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Attacks and Failures of the Right in Latin America. By Claudio Katz

Bolsonarism was affected by its failed coup. Its foundations in the army, gangs, agribusiness and evangelists are shaken. What are the current perspectives of the extreme right in the continent?

Recently, the right-wingers in the region have faced three important setbacks. The failed coup in Brazil was preceded by a failed coup in Bolivia and failed conspiracies in Venezuela.

These defeats do not annul the continued onslaught of the reactionary formations. They have managed to establish themselves in Argentina, rethink their action in Colombia, resume the Pinochet legacy in Chile, emerge in Mexico and participate in the ferocious repression unleashed in Peru. The analysis of each case illustrates the profile of this trend in Latin America.

A failed adventure

Bolsonaro led the main experience of the reactionary wave. He did not succeed in his reelection, but he received enormous support at the polls. He was about to play a leading political role, before being struck by the coup attempt perpetrated by his followers.

There are documents proving a plan initially conceived by the former captain to disavow his electoral defeat. This conspiracy was abandoned, but the preparations for the coup continued with the installation of a camp in Brasília to demand the military obstruction of Lula's inauguration. They camped for two months at the gates of the headquarters, spread their plans on social networks, attempted a mega-attack and blocked several roads.

The assault on Congress, the Planalto and the Supreme Court was intended to force the army to intervene. The attackers assumed that a spark was enough to induce the generals to take the tanks to the streets. They imagined that the chaos generated by their action would precipitate that intervention (Arcary, 2023). Plan B was to force a scenario of ungovernability, in order to weaken Lula's government at the beginning of his administration (Stedile; Pagotto, 2023).

This delirious calculation was based on the blatant complicity of the military who visited the camp to facilitate an incursion, which was also validated by the governor of the Federal District. The assailants occupied with total impunity the main state buildings and in three hours of vandalism destroyed furniture, decorations and works of art. Numerous policemen guarded the attackers, participated in the outrage and were photographed during the looting.

The onslaught bore the typical mark of Bolsonaro, who in the 1980s achieved some renown with actions of this type. To press for a wage increase, he organized at the time a bomb-planting scheme that cost him his career. From the presidency, he perfected this trajectory by shoring up the militias, which continued to rehearse attacks after the exorbitant attack in Brasília.

The military consented to the adventure in order to perpetuate the privileges they achieved in the last four years. They sought to guarantee their impunity for the misdeeds committed during that period. Together with the leaders of the bolsonarista gangs, they facilitated an insane action conceived to unite the ultra-right sectors.

The occupants of the three main state buildings openly exhibited their racism by destroying a priceless portrait of Afro-descendant girls. They also confirmed their Christo-fascist purpose of crowning a "holy war" against the PT.

Bolsonaro tried to evade responsibilities with his silence and permanence abroad. But the whole alliance that surrounds him is faltering as a consequence of the failed coup. The deputies, senators

and governors of his party who won posts repudiated the coup, approved the federal intervention in Brasilia and marched together with Lula, in the act of revalidation of the assaulted institutions. The bolsonaristas with positions in the governorships and legislatures are reconsidering their return to the classic right wing and to the traditional negotiation of votes in exchange for budgetary allocations. The presidential coalition, which could now assimilate the ultra-rightists, if their leader is destroyed by the effects of the failed coup, is working with these negotiations.

Change of scenery

The Brasilia raid was a copy of the assault on the Capitol two years ago perpetrated by the Trumpists. In both cases, the ultra-right intended to demonstrate that a small and determined group can take over the main seats of the (Boron, 2023). Like Trump, Bolsonaro threw the stone and in the face of adversity hid his hand.

The copy of the operation confirmed the close ties between both formations, under the evident command of the American tycoon. But the Brazilian replica extended the onslaught to the three branches of government and had the approval of the army (and district governors), which did not have the Yankee coup (Miola, 2023). In Brazil there was also a forceful reaction by Lula, which determined the failure of the mutiny.

This intervention was categorical in rhetorical and practical terms. It is still not known whether it was also premeditated, with prior knowledge of the coup plan. Lula denounced the “Nazi vandals”, called Bolsonaro a “genocidaire” and accused the assailants of being “terrorists”.

He acted swiftly. Instead of asking the military to patrol the streets, he forced them to evacuate the camp. The government of Brasilia also intervened and took control of the police.

