

Argentina Watch

Trip notes: Constructive Locals

Locals constructive before the global shock

We met with political analysts, economists, corporates and policy makers in Buenos Aires last week. The local mood in Argentina was generally positive, regarding politics and the economy (aside from the US tariffs hike). GDP is seen growing 5% this year and inflation declining to below 28%. Growth supports tax revenue and the zero fiscal deficit.

Milei's popularity resilient so far

President Javier Milei's popularity remains high as the economy recovers, despite some decline (after the crypto incident and higher beef prices). And the opposition is divided. Watch frictions among the Peronist opposition. Axel Kicillof decoupled the local from the national elections in Buenos Aires province, against Cristina Kirchner's advice.

Mid-term elections: key for reforms

Political analysts we met assign a high probability that Milei's party, La Libertad Avanza (LLA), could do well or very well in the national mid-term elections in October, gaining substantial ground in congress. This is key to move forward with deeper structural reforms (tax overhauls, privatization, de-regulation, fiscal reform, free trade agreements).

Currency run should be controlled

Regarding the recent mini-currency run (BCRA sold over \$1.7bn), economists we met believe the government will be able to control it eventually, as there are not too many sources of peso creation left to buy USD. And the position is cleaner now.

IMF and capital controls uncertainty

Regarding the IMF program, economists we met expect the government to begin lifting capital controls ahead of the elections, starting with some flows. Though the stocks (e.g. past dividends) are expected to be released very gradually. Most economists expect a relaxation of the current 1% crawling peg, moving towards either an exchange rate band (narrow at first) or somewhat faster crawl. Recall Argentina requested \$20bn loan program and IMF's Cristalina Georgieva hinted an agreement is likely this month.

Energy will remain supportive

Energy boom continues and additional infrastructure projects are on the way (Vaca Muerta Sur oil pipeline). Economists expect energy could add between \$16bn to 20bn additional net exports a year by 2030. Oil breakevens remain attractive. Important opportunities in mining (especially in copper projects), though it takes longer.

EXD Strategy: Stay OW (continues inside)

We keep our Overweight recommendation on Argentina's external bonds. The trip increased our conviction about upcoming catalysts (IMF, mid-term elections) that could improve valuations. Recent correction in bond prices is a particularly attractive buying opportunity in our view. On global volatility, we think the effects for Argentina are mixed, but we see Argentina as relatively better positioned compared to similarly-rated

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Refer to important disclosures on page 5 to 7. Analyst Certification on page 4. Valuation & Risk on page 4.

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EXD Strategy: Remain Overweight

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Consensus among locals that mid-term election will be favorable

We maintain our Overweight (OW) recommendation on Argentina's external bonds. The trip increased our conviction that the October mid-term elections could be a positive catalyst for bond prices, as there was a consensus among the locals we met that the government would very likely have a strong showing due to the success of the stabilization program. In addition, bond valuations have improved since early January and we think positioning has lightened since late 2024.

The mid-term elections will be seen by many investors as a proxy for policy continuity after the 2027 presidential elections. As such, the election will be an important determinant, in our view, of how quickly and at what rate Argentina could regain market access to issue Eurobonds and refinance maturing debt.

Note that there will be a few local congress elections ahead of October, in which LLA is not necessarily the favorite to win according to political analysts we met (Santa Fe, City of Buenos Aires, PBA), which could generate some noise.

IMF program: Small FX pass-through could limit political cost of new policiesConfirmation of the IMF program remains the most immediate domestic short-term catalyst for bond prices. Given the potential for changes in FX policies, we took comfort in the fact that local economists we met generally expected a relatively small pass-through to inflation from potential currency depreciations.

The cancellation of the primary elections (previously scheduled for August) also gives the government more room to maneuver and recover any lost popularity by the October midterm elections. Aside from potential changes in FX policies, we think the IMF program could surprise investors positively by including more ambitious fiscal targets.

Global volatility: Mixed effects, but Argentina relatively better positionedOverall, we see Argentina in a relatively better position compared to similarly-rated peers to face the recent global tariff-induced market volatility. The government's strong fiscal commitment is an important component of that.

We see the following implications: 1) negative due to higher risk aversion and wider EM spreads (especially critical given the need to recover market access), 2) negative due to potentially lower commodity prices, 3) positive due to potentially lower US yields and potentially a weaker dollar, and 4) positive as Argentina received the lowest reciprocal tariff of 10% (the close relationship with the US could mean that a negotiation to eliminate it might be successful).

10 reasons we remain Overweight on Argentina's bonds

We recently outlined why we remain Overweight on Argentina's external bonds (see report Argentina: 10 reasons we remain Overweight on EXD bonds): 1) IMF deal is imminent, 2) With IMF deal and related multilateral financing, FX debt is manageable, 3) Strong fiscal commitment, 4) Cleaner positioning and better valuations, 5) GDP recovery stronger than expected, 6) Disinflation "miracle", 7) Government's popular support, 8) Energy boom supports the external sector, 9) Structural reforms & deregulation, and 10) Global bond issuance and recovery of market access is possible post-election.



Valuation & risk

Argentina (ARGENT)

We are Overweight Argentina's external bonds. The stabilization plan is working better than expected, the government's commitment to fiscal equilibrium is very strong, the willingness to pay external debt is high, and there is an ambitious agenda of microeconomic and deregulatory reforms underway. Bond yields are approaching the level where regaining market access becomes feasible.

Downside risks are appreciation of the real exchange rate, low international reserves, approval of laws that dilute the fiscal equilibrium, governability in Congress, the president's popularity eroded by economic challenges, social protests, and delays in IMF negotiations.

Upside risks are reforms to FX/capital control regimes, increases in international reserves, payment of upcoming Eurobond maturities, alliances that improve governability, new IMF disbursements or agreements.

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Argentina / ARGENT

Sovereign	Date ^{R1}	Action	Recommendation
Argentina / ARGENT	31-Mar-2022		Overweight
	05-Jul-2022	Downgrade	Marketweight
	17-Jul-2023	Upgrade	Overweight

Table reflects credit opinion history as of previous business day's close. First date of recommendation within last 36 months. The investment opinion system is contained at the end of the report under the heading "BofA Global Research Credit Opinion Key."81

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