

Manuel Meléndez-Sánchez

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PRIMARY RESEARCH INTERESTS

Democratic resilience, backsliding, and breakdown; organized crime, public security, and democracy; comparative politics of Latin America.

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

University of Notre Dame	South Bend, IN
Postdoctoral Visiting Fellow, Kellogg Institute for International Studies	August 2025 - Present

EDUCATION

Harvard University	Cambridge, MA
Ph.D. in Political Science	May 2025
University of Oxford	Oxford, United Kingdom
M.Sc. in Politics Research	November 2017
Harvard University	Cambridge, MA
A.B. in Government with Certificate in Latin American Studies	March 2016

PUBLICATIONS

Articles

- “Backsliding by Elite Collusion: Authoritarianism and Democratic Resurgence in Guatemala” (with Lucas Perelló), *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 712(1): 235-247, 2025.
- “The Bukele Model: Will It Spread?” (with Alberto Vergara), *Journal of Democracy* 35(3): 84-98, 2024.
- “Millennial Authoritarianism in El Salvador,” *Journal of Democracy* 32(3): 19-32, 2021.

Under Review

- “El Salvador: Nayib Bukele’s Turn to the Far Right.” Chapter in *The Far Right in Latin America* (eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Carlos Meléndez, Talita Tanscheit, and Lisa Zanolli).

Others Publications

- “Review of ‘Violent Victors: Why Bloodstained Parties Win Postwar Elections,’” *Peace & Change* 49(2): 201-203, 2024.
- “Lessons from El Salvador’s Authoritarian Turn,” Newsletter of the Democracy and Autocracy Section, American Political Science Association, August 2022.

WORK IN PROGRESS

On Organized Crime, Public Security, and Democracy

“Criminal Electioneering: A Conceptual Framework”

“When Do Criminal Groups Target Voters? Evidence from Guatemala”

“Re-Examining the Security vs Rights Tradeoff: Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Guatemala”

“The Personnel Economics of Law Enforcement” (with Matthew Pecenco and Carlos Schmidt-Padilla)

On Democratic Durability, Backsliding, and Breakdown

“Asymmetric Institutional Trust and Democratic Backsliding”

“Democracy and Authoritarianism in Central America” (volume co-edited with Steven Levitsky)

“Political Establishments and Democracy” (with Steven Levitsky, Aaron Watanabe, and Daniel Ziblatt)

ADDITIONAL WRITING

Technical Reports

“The Far-Right in El Salvador.” Published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2023.

“Analysis of Trends in Democratic Attitudes: El Salvador Report.” Published by NORC, 2023.

“Political Institutions in El Salvador, 2014–Present.” Prepared for The World Bank, 2021.

Public Scholarship

By-lines in *El Faro*, *Lawfare*, *Plaza Pública*, *ReVista*, *Slate*, and *The Washington Post*.

MAJOR FELLOWSHIPS & RESEARCH GRANTS

Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant, American Political Science Association and National Science Foundation (\$14,850)	2022-23
USIP-Minerva Peace and Security Scholarship, US Institute of Peace (\$20,000)	2022-23
Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, Harvard University (\$30,000)	2022-23
Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics (\$9,972)	2018

TEACHING AND ADVISING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Awards

Derek C. Bok Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching of Undergraduates 2021

- Awarded each year to five Teaching Fellows from across Harvard University.

Certification of Distinction in Teaching, Harvard University Various

- Received every eligible semester.

Courses in Comparative Politics

The Politics of Organized Crime (Lead Instructor) Spring 2022, Summer 2024 and 2025

The Rise—and Fall?—of Democracy (Lead Instructor) Summer 2025

Comparative Politics in Central America (Lead Instructor) Spring 2024

Authoritarianism (Head Teaching Fellow) Fall 2023

Comparative Politics in Latin America (Head Teaching Fellow) Spring 2021

Foundations of Comparative Politics (Head Teaching Fellow) Fall 2020, Summer 2022

Courses in Methods and Research Tools

Qualitative and Mixed Methods (Teaching Fellow) Spring 2020

Formal Political Analysis I - Graduate Level (Teaching Fellow) Fall 2019

Government Department Writing Fellow Fall 2021

Senior Thesis Writers' Seminar 2021-22, 2023-24, 2024-25

Advising Roles

Honors Thesis Advisor (4x), Department of Government, Harvard University 2018-19, 2022-23, 2023-24

Non-Resident Tutor, Leverett House, Harvard University 2018-20

TALKS, PRESENTATIONS, AND CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

Conferences Organized

Democracy and Authoritarianism in Central America (Cambridge, MA)	2025
Political Economy of El Salvador (San Salvador, El Salvador)	2019

Invited Talks, Panels, and Lectures

University of Colorado-Boulder; Carleton College.	2025
Canning House; Georgetown University; Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro; Red Iniciativa Centroamericana; Syracuse University; University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and University of Maryland; US Agency for International Development (USAID)	2024
Canning House; Central American Politics Consortium; The Citadel; Colby College; National Democratic Institute (NDI); Programa Estado Nación (Costa Rica); Universidad del Pacífico (Perú); University of Utah	2023
Escuela de Comunicación Mónica Herrera (El Salvador); Universidad del Pacífico (Perú)	2022
University of Pittsburgh	2021
Canning House; London School of Economics	2017

Conference and Workshop Activity

Latin American Studies Association	2025
American Political Science Association; Conference on Crime, Conflict, and Security Institutions in the Americas; Latin American Studies Association; Workshop on the Far-Right in Latin America	2024
American Political Science Association; Latin American Studies Association	2019
Latin American Studies Association	2018

SERVICE

External

Country Expert, Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES-LA)	2024
Country Expert, Digital Society Project	2023
External Reviewer, Faculty Research Grant Proposals, The City University of New York	2022
Reviewer, Cambridge University Press	2021

Internal

Co-Organizer, Tuesday Seminar Series, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies	2023
Co-President, Graduate Student Association, Harvard Government Department	2019-20
Student Coordinator, Harvard Political Violence Workshop	2019-20
Student Coordinator, Harvard Comparative Politics Speaker Series	2018-19

REFERENCES

Available upon request.