This attitude inclined the judges to carry out retaliatory measures. They ordered the arrest of 1,200 people involved in the attack and the arrest of the main suspect of organizing the assault, upon his return from Florida. This decision could have an impact on the pressure exerted by the progressive sector of the Democratic Party, for Bolsonaro to be expelled from the United States. The former captain is no longer untouchable. His assets would soon be frozen and he would be charged as an instigator of the coup.

These decisions have been promoted within the new cabinet by the Minister of Justice (Flavio Dino) in conflict with his colleague of Defense (José Mucio), who appeases the military and suggested an amnesty for the vandals.

A great opportunity has arisen to defeat the ultra-right, which was neutralized but not crushed. If they are not demolished they will return to the charge and to a great extent that game will be played in the predominance of the streets. Bolsonarism has been disconcerted in front of the ruling party, which resumed the massive acts in the electoral campaign, in the victory day, in the inauguration day and on the marches repudiating the coup.

This new scenario may modify the adverse power relations, which were not reversed by Bolsonaro’s electoral defeat. The connections between both variables are not univocal. In 1989 Lula lost the elections to Collor, but won a political victory. In 2014 Dilma triumphed at the polls but suffered a defeat that allowed the coronation of the former military man (Arcary, 2022). Now the electoral victory may be succeeded with a direct corollary in the balance of forces. The right is disoriented and the popular movement may capture the initiative.

Brazil: Establishment and weaknesses of Bolsonarism

What happened in Brasilia illustrates the contradictions of the ultra-right. Bolsonaro surprisingly reached the presidency, channeling discontent with the PT government that made its debut with

street marches (2013), was strengthened with the judicial-parliamentary coup (2016) and resulted in the preeminence of a conservative environment (2016-18).

The prescription of Lula allowed Bolsonaro to lead the reaction against the preceding cycle promoted by the establishment and the media, with the support of the middle classes disappointed with progressivism.

But the accumulated disasters during his administration frustrated the reelection of the furious military man, who was penalized for his criminal handling of the pandemic. The death toll from that infection was far higher than those caused by the virus alone. No one forgot that he refused to buy vaccines and to carry out tests, arguing that they could turn individuals into yacaré (Boulos, 2022).

Bolsonaro also failed to reverse the structural stagnation of the economy and aggravated social regression, recreating the tragedy of hunger that affects 33 million people. This scourge is particularly shocking in a country that ranks third in the world ranking of food producers.

The ups and downs and outbursts of the military exorbitant eroded the endorsement of the establishment and the release of Lula precipitated its decline. He was unable to keep his great adversary behind bars and that outcome prompted the PT to successfully contest the presidency.

Bolsonaro gave ample evidence of his fascist ambitions, but failed to introduce any pillar of that system. He multiplied daily violence, labor intimidation and fear, with 40 murders in the weeks prior to the elections. But he failed to create the framework of terror that fascism demands.

Nor was he able to replace the existing political regime with some version of totalitarianism.

He maintained his lead with military tutelage and a certain balance with the rest of the powers.

The ruling classes tolerated his indifference to exercise an executive function and the carnival-like profile of his appearances but did not validate his continuity.

The runoff also confirmed the great magnitude of his electoral base. He managed to introduce an unprecedented political polarization, which geographically divided the country into differentiated segments. Lula won in 13 states and Bolsonaro in 14. His party conquered the state of São Paulo, 15 of the 27 seats contested in the Senate and numerous deputies (Agullo, 2022). But now there is a serious question mark over the impact of the failed adventure on the four pillars of his political force: the army, organized crime, agribusiness and evangelism.

During his government, the military doubled the number of military officers in official positions and the uniformed officers placed 2 senators and 17 deputies, who presented themselves as referents of the national identity or heirs of the industrialization of the 60s. The nine generals closest to the former captain also strengthened their own businesses with military equipment.

But now a scenario has been created that would make it possible to dismantle this caste, if Lula translates his denunciation of military complicity with the coup into action. The replacement of the Minister of Defense, the purge of the command, the annulment of privileges and the investigation of the embezzlement of that leadership are all on the table.

The survival of the gangs sponsored by Bolsonaro is also threatened after the assault perpetrated in Brasília. The preparation of this criminal action was officially supported in the last years, with the authorization to use weapons under the cover of hunters, shooters and collectors clubs. The vandal groups now concentrate the bulk of the accusations for the coup, with a significant number of their members in prison.

The bolsonarista support in agribusiness was illustrated in the new post-electoral map.

