving a quarter of what it had been allocated in 1980 (7).



This was exacerbated by poor sanitation infrastructure in both urban and rural areas, with Lima (the capital, where the epidemic started) struggling with an aging sewage treatment system. Areas such as Trujillo (on the Pacific north coast) and Iquitos (in the Amazon) had no or very little chlorination, leading to high rates of infection. Over 16,000 cases of cholera were reported in Trujillo (11), with many more probably unreported.

Infrastructure remains a challenge for Peru even today, with 3 million people in Lima not having access to clean, running water and 5 million people not having access to a working toilet. In rural areas almost 20% of the population are still without access to adequate sanitation (12).

It is not surprising therefore that the virus spread to such a large extent, given that the bacteria *Vibrio cholarea* can be transmitted through contact with infected faeces. The unchlorinated water supply, contaminated with raw sewage, further contributed to the bacteria spreading.

Other hypotheses have been proposed, such as cargo ships bringing cholera, or a connection to El Niño (the cyclical weather phenomenon that heats the ocean near the Peruvian coast). However, it is clear that these are incomplete explanations that can not account for the widespread epidemic at different points in the country.



In conclusion, the evidence points to this epidemic being caused by the systematic failure of government to ensure that appropriate provisions, resources and practices were in place. Peru in 1991 lacked the necessary infrastructure to ensure that its citizens could remain healthy and that any bacterial infection could be contained at a small, endemic level. Contamination of the food chain increased Peruvians' vulnerability to the disease, with their high reliance on crops and seafood cultivated in water infected by the cholera bacteria.



Spain's Civil War: how the Republic's internal divisions helped Franco

Jasmine Wagon

It is tempting to see Spain's Civil War (1936-39) as a struggle between fascism and democracy, but that would be an over-simplification. Whilst the Nationalists were united by Franco, the Republicans, a coalition of left-wing groups, suffered from ideological differences which fatally weakened their cause.



Featuring large in the anti-Franco Republican front were the socialists (PSOE) and communists (PCE). For them, fighting fascism and winning the war was the priority, a position supported by their backers in the Soviet Union. By contrast, the anarchists (CNT-FAI) and marxists (POUM) saw the struggle as an opportunity to push for social and political revolution, to include the

collectivisation of shops, farms and other industries, and decentralisation of the state into self-governing communities.

George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* provides a first-hand account of the ideological disunity among these groups. In Chapter Five, Orwell states "it is all very well to talk of 'revolutionary purity', but when one is fighting against the odds, the most essential thing is unity" – highlighting how divisions on the left damaged the Republic's cause during the conflict.



The Barcelona 'May Days' (3 – 8 May 1937), known in Spanish as the *jornadas de mayo*, or *sucesos de mayo*, revealed the deep ideological fractures within the Republican front. The conflict began when the Republican government attempted to seize the CNT-controlled telephone exchange in Barcelona, an act with profound implications for the anti-Franco alliance. This flashpoint became an ideological battle between the communists, who wanted to fight against fascism through centralised control, and the anarchists, who believed that revolution alone would win the war. Tensions erupted into long days of bloody violence on the streets of the city, turning allies into enemies and thereby weakening the Republican cause. Orwell recorded seeing "people who should be friends quarrelling over a difference of two or three words, and shooting one another dead about it."



Harsh consequences followed from the May Days violence. Morale within the front collapsed, trust within the coalition was shattered, and, most dangerous of all, Franco was able to portray the Nationalists as the only hope for a coherent, united government. Increasing support from the Soviet Union led to intensified repression against the anarchists and POUM, further damaging the credibility of the Republican side.

The Soviet Union played an active role in supplying the Republican front with arms, but at the cost of political control. Stalin thought that a Bolshevik-style revolution in Spain would undermine his attempts to build co-operation with potential western allies against Hitler, such as Britain and France. His suppression of marxist and anarchist groups in the Civil War further deepened the ideological divide within the Republican front.

Unity wasn't the only advantage the Nationalists had over the Republicans. Franco was able to purchase high-quality armaments from Italy and Germany through long-term loans, giving the Nationalists an abundance of military resources. By contrast, the Republicans had to pay Stalin in gold bars for weapons dating back to the Tsarist era.



