



# NEW CLOTHES, OLD THREADS

THE DANGEROUS RIGHT-WING OFFENSIVE IN LATIN AMERICA



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As the old world dies, Antonio Gramsci said, it is in the ‘interregnum’ where monsters emerge. The images in *New Clothes, Old Threads* use satire and mockery to confront the monsters of the emerging fascist and right-wing movements in Latin America. Satire, after all, has been historically used as an art form of resistance to confront fascism. Using digital collages and stylistic mashups, photographs of contemporary right-wing leaders and movements are turned into a new tarot-like iconography of monsters: The Libertarian, The Anarcho-Capitalist, The Anti-Scientist, The Techno-Feudal Lord, The Anti-Communist Saviour, The Pacifier, and The Interventionist. Hovering above these figures is a caricature of the Right’s greatest fear – The Spectre – which for the rest of us is a symbol of hope and resistance that is ushering in a new world.

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## **THE DANGEROUS RIGHT-WING OFFENSIVE IN LATIN AMERICA**



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THE INTERVENTIONIST

## *Introduction*

The Western world lives in discontent. Progressive models have failed to maintain the levels of politicisation, mystique, capacity to question, transformative purpose, and possibilities of concrete changes for the masses. At the same time, neoliberal projects systematically fail to fulfil their own aspirations: to take advantage of new technologies, develop entrepreneurial capacities, and achieve noticeable improvements in the population's living standards.

Models of success linked to upward mobility through work or associated with people becoming their own bosses fail to meet expectations and place the masses in a situation of constant frustration and discontent. This is undoubtedly the breeding ground for a broad spectrum of new right-wing operations. This reflects the situation described by Mark Fisher in his book *Capitalist Realism* (2009), in which catastrophe slowly unfolds: the future only holds the same promise as the present, which is not encouraging.

The promises of the free world that were supposed to be realised after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and that inextricably linked economic progress to individual liberties and democracy have failed miserably. In Latin America, the neoliberal scorched earth could not prevent the resurgence of people's struggles and the blossoming of new grassroots leadership, which reached their peak in the first decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> This surge in popular governments and mass mobilisations managed to disturb

the still waters in which neoliberal projects sought to submerge us. Renewed hopes, new myths, political identities, struggles, and tactics brought to the table a mobilising, mass, and popular sense of meaning for millions of people to fight and live for.

But the world is turning in a different direction. The break with neoliberal inertia allowed Latin America to rebuild links between peoples, include the excluded, and improve living conditions. However, this took place in the context of a trend towards the total precarisation of life, which could not be shaken from the roots of neoliberalism. This movement also came about in the context of the cultural triumph of neoliberalism, which radically changed the subjectivity of the majority of the population. This cultural hegemony has instilled deep roots that are based on individualism, consumerism, and a loss of the ability to imagine the future, which limits the horizon of what we believe to be possible. For the vast majority of humanity, this horizon is nothing more than the possibility of survival. As Fisher put it, 'The power of capitalist realism derives in part from the way that capitalism subsumes and consumes all of previous history'.<sup>2</sup> This is the cultural and political context of the West, and it is based on this decay that a new neoliberal offensive was launched from 2012 onwards, with Washington at its core. US hard power pursued different forms of hybrid warfare including 'soft' and 'hard' coups, lawfare, fake news, and armies of trolls, bots, and right-wing supporters spreading hate speech.<sup>3</sup> In just a few years, Washington increased its levels of intervention, sophisticated its methods, and achieved its goal of destabilising the progressive balance of power in Latin America.