The regions that feed this activity underpinned the lists of the former captain, demonstrating the incidence of a sector that represents a third of the GDP. They profit from extractivism and

expanded at the pace of the enduring industrial crisis. But the ringleaders of this network are being investigated for their financing of the uprising and could face serious charges.

The new context also influences the evangelist leadership that supported Bolsonaro, in exchange for the 82 deputies obtained by the Pentecostal Church. The high clergy of the pastors continued their enrichment, while their preachers induced to vote for the right to avoid divine punishments. The bolsonarismo communicators combined such crazy messages with the justification of the former president's daily lies. One day the former captain described Venezuelan immigrants as prostitutes and the other accused Lula of keeping pacts with the devil. No delirium was excluded from the rhetoric orchestrated to consolidate a salvationist leadership, among voters disappointed with the political system.

This ideological support may be corroded if Bolsonaro becomes a regular visitor to the courts. In that arraignment, the great critic of "Lulista corruption" will have to explain how he acquired 107 properties in the last 30 years, with his moderate salary as a congressman. The entire Latin American right wing is hanging on Bolsonaro's fate.

Bolivia: A thwarted coup

The failure of an uprising in Bolivia anticipated the outcome in Brazil at the beginning of the year. There, too, a failed coup attempt was consummated, to repeat with Arce the uprising that overthrew Evo Morales in 2019.

On that occasion, the ultra-right contributed armed gangs to kidnap social leaders, assault public institutions and humiliate opponents. It reiterated its old behavior of supporting military interventions against governments opposed to the establishment or crucified by the U.S. embassy. That coup was the most brazen military intervention of the last decades in South America. It had no institutional disguise, nor soft masquerade. Evo was forced to resign at gunpoint when the generals refused to obey him. He did not resign simply because he was overwhelmed. He was expelled from the presidency by the army leadership.

But the main peculiarity of this operation was the proto-fascist tinge brought by the right-wing partners. They established the reign of terror in the zones liberated by the uniformed and, under the leadership of Camacho, put into practice Bolsonaro's proclamations. With bibles and evangelical prayers they burned houses, shaved women's heads and chained journalists.

The aggressors also emitted racist cries against the cholo, while mocking the Coyas, burning the Whipala flag and beating passers-by of the denigrated race.

They implanted in La Paz the vandalism they had tried in their Santa Cruz stronghold. The ridiculous audacity of these hordes was guaranteed by police protection.

This hatred against the Indians is reminiscent of Hitler's initial provocation against the Jews.

Camacho did not disguise the irrationality of his diatribes against the native peoples. He considers the indigenous women to be satanic witches and the men to bear a servile imprint. He has created legions of resentful people to humiliate the indigenous people (Katz, 2019).

The ruling class of the Altiplano celebrated revenge against the original peoples.

Not digesting that an Indian had exercised the presidency, it validated Camacho's uncontrolled outrages. But his reactionary expectations were demolished by the extraordinary victory of the popular uprising (2019). That achievement led to elections, a renewed MAS triumph (2020) and a succession of trials that put the former usurper Añez behind bars (2022).

This result dislocated the ultra-rightists, who were forced to accept a retreat to the refuges in the east. From there they reorganized their forces and resumed the offensive, with the civic militias

sponsored by the local economic power. They sent these groups to the popular neighborhoods to sow terror and set up roadblocks to create a destabilizing climate.

They demanded the release of the coup perpetrators and turned the date of the census, which was to reevaluate the weight of each district, into a new pretext for great belligerence. With that excuse, they propitiated the 2023 uprising.

That plan even contemplated the eventual secession of the revolted territory, if they failed to regain control of the country. With the masquerade of a federal status for Santa Cruz, they conspired to perpetrate the territorial fracture. The civic groups underpinned this plot with an anti-Colla legend that impugns the plurinational state and takes up the old beliefs of the superiority of the white elites. With this reactionary separatism, they completed a script inspired by the oligarchic actions of the past (Acosta Reyes, 2022).

But the new coup attempt failed. It began with a sequel of strikes in the East and included the reactivation of the shock groups against social organizations. It also resuscitated the infuriated preaching of the Pentecostals to unite the mutiny. In the dispute between fractions to exhibit greater radicalism, they organized and manipulated Cabildos under the command of the same leaders of the previous uprisings (Camacho and Calvo) and managed to generate a major regional chaos.

Finally, after 36 days of traumatic actions, they were forced to suspend their uprising.