Nationalist troops were also better organised and trained in battle. Their command structure of experienced army officers under Franco's leadership helped to consolidate their advances on the battlefield. Nonetheless, the Nationalists also had their ideological divisions. The Falange wanted a fascist dictatorship similar to that of Hitler or Mussolini, while the royalists sought restoration of the monarchy. There was even a Carlist faction that wanted to establish a separate royal dynasty. Franco took care to humour these competing forces without aligning himself too closely with any of them, thereby preventing any faction from becoming alienated and breaking away.

We can therefore conclude that Franco's victory in the Civil War was not only down to his well equipped troops and clear leadership, but also to the fractured fronts of the Republic. A united cause was something they lacked from the start, thereby leaving the way open for a Nationalist triumph. This sealed the Republicans' defeat, and determined the nature of Spanish society for decades to come.



La identidad vasca

Flor Stochino

Cuando hablamos del País Vasco, empezamos normalmente refiriéndonos al movimiento separatista de los años ochenta, en el que participaron grupos terroristas como la ETA. Por esta razón, el País Vasco tiene todavía en general una reputación bastante matizada en el resto de España.

En este artículo quiero demostrar que la historia vasca no empieza y acaba en los años ochenta, sino que ha sido y continúa siendo una cultura muy rica.



La base de la población vasca actual se relaciona con la introducción del Neolítico en la región hace unos 7,000 años. Los neolíticos fueron los primeros seres humanos en la península ibérica y el sur de Francia. Visto que vivían en una región montañosa, estaban bastante aislados, tanto genéticamente como culturalmente. Por eso preservaron su singularidad, y sus descendientes – los vascos – se habían asentado allí antes de la llegada de las lenguas indoeuropeas. Por eso la lengua de los vascos – euskera – es muy distinta de otras lenguas ibéricas, y una de las más antiguas de Europa.

Los vascos encontraron su primer desafío al enfrentarse con los romanos. A pesar de la interacción prolongada (de tres siglos) que tuvieron con los romanos, estos nunca consiguieron conquistar por completo el territorio vasco. Aunque tuvieron influencia sobre algunas zonas llanas (Ager), su dominio fue menor en las áreas montañosas (Saltus).



Para sobrevivir, los vascos debieron luchar por sus derechos, pero también se integraron en el mundo romano, como indica la presencia de los vascones en la guardia personal del Emperador Augusto. Esta flexibilidad fue clave en su coexistencia con los romanos, y fue sin duda una razón por la que pudieron en fin reconquistar su país después de que el imperio colapsara.

En la Edad Media, entre los Pirineos y el norte del País Vasco, los visigodos crearon el ducado de Vasconia. Se creó también el reino de Navarra, que se extendía desde los Pirineos hasta el sur del País Vasco. Esto fue un hito muy importante ya que permitió que se defendiera el territorio contra la expansión de los francos y los musulmanes.

En el año 1515, Fernando el Católico, rey de Aragón, habiendo conquistado Alta Navarra, la integró en el nuevo reino que se establecía en la península después de la Reconquista. Sin embargo, en la Baja Navarra existía todavía el reino de Navarra, hasta el año 1617, cuando lo heredó el rey Enrique IV de Francia.



La Edad Media fue también importante en el sentido socio-económico. La costa vasca conoció un notable esplendor durante esta época: no solo respecto a la pesca, sino también en el transporte marítimo de mercancías – una rica fuente de ingresos, dado que la lana castellana y el hierro se exportaban desde puertos vascos. Por estos puertos también pasaban todas las telas y tejidos que venían desde Europa. Los vascos prosperaban también en su comercio interior. El camino de Santiago atrajo muchos peregrinos y mercancía que luego impulsó la economía.

Después de la Revolución francesa de 1789, las tres provincias que conformaron en siglos anteriores el País Vasco del norte (Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea y Zuberoa) se integraron con el Bearne del departamento número 64 del nuevo estado francés unificado.

