

Paraguay: Political parties

Paraguay has a multi-party system with two main parties – the Colorados and the Liberals – and other small parties and alliances. After 61 years in power, the Colorados, the world's longest-ruling party, lost the 2008 elections to the Liberals. Nonetheless, in April 2013, they returned to power.

Background

Following [35 years](#) of [Alfredo Stroessner's](#) authoritarian rule from 1954, [democracy](#) re-emerged in Paraguay in [1989](#) after he was overthrown in a coup. The Constitution of [1967](#), enacted during the dictatorship, was considered very authoritarian, but the 1992 [Constitution](#) introduced important democratic reforms. In 1993, [Carlos Wasmosy](#) of the Colorado Party was the first president elected after the return to democracy, and the party dominated in [the 1990s](#). Paraguay's [transition](#) to democracy saw alternating periods of more or less stability, with coup attempts, political stalemates, deadlocks, corruption and severe division within governments. In 1996, Wasmosy was forced into exile by General Lino César Oviedo. The Supreme Court later convicted Oviedo for an attempted military coup at the time Wasmosy was ousted. Wasmosy was succeeded by [Raúl Cubas Grau](#), elected president in 1998. A year later he had to resign on suspicion of links to the assassination of [Luis María Argaña Ferraro](#), leader of a faction within the same party, and was replaced by [Luis González Macchi](#). Since 2000, elections have become more democratic, despite corruption and harsh divisions. Paraguay has yet to experience a sustained period of stability with functional democratic governance. Over the years, the Colorado Party had managed to build a powerful machine via the military, economic groups and state bureaucracy. Created in the 19th century, Paraguay's Colorado Party is among the oldest traditional parties in Latin America. However, in April 2008, it lost to the Liberal Party represented by [Fernando Lugo](#). In [April 2013](#), the Colorado Party returned to power with [Horacio Cartes](#) as President.

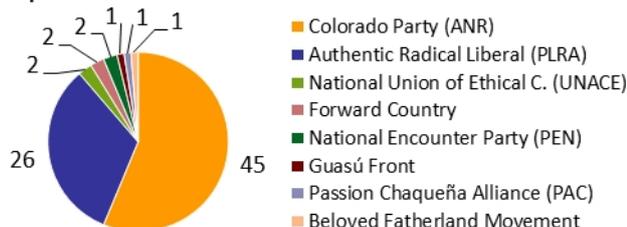
Political and electoral system

Paraguay is a [constitutional](#) republic with a division of powers and a multi-party system, even if in practical terms it is a bipartisan structure composed of the Colorado and the Liberal parties. The executive is headed by the president, directly elected for a five-year term, who functions as head of state and government. Currently, Colorado Party members [Horacio Cartes](#) and [Juan Afa Maciel](#) serve as the president and vice-president, respectively. Both were elected in 2013 and neither may be re-elected. The next presidential election is scheduled for 2018. Legislative power resides in a bicameral Congress composed of the [Senate](#) (with 45 members, 20% of whom are women) and the [Chamber of Deputies](#) (with 80 members, 15% of whom are women). The Senate is elected in a single national constituency and the Chamber of Deputies is elected in 18 multi-member [constituencies](#). Legislative elections are held every five years and coincide, in principle, with the presidential elections. The current [Electoral Law](#) was adopted in 1996. Members of both chambers are elected through a proportional representation system from closed party lists. The most recent elections were held on 21 April 2013 and the next will take place in 2018.