The expected support from other regions did not arrive and both the lack of supplies and the paralysis of commerce undermined the movement. The civic groups could not force the extension of the strike with a simple show of force (Paz Rada, 2022). Nor did they achieve national support from the traditional right or from indigenist sectors displeased with the government. Only some declining figures of the bourgeois spectrum approved of Camacho's new adventure (Montaño; Vollenweider, 2023).

But the principal novelty was the government's response. At the beginning of the provocation, the government only called for street demonstrations to repudiate the denigration perpetrated against the plurinational flag. It organized marches that gathered crowds, but did not deviate from the usual pattern of simply denouncing the coup perpetrators.

The turning point came in the last two weeks, with the audacious operation to arrest and transfer Camacho to La Paz. The main leader of the reactionary gangs was imprisoned, awaiting trial for his participation in the military coup of 2019. If this action is ratified, the government will have consummated a counter-offensive, which could pave the way for a great victory. In this confrontation is at stake the rebound or failure of the Bolivian ultra-right.

Venezuela: A frustrated model

The defeat of Bolsonaro in Brazil and Camacho in Bolivia is framed in the fulminating shipwreck of Guaidó in Venezuela. Their squalids led the regional ranking of reactionary vedetism for a long time. They replaced Cuba's gusanos on that podium and managed to place their actions on the front page of the news. On countless occasions, they assumed that their return to Miraflores was assured, but they currently share the same frustrations as their Miami relatives.

The extreme profile of that right wing was not predetermined in the debut of the confrontation with Chavismo. That initial clash was led by the traditional conservatives, who lost preeminence with the intensification of the conflict. The most virulent groups captured the leadership, promoting coups from the barracks and guarimbas in the streets.

In its obsessive anti-Chavista project, the ultra-right tried to follow in the footsteps of Pinochet. It demonized the Bolivarian process and proposed to extirpate it with a bloodbath. This hatred

reached the same intensity as the fascist denigration of communism. The mobilization of the anti-Bolivarian middle sectors was driven by this tone.

The ruling classes sought to bury the challenge personified by Chávez and tried to dissolve the popular empowerment that accompanied his administration. In this campaign they repeated all the items of the reactionary script.

This reiteration of scripts corroborated their total submission to Washington's dictates. The Venezuelan ultra-right wing was organized, financed and directed by the State Department, in the same mold as their Cuban predecessors. Also the quarrels aroused by the handling of money and the connections with the mafia, resemble the two Caribbean servants of the Yankee client.

Trumpism played all its cards to the squalids and the Obama-Biden side also contemplated alternative variants. But both sectors of the imperial establishment had to deal with the impossibility of sending marines to Caracas, as was the style in the Nixon or Kennedy era.

Without the saving resource of the U.S. invasion, anti-Chavismo tried all forms of substitute operations. It encouraged military plots, trained mercenaries on the border, landed militias on the beaches and hijacked helicopters. It also tested assassinations, staged the international farce of humanitarian aid and encouraged tireless street uprisings. But it failed in all conspiracies, demoralized its own troops, lost credibility and is currently facing a terminal crisis.

The self-proclamation of the ghost Guaidó is already an episode of the past. His followers tried to boycott the last elections with an inconsequential farce of parallel elections. Chavism recovered the National Assembly and the bulk of the opposition joined the elections, closing the long institutional conflict inaugurated with the disregard of the 2018 presidential elections.

It is not the first time that right-wingers return to the polls, but this return is processed with their heads very low. Guaidó is tainted by countless corruption scandals and his project is moribund.

The government first managed to quell the insurrectional cycle of 2014-2017. Subsequently, it obtained revenues from the migratory crisis, which scattered the opposition and finally neutralized the entire spectrum of its adversaries (Bonilla, 2021). The guarimbas have disappeared and the coup d'état no longer figures in any relevant agenda.

This failure of the ultra-right has reopened spaces of intervention for the more conventional sectors of the political system. But the new scenario is of great regional impact because the escuálidos were extolled as the great Latin American reference of the regressive project. Their decline together with the defeat of their emulators in Bolivia and Brazil creates a more problematic scenario for the gestation or reconstitution of reactionary currents in other countries.

Argentina: Old recipes recycled

The expansion of the ultra-right in Argentina is more recent and, as in Brazil, it emerged in a confrontation with a center-left government. The first flashes in the street marches against Kirchnerism were captured by traditional conservatism and catapulted Macri into government. But in the subsequent virulent contestation of Fernández and Cristina, the reactionary force of Milei (and to a lesser extent Espert) emerged.