Las guerras carlistas del siglo XIX impactaron duro el País Vasco. Perdieron los fueros (derechos regionales) y se sometió a la monarquía española. Después de la Guerra Civil de 1936-39 Franco impuso el modelo de una España completamente unida, pretendiendo de esta manera suprimir la identidad vasca.

La transición democrática española, representada en la Constitución de 1978, reincorporó más autonomía para el País Vasco del sur, reconociendo su propia lengua e identidad especial.



Sin embargo, estas reformas no satisficieron a todos. En los años ochenta ciertos grupos exigieron la independencia absoluta. La ETA lanzó una serie de secuestros y atentados, colocando bombas y asesinando tanto a civiles como a militares. Esta campaña de violencia provocó una 'guerra sucia' entre los Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación y la ETA, lo que condujo a escándalos y juicios en los años 90.

Gradualmente la ETA perdió apoyo entre los ciudadanos. En el año 2018 anunció un cese definitivo de la violencia y su disolución. Hoy en día muchos vascos aún apoyan la independencia, pero de modo democrático, orgullosos de su lengua e identidad.



Aunque Franco intentó eliminar la lengua vasca, hoy en día se está volviendo cada vez más popular, especialmente gracias a las ikastolas (colegios vascos). A esto se le añade un resurgimiento de la cultura vasca, incluyendo deportes como la pelota vasca, y una gran tradición coral y musical, con instrumentos únicos como el txistu, además de una gran oferta gastronómica inspirada en las sociedades culinarias (txokos) y una de las mayores concentraciones del mundo de restaurantes con estrellas Michelin.

Al final, ser vasco/a es mucho más que una postura política. Es ser parte de una de las culturas más antiguas y únicas de Europa.

Para saber más, haz clic en https://www.eke.eus/es/cultura-vasca/pais-vasco/historia/garai_erromanoa



Costa Rica y la paz interna

Sam Romer

Costa Rica es un país centroamericano conocido por el estilo de vida relajado – la llamada ‘pura vida’. Un elemento central de este fenómeno es una agenda política inteligente que ha fomentado los valores centrales de la familia, del cristianismo (la mitad de la población es católica) y de la comunidad.



Presidente Jose

*Figueres Ferrer destruye
muro del cuartel de Bellavista, acto
símbolico de la abolición del ejército.*

Un aspecto central de la identidad cultural es la paz social. En 1949 la decisión original de abolir el ejército fue consecuencia de la guerra civil de 44 días y la subsiguiente elección de José Figueres Ferrer como presidente. Desde aquel entonces el país ha desarrollado una fuerte tradición democrática y una sociedad con altos niveles de alfabetización y compromiso con la naturaleza.¹ Con los fondos originalmente destinados a los gastos militares, Costa Rica ha invertido mucho en su sociedad, mejorando el acceso a una buena educación y

a los servicios de sanidad pública. Hoy en día Costa Rica se está desarrollando rápidamente, con la tasa de pobreza gradualmente en baja.²



Por medio de estrictas leyes sobre la preservación de la biodiversidad, la naturaleza de esta fantástica nación se está conservando para las generaciones venideras. La protección es importante para el país ya que Costa Rica alberga más de 500,000 especies y el 4% de la biodiversidad mundial. En 2024 el turismo 'eco' proporcionó ingresos de más de 5 billones de dólares. Estos fondos pueden permitir que Costa Rica continúe destacándose como un país totalmente comprometido no solo con la paz social, sino también con la preservación de sus selvas tropicales llenas de biodiversidad donde los perezosos lentos viven en armonía con la comunidad tica.

En el verano de 2025 tuve la oportunidad de sumergirme en la cultura local de Costa Rica, alojándome con dos familias locales y descubriendo por mí mismo lo que significa la 'pura vida'. Conocí a muchos lugareños que jugaban papeles activos en la comunidad. La mujer con la que me alojé tenía una pequeña granja, y la familia ganaba ingresos vendiendo localmente queso de oveja producido en la granja.