The traditional right-wing formulas, tied to the programme of neo-liberal globalism or to the more historically conservative views of the oligarchic elites, were of course unable to fulfil their anti-populist promises. On the contrary, these formulas are also part of the problem. The emergence of both former President Donald Trump in the United States as well as the COVID-19 pandemic swept away the few remaining certainties that remained up to that point. The right wing today adopts new faces that intermingle with the old at the same time as it breaks ties with them. The alternative right, neo-reactionaries, far right, post-fascists, religious fundamentalists, and anarcho-capitalists moved from the margins of the political system to positions of relative importance in the Global North. One of the most prominent examples is Steve Bannon, a white supremacist who manipulated social media data and became one of the Trump administration's star advisors for eight months. After his departure from the White House, mainly because of his proven manipulation of Facebook user data for electoral purposes, he devoted himself to developing links between the different parties or experiences of the new nationalist right in all its variations in Europe. Together with Belgian Mischael Modrikamen, in 2018 Bannon launched what they called 'The Movement', a space for coordination and support for new right-wing projects in the region. They strengthened links with far-right parties in different countries and leaders of the stature of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán; Matteo Salvini, who at the time was prime minister of Italy; Marine Le Pen in France; and figures linked to the Vox party in Spain and the Golden Dawn party in Greece, among others. Shortly afterwards, global events went into free fall. The pandemic that emerged in 2020 showed the profound decay of the

capitalist West and the major crisis of its model of civilisation. This provided a wealth of possibilities for the initiatives of the extreme right, which assumed the role of condemning ‘the system’, voicing the need to break with inertia, and expressing the tedium and weariness caused by capitalist realism that does not offer alternatives that can be understood as ‘good sense’ in the hearts and minds the people, as Antonio Gramsci put it.

Latin America was not spared from this wave of new right-wing formations. From the election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil – the most important country in the region in economic and geopolitical terms – to the emergence of Nayib Bukele as president in El Salvador, different figures of the non-traditional right have gained political weight, visibility, and mass influence. At the same time, they have mixed up – or at least opened up – the spectrum of political discourse so that Latin America’s most conservative and traditional right wing can find echoes in the criticism of progressivism, the left wing, and national and popular projects.<sup>4</sup>

In dossier no. 47 of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, *New Clothes, Old Threads*, we present an analysis of these right-wing movements in Latin America. This is comprised of both an old right and a new right: its new clothes are woven with the same old threads of the past: racism, classism, homophobia, misogyny, authoritarianism, militarism, and repression.







THE LIBERTARIAN

## *Big Business Oscillates between the New and the Old Right*

Since the 2008 financial crisis, global capitalism has accentuated and magnified its previous tendencies. The financialisation of the economy accelerated after states in the North (especially the US) carried out multi-billion-dollar bailouts of investment banks whose portfolios largely consisted of the subprime market. This renewed wave of financialisation accelerated the pace of growth of new economic bubbles and leveraged the new and triumphant hi-tech and online platform mega-corporations. The world of work continued to exclude more than 50% of the population in the capitalist countries of the South, increasing both the offshoring of production and the creation of new linkages in global value chains, in which the middle positions continue to be occupied by the countries of the Global North, with the exception of China.<sup>5</sup>

These processes were undoubtedly exacerbated in 2020-2021 by the coronavirus pandemic, which acted as a catalyst for the economic tensions that had accumulated in previous years.<sup>6</sup> Above all, the crisis clearly showed a significant gap between national and global dynamics of capital accumulation, among which the power of online platforms and investment banks prevails. In the face of the exponential growth in the use of online platforms and events, Amazon, Meta, Alphabet, Apple, Microsoft, and Tesla are the big business winners of the new post-2008 bubble, especially in 2020 and 2021. Major financial companies operated as an indispensable

mechanism in directing the dollars in circulation towards these vehicles for capital accumulation.

To a large extent, the relationship between technological developments in Silicon Valley and the emergent right wing is well known: Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal, is a fervent advocate of alternative right ideology; cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology are promoted by white supremacist Richard Spencer as the currency of the alt-right; and Oracle CEO Safra Catz donated some \$127 billion to Donald Trump's last election campaign, among other examples. Neo-reactionary sectors and philosophies based on uchronia, as advanced by ideologues such as Nick Land and Curtis Guy Yarvin (also known as Mencius Moldbug) and their followers, have reinforced the anti-statist and anti-globalist notions that fuel the new right-wing movements in the North. They have done this based on the latest developments in online platforms, social media, and cryptocurrencies.