Both characters are nourished by the negationist groups forged during the pandemic, gather violent formations and aspire to become a strong electoral force in the 2023 presidential elections.

The Argentine bolsonaristas were fabricated by the media and came to politics without any previous trajectory. In this deficiency, they differ from their conventional peers (Pichetto, Bulrich), who have been the protagonists of all the chameleonic mutations of the partidocracy.

In the last two years, the media installed new figures, in order to induce the right-winterization of the political agenda. They tolerate their scandals, outbursts and delusions (such as the acceptance

of the purchase and sale of children), in order to allow the imposition of reactionary issues, especially in the economic sphere (Katz, 2021). With this strategy, the very old and failed recipes of neoclassical orthodoxy have regained centrality.

Milei is the most outstanding showman of this operation. He adopted the eccentric pose of anger and shouting recommended by his advisors, in order to capture the audience and transform politics into a sequence of entertainment. He has tirelessly denigrated the “political caste” as he currently integrates and rants against the State, hiding his use of public resources.

He manages with the money provided by several U.S. foundations and has resorted to the antics of raffling his deputy’s allowance as a gesture of impugning the “caste”. In his ultra-liberal fanaticism, he did not consider the donation of that monthly allowance to some meritorious work or academic activity.

Some observers point out that this option for the raffle illustrated how he likens individual progress to pure chance. In his world of savage capitalism, it is not the fittest who survive, but only the luckiest (D’Addario, 2022). Incidentally, he induced a million people to leave their personal data in the information base managed by his bunker. They will opt for the most opportune algorithmic appropriation of that universe.

Milei is one of the crazy characters sponsored by the powerful to channel dissatisfaction with inoperative governments. He squanders demagoguery to capture the anger of the middle class and the desperation of the impoverished. But its effective priority is the erosion of democratic gains achieved after many years of struggle.

All the ultraliberal economic nonsense he enunciates is riddled with inconsistencies and is spread by the simple complicity of servile journalism. Nobody demands from him historical examples or practical illustrations of his absurd proposals to set fire to the Central Bank. With this masquerade, he feeds the reintroduction of a repressive climate, through apologies to State terrorism and exaltations to the free bearing of arms.

The hegemonic media support this regression, spreading the false belief that young people are disinterested in the blood tragedy imposed by the last dictatorship. The fascists who accompany Milei promote the harassment of social movements, with initiatives of criminalization of the piqueteros. His colleague Espert supports the same aggression with proposals to limit the birth rate in poor households. In his bourgeois blindness he considers that pregnancies are motivated by the payment of a social plan.

Espert has been flagged with punitive demagoguery, hiding the repeated failures of the “iron fist”. In his celebration of trigger-happy behavior, he omits that police violence never mitigated crime. It simply calls for revenge, ignoring the close relationship of criminality with inequality and the strong connection of recidivism with lack of education or work. To restore large-scale repression, the two ultra-rightists actively participate in the anti-Mapuche crusade and the consequent escalation of aggressions against native peoples.

The failed attempt to assassinate Cristina illustrates the extent to which the new ultra-right is not restricted to the electoral sphere. The attack was consummated after an intense media campaign of incitement to hatred (Katz, 2022) and the handful of marginalized people who carried out this action participated in a well-oiled organization of lawyers, spies and businessmen.

Before targeting Cristina, they developed the typical techniques of neo-Nazi groups, launching torches against the Casa Rosada, and displaying body bags and guillotines. The hand of the intelligence services in these operations is as visible as the kinship of their scripts with the Venezuelan guarimbas.

The complicity of high spheres of the Judiciary has been corroborated with the obstruction to the clarification of the frustrated assassination. They are working to restrict the charges to the three or four directly involved, covering up for the financiers and instigators of the assassination attempt. Particularly scandalous is the judicial protection of the right-wing politicians who knew about and allowed the preparation of the plot.

Dangers and limitations

The capacity for action of bolsonaristas (Olmedo) was marginal in Argentina during Macrismo, but has expanded in proportion to the widespread disappointment with the current government. They no longer constitute a distant threat and dispute spaces with the traditional right. They maintain a profile of their own that threatens the unity of the opposition in the upcoming elections. In this potential division lies the expectation of the ruling party to remain in the race to retain the presidency.