Este estilo de vida de subsistencia a pequeña escala adoptado en toda Costa Rica, sinónimo de naciones mucho menos desarrolladas a nivel mundial, ejemplifica bien la 'pura vida'. Su falta de materialismo occidental a través de prácticas honorables como la agricultura plantea la pregunta: ¿se encuentran los costarricenses entre los pueblos más felices del mundo? Según el World Happiness Report de 2025, Costa Rica es el sexto país más feliz del mundo, por encima de numerosas naciones más desarrolladas.³



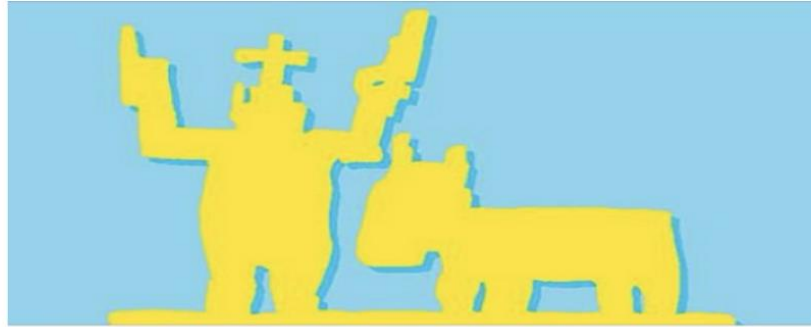
Óscar Arias, Presidente de Costa Rica entre los años 1986-1990 y 2006-2010, jugó un papel crucial en el mantenimiento de la paz en Centroamérica, ayudando a fortalecer la gran sociedad 'tica' después de las guerras civiles en Nicaragua, El Salvador y Guatemala a mediados de los 1980. Arias fue galardonado con el premio Nobel de la Paz en 1987.

Mientras que otras naciones regionales como los Estados Unidos valoran el éxito comercial y el dominio político, la presencia tranquila y estabilizadora de Costa Rica, con la religión y la naturaleza en su corazón, se destaca como un ejemplo para el resto del continente americano.

Bibliografía

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/happiest-countries-in-the-world>

1. Panamá también abolió su ejército en los años 90, siguiendo el ejemplo costarricense.
↵
2. <https://pip.worldbank.org/country-profiles/CRI> ↵
3. <https://www.worldhappiness.report/ed/2025/caring-and-sharing-global-analysis-of-happiness-and-kindness/> ↵



JLACS Conference 2026: new areas of research into Latin America

Agnes Fanning

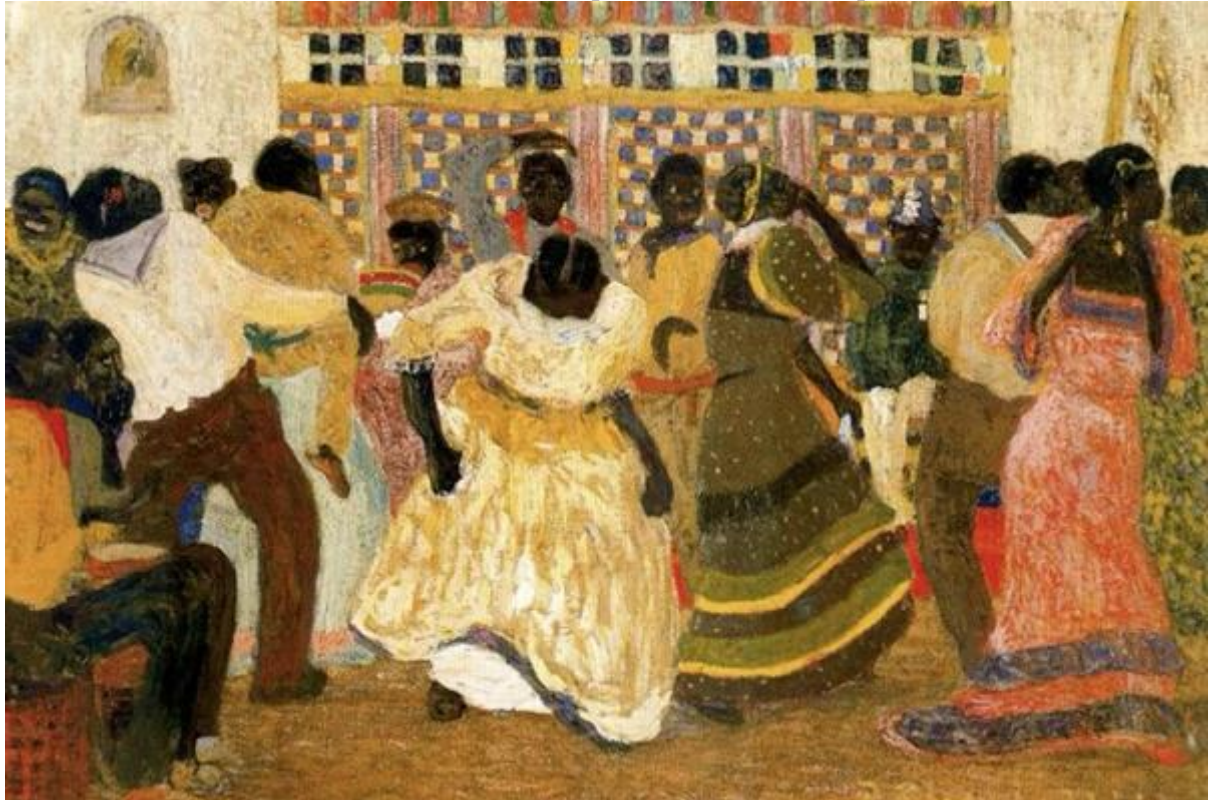
The *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* (JLACS) is pleased to host its 2026 International Conference, *A World in Common*, at St Catherine's College, Oxford (23–24 July 2026).