The alternative right sees concrete ways of boosting private capital accumulation through the development of cognitive capitalism and the financial developments of blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies, in which national states have little or no capacity to intervene.<sup>7</sup> Programmers linked to the new waves of Silicon Valley have associated the latest developments of high-tech companies with the potential to solve the 'problems' of democracy and state intervention. This is what Cédric Durand calls the 'Silicon Valley consensus', which – rather than impacting solely this group of companies (known as start-ups) – seeks to conduct a hegemonic operation to produce a new cognitive map. This map

puts the blame for entrepreneurs' lack of productivity on the traditional conservatives of the Republican Party and progressive Democrats, who are said to promote 'egalitarian, consumerist and multicultural mediocrity'.<sup>8</sup> This ideology was expressed in 1994 in *A Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age*, produced by the Progress and Freedom Foundation.<sup>9</sup> This ideology failed to contest the brief period of neo-conservative hegemony at the state level, in which the Pentagon hawks set the pace. Big business adopted the same position that 'Silicon Valley, or rather its enchanting representation, is the showcase of the new capitalism: a land of opportunity where, thanks to start-ups and venture capital society, ideas flourish freely, jobs abound, and high-tech developments benefit the masses'.<sup>10</sup>

After the failure of neoconservatism and Barrack Obama's globalist initiatives, this ideological operation – which had been developing since the 1990s – went on the offensive, boosting its political agenda during Donald Trump's government. The world's richest one percent have taken on the idea that value creation in contemporary capitalism is increasingly immaterial and found in innovation (be it in information technology, finance, or in obtaining patents to develop physical production). As Mariana Mazzucato shows us, from Apple to PayPal, and from Goldman Sachs to Pfizer, the position is clear: these companies are the ones who create value – not 'inefficient' sectors, among which the state and the working poor are always cited as examples.<sup>11</sup> This is closely linked to the neo-reactionary movement, which is simultaneously 'anti-modern and futurist, made up of disillusioned libertarians'.<sup>12</sup>

The key questions here are: how many of these elements have been behind the projects of the Latin American right wing? Is this ‘Silicon Valley ideology’ setting the pace for the demands and proposals of the ruling classes in the countries south of the Rio Bravo?<sup>13</sup> What link does this new emerging right have with local ruling classes? Though we will not be able to conclusively answer these questions here, we can at least propose some hypotheses.