Current political parties and coalitions

The results, including those of the alliances, are shown for the 2013 legislative and presidential [elections](#):

Deputies Elections 2013



Source: [Parline](#)

Senate Elections 2013



Source: [Parline](#)

Parties

- **National Republican Association/Colorado Party (ANR-PC)** (leader [Horacio Cartes](#)): Founded in 1887, this is a centre-right conservative and nationalist party with many factions. It has dominated modern Paraguayan politics since 1946 (then known as '[Stroessner's Party](#)'), including after the introduction of democracy in 1992. Horacio Cartes, its candidate for the 2013 presidential elections, won with 48.5% of the vote. The ANR-PC was a highly effective political machine under Stroessner's regime and continues to enjoy a strong national and local presence today.
- **Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA)** (leader [Efraín Alegre](#)): Founded in 1978, the PLRA grew out of the Liberal Party, which dates back to 1887. This leading opposition party espouses the principles of social liberalism and plays a central role on the political scene. It has a number of factions i) the Llanistas, led by [Senator Blas Llanos](#), ii) the Efraínistas, led by [Efraín Alegre](#), and iii) the Franquistas, led by [Federico Franco](#). In 2008, the party struck an alliance with Fernando Lugo's Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC), and Lugo was elected the country's president. Later it allied itself with PEN for the 2013 presidential elections, yet their candidate Efraín Alegre came second with 39 per cent.
- **Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)** (leader [Desirée Massi](#)): Founded in 2007, the party is committed to the [socialist principles](#). Ahead of the 2013 elections, it forged an alliance with PLRA and gained three seats in the Senate.
- **National Union of Ethical Citizens (UNACE)** (leader [Jorge Oviedo Matto](#)): It was founded in 2002 by General [Lino César Oviedo](#). Initially a faction of the Colorado Party, it is characterised by a nationalist, conservative ideology. Democracy and the dignity of the human being are central to its political activity.
- **National Encounter Party (PEN)** (leader Fernando Camacho): Founded in 1991, this party occupies the centre-left of the political landscape and champions social democracy, among other things.

Coalitions

- **Forward Country ([Avanza País](#))** (leader [Mario Ferreira](#)): This alliance was formed in 2013, ahead of the elections. The alliance included members, among others, of the Revolutionary Febrerista Party, the Movement for Socialism, the Christian Democratic Party, the Tekopyahu Party and the Democratic Movement for Victory, which had split off from the Guasú Front. It is a soft left-wing [alliance](#) which supports universalism, equality and citizen participation.
- **Guasú Front ([Frente Guasú](#))** (leader [Fernando Lugo Méndez](#)): The front was founded in 2010 as a coalition between two parties – the Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC) and the Unitary Space-People's Congress (EU-CP). Lugo was appointed as the front's leader following his [2012 impeachment](#). It is regarded as a 'hard left' alliance which defends progressive values.
- **Pasion Chaqueña Alliance ([PAC](#))** (leader [Fernando Nicora](#)): The alliance was established with the aim of participating in the 2013 elections. It is composed of the National Encounter Party, the Authentic Radical Liberal Party, the Beloved Fatherland Party and the Democratic Progressive Party. The alliance won a single seat in the Chamber of Deputies.

Paraguay and the EU

Since 1992, relations between the EU and Paraguay have been developing at bilateral and regional levels with the [Framework Agreement for Cooperation](#) (1992) and the [Mercosur Cooperation Agreement](#) (1995), respectively. The 1992 agreement foresees the holding of periodic EU-Paraguay Joint Cooperation Commissions; the last was held in Brussels on [26 November 2014](#). In addition, Paraguay has close bilateral trade and cooperation relations with the EU and enjoys the [GSP+](#) regime in the field of trade. Currently, relations are governed by the [Multiannual indicative programme for 2014-20](#), which has education, private sector development, social protection, democracy, participation and institutional strengthening as its priorities. The indicative allocation for Paraguay amounts to €168 million. The most recent [EU-CELAC summit](#), which has much broader objectives and aims at strengthening relations between the EU and the Latin American regions, took place on 10-11 June 2015. On this occasion, a [political declaration](#) and [action plan](#) were adopted.

The most recent resolution of the European Parliament related to Paraguay, adopted in the eighth parliamentary term, is the [Resolution](#) on defining new development cooperation with Latin America, of 12 June 2012. Further to that, during the same term, a delegation visited Paraguay on [17-18 February 2015](#).