The conference forms part of a biennial series that has previously taken place in the UK, Switzerland, Mexico, and the United States, returning to Oxford for the first time since 2016. It provides a forum for scholars working across disciplines to engage with current debates in Latin American cultural studies, in dialogue with the journal's broader intellectual aims.

As reflected in the journal's scope, JLACS is committed to sharing work that examines Latin American culture through theoretical, historical, and interdisciplinary approaches, including research on Caribbean, Latino/a, and trans-regional formations. The conference extends this mission by bringing together scholars whose work engages with diverse cultural forms (literature, film, visual arts, and beyond) as well as broader questions of memory, identity, and cultural production in contexts shaped by modernity, globalisation, and political transformation. The theme *A World in*

Common invites reflection on shared cultural, political, and epistemological frameworks, and the tensions and inequalities that complicate them.



The programme features a range of speakers whose work exemplifies the journal's interdisciplinary reach. Caroline Egan (Northwestern University) brings expertise in the literatures and cultures of early colonial Latin America, Agnes Fanning (University of Oxford) focuses on twentieth-century cultural production and political writing produced by women, Jessica Fernández de Lara Harada (University of Oxford) works on race and racism in Latin America and Asia, as well as decolonial approaches in history and social thought, and Sergio Raimondi (Universidad Nacional del Sur) is both a poet and academic whose work engages with questions of labour, economy, and language. Leo Temple (University of Cambridge) researches the intellectual and social histories that underwrite the evolution of poetic form in Latin America, and Ana Lucía Martínez (University of Cambridge) contributes perspectives from twentieth- and twenty-first-century poetry and visual arts of the region. Lesley Wylie (University of Leicester) brings a strong focus on the environment, indigenous identity, and cultural geography. María Jacinta Xón Riquiac (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid) works at the intersection of anthropology and indigenous rights.



Together, these contributions reflect the journal's commitment to fostering new areas of research and debate, particularly in relation to questions of hybridity, transculturation, and the ongoing reconfiguration of cultural studies as a critical and political project. The conference aims not only to showcase current research, but also to create a space for dialogue across disciplinary and geographic boundaries, encouraging participants to reconsider how cultural practices and meanings are shared, contested, and transformed.

A World in Common seeks to bring into focus both the possibilities and the limits of commonality, whether in relation to cultural forms, political imaginaries, or scholarly methodologies. This conference aims to continue the Journal's tradition of promoting rigorous, innovative, and engaged scholarship within Latin American cultural studies.

