Manuel Meléndez-Sánchez

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PRIMARY RESEARCH INTERESTS

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

EDUCATION

Harvard University   Cambridge, MA
Ph.D. in Political Science   Expected May 2025
- Dissertation: "Criminal Electioneering: How and Why Criminal Groups Influence Elections"
- Committee: Steven Levitsky (chair), Frances Hagopian, Alisha Holland

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
- "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
- "Democratization, Elite Collusion, and Authoritarian Enclaves: The Case of Guatemala" (with Lucas Perelló). Article.
- "Far Right by Convenience: El Salvador's Nayib Bukele." Book Chapter.

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." Prepared for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2023.

"Analysis of Trends in Democratic Attitudes: El Salvador Report." Prepared for NORC and USAID, 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	2022-23
USIP-Minerva Peace and Security Scholarship, US Institute of Peace	2022-23
Frederick Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, Harvard University	2022-23
Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics	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
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, 2023-25

Advising Roles

Honors Thesis Advisor, Department of Government, Harvard University	2018-19, 2022-24
Non-Resident Tutor, Leverett House, Harvard University	2018-20

TALKS, PRESENTATIONS, AND CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

Conferences Organized

Democracy and Authoritarianism in Central America Conference (scheduled)	2025
El Salvador Political Economy Workshop	2019

Invited Talks, Panels, and Lectures

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

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

El Salvador Country Expert, "Measuring Internet Politics," Digital Society Project	2023
External Reviewer, Faculty Research Grant Proposals, The City University of New York (CUNY)	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, Government Department	2019-20
Student Coordinator, Political Violence Workshop	2019-20
Graduate Student Peer Advisor, Government Department	2018-20
Student Coordinator, Comparative Politics Speaker Series	2018-19

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Political Risk Consultant, GeoQuant	2023-Present
Consultant, NORC and US Agency for International Development (USAID)	2022-23
Consultant, The World Bank	2021

Last updated: September 13, 2024