But in any electoral option, the ultra-right may become a strong force in the face of the very serious social crisis in the country. Unlike in 2001, they are emerging as a channel to capture the discontent with the political system. The progressive and radicalized tinge that this dissatisfaction had two decades ago, now presents a different physiognomy.

In fact, Milei advocates a return to Menemism. Not only does he promote a similar scale of privatizations, with greater labor deregulation and trade liberalization. He also proposes to counteract the current superinflation with a reinstatement of convertibility, which would irreparably ruin the country's economy. The establishment does not share this surgery for the moment for fear of an uncontrollable popular reaction, but neither does it reject its eventual application.

Milei joined Bolsonarism with great enthusiasm, displaying photographs with its leaders and reproducing the same exaltation of anti-communism. The failed coup in Brasilia placed him in an uncomfortable situation, which he camouflages with the usual complicity of the media.

But the bulk of the local right wing registered the electoral defeat of their Brazilian counterparts and disapproved of an assault on government buildings that could not be repeated in Argentina. The army maintains a marginal political role, in a country that has developed strong antibodies against militarism.

The Brazilian dictatorship coincided with a prolonged period of developmental growth and those responsible for it were never tried. On the other hand, Videla and Galtieri accentuated an economic regression that led to the Malvinas adventure. All conservative attempts to revalorize these genocides have unleashed massive repudiation. The popular demobilization and demoralization of progressivism that preceded Bolsonaro, did not have an equivalent correlate in Argentina as yet. But the historical differences between a country marked by convulsion and another characterized by the continuity of order, should be reviewed with some care. Brazil has never experienced the kind of socio-political confrontations that have prevailed in Argentina, but it is the protagonist of an unprecedented rift of unknown consequences. On the contrary, its southern neighbor has been plunged into a catastrophic social crisis, which alters all the parameters of the past.

Colombia: The nightmare of the mafiosi

The Colombian ultra-right is burdened with a ferocious trajectory of war against peasants and workers. It has incurred in an unequaled degree of savagery. In no other country in the region have so many mass graves been found with the remains of massacred people.

For six decades it complemented army shootings with massacres of all kinds.

These gangs specialized in the daily assassination of social militants, with a systematicity unparalleled in Latin America. Last year alone they finalized 198 popular leaders and since the signing of the Peace Accords (2016) they killed 1,284 fighters. Their terror has turned Colombia into the nation with the largest forced population displacements in the entire continent.

This ferocity dates back to the emergence of paramilitary groups organized by the Armed Forces in the 1960s to support the counterinsurgency war monitored by the Pentagon. From these formations emerged the so-called self-defense groups, which became intertwined with the drug trafficking mafias under the protection of the Uribe's government. In 2005 they were formally demobilized with all kinds of benefits but reappeared as shock forces hired by regional elites (Molina, 2022).

These groups dispute the control of territories and integrate a narco-mercenary structure that operates in all levels of the State. The old oligarchy was replaced by a narco-bourgeoisie, which manages a large part of the country's subway economy. The areas occupied by drug plantations are more extensive today than at the beginning of Plan Colombia (1999) and the productivity of the crops has doubled. Aerial fumigation has simply accelerated the abandonment of community fields and the concentration of land.

The narco-military structure forged by the drug clans has perfected its operational capacity and already exports mercenaries for different tasks. The way in which they organized the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse illustrates the regional gravitation of these criminals. They have formed a parallel army, which has been involved for decades in Colombia's parapolitics, to keep the country at the top of the world ranking for cocaine exports. The main figures of the Colombian right-wing maintain countless ties with this narco-economy.

This association is sponsored by the United States, which has turned Colombia into the Pentagon's main regional operation center. The seven military bases based in the country are connected to a vast network of uniformed personnel throughout the continent. Trump additionally used Colombia as a rearguard for incursions against Chavismo and reinforced the country's status as an "extra-NATO ally." Biden readjusted that strategy to ensure U.S. preeminence in the hemisphere (Pinzón Sánchez, 2021).

The ultra-right has been a key player in the political system for decades. But the exhaustion of urbismo and the popular revolt of 2021 undermined that regime and Petro's electoral triumph seriously challenges that fabric of oppressors.

To prevent that decline, they introduced an improvised character of Latin American Trumpism in the ballot. Rodolfo Hernández burst in with an empty speech against corruption, exhibiting his status as a millionaire, as the main merit to accede to the presidency. With this crazed message he tried to compensate for the bankruptcy of the official candidate (Federico Gutiérrez).