For more information on the journal, see its

website: <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/cjla20>

To register for the conference, please email: jlacs2026@gmail.com

Registration fee:

£10 – full-time tenured academic staff (UK/US/Canada/Europe)

Free – all other participants

The fee can be paid via bank transfer or on arrival.

Accommodation

A number of rooms have been reserved at St Catherine's College for

conference attendees.

For information on rates and booking, please contact:

catz.conferences@stcatz.ox.ac.uk



Behind the scenes – summer 2026

A good number of readers thought our ‘Behind the scenes’ column in the Spring 2026 edition worth a click, so we are again throwing open the doors on our Bulletin-brained thought processes for those who might appreciate an insight into such things.

The afterglow of our 2025 Essay Competition continues to illuminate us. Those who sent in ‘commended’ (but not winning) entries last September have now re-drafted them in consultation with our editors, so that their new versions are now publication quality. All in all, ten of the essays submitted last September have now been published. This has proved popular: student authors have commented, “Amazing, thank you ever so much! I love the edits!”, “Thank you again, this publication is really exciting”, “I truly appreciate your efforts in helping improve my article!”, among others. We are grateful for that feedback – very welcome to the team here who keep the Bulletin going (*pro bono*). We are also grateful that the University of Glasgow continues to sponsor the Competition, which we like to think of as the best of its kind for Sixth Form hispanists.



We have long hoped that our co-founder Professor Hart would use our pages to lift the veil on some of the extraordinary situations in which he has found himself as a global hispanist. We were therefore delighted when he produced this edition's anecdote about Santa Rosa and the Pope. We were even more gratified when we managed to coax him into making the second draft twice as long as his first. It's a delightful vignette, not to be missed.

One of the joys of the Bulletin is that, however long one has been a hispanist, there are always fascinating new insights to be had into the Spanish-speaking world. For example, in our ignorance, some of us had assumed Bad Bunny was a transient and possibly rather irritating commercial construct. Colin Harding's article in this edition reveals a very different reality, with repercussions well beyond show-business. What a joy when closed doors in the mind are suddenly blown open to reveal something unexpectedly worthwhile.



Another paradigm-shifting article is Clara Riveros' conversation with two eminent Latin American professors about President Trump's 'Shield for the Americas'. This initiative seems to turn on its head the relationship between north and south, in line with an arcane but remorselessly logical new approach: ie Latin American states are overwhelmed with crime and drug cartels, so forget about established notions of sovereignty and equality between states and harness US power to crush the perpetrators. Previous BAS articles on the Bukele approach in El Salvador (eg in our Spring and Summer editions of 2024) were early indicators of what was happening. Hats off to Clara for making a complex topic so clear. Is there in the whole of Latin America a better *polítolog* than Clara not tenured at a university? We doubt

it, and count ourselves very fortunate to have had her spearheading our Latin America coverage for the past several years.

This Summer Edition is launching over a month earlier than normal. In previous years our June launch date made it difficult for school and university-based readers to absorb our summer offerings. By launching this edition on 1 May, we anticipate being more useful to a larger readership. This academic year's earlier deadlines of 25 Sept, 25 January and 25 April seem to have made life easier for all concerned, so will stay.



Hot tips to get published in the Autumn Bulletin 2026? We're still looking for an author to write about Rosalía. We're also intrigued by the way in which Spanish Prime Minister Sánchez has staked out a position of moral leadership in resisting the Trump administration's foreign policy. How will that look in September, when we gather articles for the next edition? Could you be the person to tell the story? Or you might write about somewhere amazing in the Spanish-speaking world that you encounter during your summer travels....

And yes, we're looking for a new Senior Editor to take the reins in the next year or so. As we said last time, "perhaps you, valued reader, might know someone who would enjoy taking on that role? Perhaps you yourself would find it inspiring to do so? The position might suit a teacher, lecturer, journalist, tour guide or diplomat scaling back on their workload, a graduate looking to expand into publishing, or a technological wizard able to harness virtual resources to facilitate the editorial process."

To share your ideas on this, or any other matter, you're welcome to get in touch via the Contact Us button or our email address – bulletinofadvancedspanish@gmail.com . We'd be delighted to hear from you.

¡Buen verano!

Essay Competition 2026

[Click here to download](#)