Hernandez resorted to every imaginable outburst and rant against the rest of the politicians, as if he was part of a different race. He did not disguise his macho convictions, nor his misogyny. But he crossed the line of what was acceptable to his own supporters, when he declared his admiration for Hitler (Szalkowicz, 2022).

Nor did his outrageous verbiage, the motorized campaign from Miami, and his threat of violent action have any effect. The backing of the powerful was not enough to contain the hope for change embodied by Petro. The right wing suffered a historic defeat and Hernandez himself immediately left the scene.

Now Petro confronts the monumental task of forging peace, in the face of reactionary sectors that are waiting for the moment to counterattack. They have rehearsed an attempt against Vice President Marquez and are sabotaging the ongoing negotiations (Duque, 2023). But they have been

left in a defensive position and the normalization of relations with Venezuela strengthens this setback. The Miami lobby does not mask its displeasure with a scenario far removed from its purposes.

Chile: The pinochetism of the new times

The ultra-right reappears in Chile with the same Pinochetist profiles of the past. Kast cannot repeat the coup of his admired predecessor, but he resumes all the banners of the nefarious dictator.

He burst in abruptly, in the face of Piñera's impotence to contain the popular uprising of 2019. That rebellion dragged the whole right into an electoral abyss, which Kast contained by forging the emergency candidacy that he unsuccessfully disputed against Boric.

The main banner of the trans-Andean reactionary was the restoration of repression against young people who defied the thirty years of post-dictatorial continuity in the streets. Kast demanded a hard hand against the protests as if the demonstrators had not suffered 30 murders, 450 people with eye injuries and hundreds of arrests (Abufom Silva, 2021).

With the same virulence he demanded the militarization of the south and the hardening of the anti-Mapuche campaign. He added to this agenda of explicit pinochetism an anti-immigrant discourse, to encourage hatred against the new wave of foreign workers incorporated into the Chilean economy.

Kast achieved a vertiginous reconstitution of the extreme right, at the expense of the conventional candidates of that space. He overcame the Christian Democrat (Provoste) and officialist (Sichel) figures, by means of a digestion of the center very similar to that consummated by Bolsonaro in Brazil. He also prevailed over the marginal characters bannered with anti-politics, who opted for an exotic electoral campaign from the United States (Parisi). He won the game within the conservative spectrum by retaking fidelity to Pinochettism.

With this stance he managed to reintroduce a large group of legislators in both chambers, reversing the meager results of the previous elections. He even came close to becoming president but was happily defeated by a great anti-fascist reaction. That response gained strength in the streets, regained primacy in the popular neighborhoods and attracted votes from the indifferent to the ballot boxes.

The eventual arrival of Kast to the Mint was even resisted by part of the establishment, which feared the consequences of a resumption of direct confrontation with the people. They considered that the game lost by Piñera would not be won by a more extreme version of the same script. They evaluated that the old political class is the best guarantee of continuity of the neoliberal model that Boric never proposed to eradicate.

Kast's irruption expresses the counterrevolutionary reaction of the powerful who defend their privileges. The popular rebellion diluted the center formations and the extreme right regained protagonism demanding the restoration of order.

Kast incorporated some facets of the new right, such as the support of the evangelists, but he affirmed himself with the old Pinochet codes. He sought to retake the resentment of the middle sectors against wage earners, taking advantage of the new scenario of informality and disarticulation of the traditional labor movement (De la Cuadra, 2022).

Its accelerated installation confirms the social roots left by the dictatorship to nurture the permanence of successors (Cabieses, 2021). The military tutelage -which collapsed abruptly in Argentina after the Malvinas adventure- lasted longer in Chile. That is why Pinochet died with military honors, while his Argentine colleagues were tried, pardoned and imprisoned again.

Under Pinochetism, a conservative middle class was also forged, which conditioned all the governments of the Concertación. Following the model of the Spanish transition, these administrations agreed to uphold the Constitution created by the dictatorship, in order to ensure the validity of the neoliberal model.

The Chilean ultra-right has been highly regarded by its peers in the region and Kast's frustrated access to the presidency was perceived as a defeat by the continent's reactionaries. Due to the shocking history embodied by Allende and Pinochet, Chile persists as the great symbolic referent of the two poles of Latin American political life.

This centrality is revived with each tussle between the two formations. The victories of the popular movement are quickly responded to by the right, in a dynamic of constant twists and turns and dizzying changes.

Peru: The custodians of Fujimorism

All variants of the right wing unified forces in Peru to consummate the recent coup that overthrew Castillo. They harassed the president until they finally forced his displacement. They would not tolerate the presence of a president alien to the Fujimorism conspiracy with its allies and adversaries, which sustains the most anti-democratic political regime in the region.

This time they carried out an extreme variant of lawfare, by means of a parliamentary coup with a military foundation and the complicity of Vice President Boluarte. They immediately unleashed fierce repression, with dozens of people killed, hundreds of people arrested and curfews in several provinces. This criminalization of protests goes beyond recent precedents and has placed the army in the typical place of any dictatorship (Rodriguez Gelfenstein, 2022).

This brutality is guaranteed by a commitment to the impunity which obliges any complaint against the gendarmes to be processed in the military courts. The new president validates the repressive savagery, rewarding with charges those responsible for the shooting of the people. She also accepted to delegate the effective command of the country to the ultra-right fanatic who presides the Congress (Álvarez Orellana, 2022). From there, the "coup within the coup" is perfected, which would legitimize the overthrow of the kidnapped Castillo, with some advance of the next elections. Since 2018, the right-wingers have been displacing the six presidents who lost functionality for the continuity of the regime. This system was created by Fujimori a year after taking over the government (1993), through a constitutional device that grants omnimal powers to the Judiciary and its Prosecutor's Office to intervene in political life. The weakness of the Executive, the atomization of the Legislative and the gravitation of the courts underpin a system that fosters immobility, apathy and disbelief among the population (Misión Verdad, 2022).

The purpose of this scheme is to ensure the continuity of a neoliberal model divorced from the vicissitudes of politics. The dizzying change of presidents contrasts, for example, with the permanence of the same president of the Central Bank in the last 20 years.

This economic course guaranteed the privatization of industry and the handing over of natural resources to foreign capital, within a framework of shocking poverty and inequality. The praised growth of the last three decades was consummated by expanding labor precariousness, which in the interior regions affects 70% of the population. The peasantry has also been severely hit by imports and the rising cost of inputs, while the bulk of investment has been concentrated in extractive activities that deteriorate the environment.

The coup against Castillo -which the United States immediately supported- aims at sustaining the political mechanism that guarantees the economic devastation. The entire right wing supports this regime, while its extreme variants build niches with changing figures. Its most recent character is

Rafael López Aliaga (Porky), who got the backing of evangelicals and ultra-conservative Catholics to expose caveman messages. He confesses to frequent self-flagellation and that he would annul any vestige of sex education, to exorcise the resabios of the “diabolical left”.

During the pandemic, he rejected the use of masks and proposed privatizing vaccination. He propagates neoliberal fanaticism and avoids the clarification of the accusations that involve him in money laundering (Noriega, 2021). Porky competes in Lima with another right-wing extremist accused of terrible human rights violations.

But the heroic popular resistance faced by the coup perpetrators is seriously challenging all variants of reaction. The death toll continues to rise and the shooting of demonstrators increases the number of victims. This uncontrolled brutality of the right wing will end up destroying its own continuity.

Other variants in gestation

The models of the established ultra-right are inspiring their more backward peers. This is the case of Mexico, where the same street dispute that the progressive governments of South America have provoked can already be foreseen. The traditionally minority sectors of reaction have begun to repeat the sequence of other experiences. They have recovered the initiative with movements rejecting the democratization of the electoral system promoted by López Obrador.

AMLO responded to this challenge with the largest rally in recent years.

Faced with this polarization in the streets, the ultra-right refined its repertoire, organizing a great international event with various troglodyte figures.

In other countries more accustomed to the repressive management of the State, the new right wing offers few novelties. In Ecuador or Guatemala, it simply supports the periodic reinstallation of regimes of exception, with the consequent militarization of daily life. There it supports variants of coup d'état, replacing the old military tyrannies with more disguised modalities of civilian dictatorship.

In Haiti, right-wingers sponsor both foreign intervention and the expansion of the mafia gangs that have destroyed the social fabric of the island. They support the gangster coup model that replaced the political system and oscillate between promoting a traditional dictatorship or precipitating another US occupation.

Faced with so many versions of the right-wing spectrum, it is important to clarify the uniqueness of this space in comparison to other regions. We will address this problem in our next article.