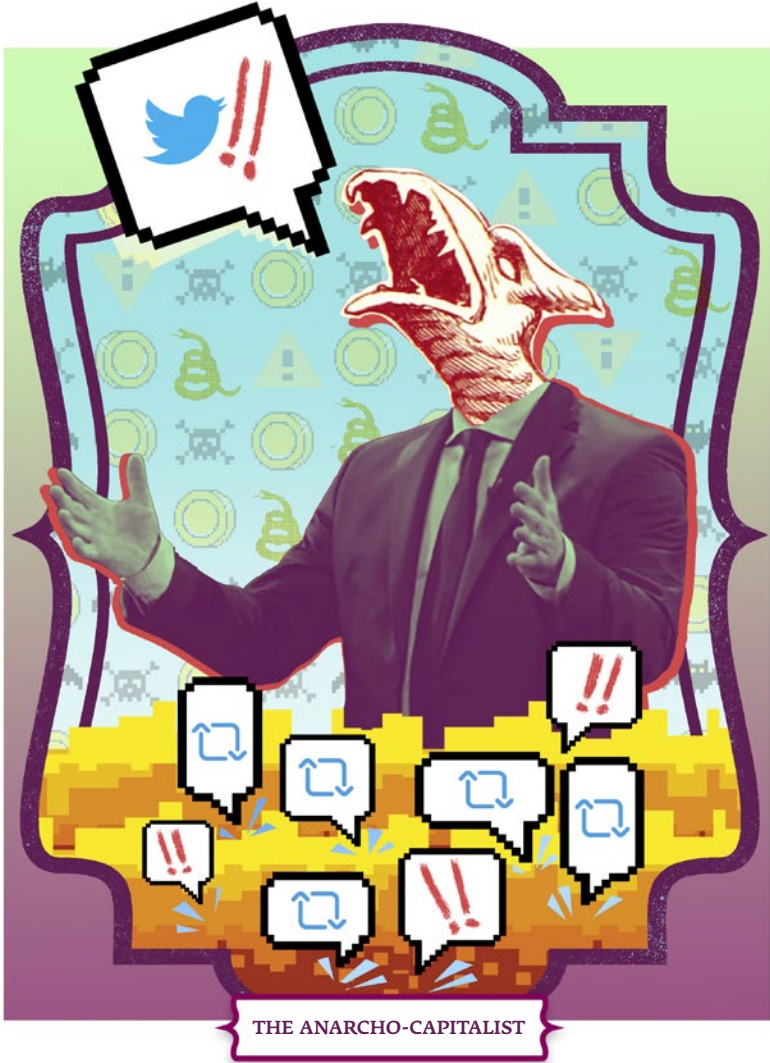
**Hypothesis one:** Anti-populism is the main expression of big business in Latin America. Big business considers the diverse popular projects (which it disparagingly labels as populist) to be its greatest enemies. The reengagement of concentrated capital with the political right stemmed from the need to confront the governments emerging from the continental anti-neoliberal struggle since the first decade of the 2000s. As the two worked together more closely, they generated new processes ranging from soft coups to hard coups through a variety of reactionary electoral coalitions.

The region’s big business backed different right-wing coalitions and leaders based on core concepts such as the endless dichotomies associated with ‘populism’: republicanism versus institutional decline, the free market versus statism, and democracy versus autocracy, among others.

This coordination between business interests and right-wing political formations continues today. If we take Brazil as an example, it is clear that big business prefers to support Jair Bolsonaro, who could be defined as a neo-fascist. This support comes as his

government faces the possibility of collapse and as a popular project could once again come to power, headed by former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.<sup>14</sup> As a rule, Brazil's economic elite tends to position itself within a more classical and globalist neoliberalism, which is somewhat represented in the figure of Paulo Guedes, Bolsonaro's economy minister. Compared to the 1990s, today Brazil is witnessing a conciliation of the classic neoliberal economic programme and Bolsonaro's neo-fascism in the political sphere.<sup>15</sup> Sectors ranging from agribusiness to banks now openly support the government.<sup>16</sup> They are united by their fear of the return of a popular government: if the reactionary bloc in Brazil does not succeed in preventing the return of a popular government, it is ready to carry out all possible regressive structural reforms in order to destroy the already reduced capacities of the state. The Brazilian bourgeoisie refuses to consider another possible project. Rather, it is committed to maintaining the neoliberal vision in the economic sphere while sweeping Bolsonaro's fascist excesses under the carpet.

Similarly, big business in Argentina adopted an anti-populist stance from the very moment of Néstor Kirchner's inauguration as president in 2003, taking increasingly firm steps to shape a project that would succeed in replacing Peronism in the government.<sup>17</sup> This was achieved through a political force headed by Mauricio Macri. While this force resembled the new right, it was closer to the conservative, republican, colonialist, and oligarchic right wing than a right wing which thrives on political incorrectness, extreme anti-statism, political mobilisation, and reactionary nationalism.



In 2015, the Argentine Business Association (the most influential in the country), the major agribusiness players (represented by the Argentine Rural Society and other entities), and the main groups operating in the Argentine Industrial Union expressed their total support for Macri's electoral campaign and policies, even though they did not actually benefit them substantially in terms of profitability. However, the need to sustain a neoliberal policy remained the core principle 'in the face of the populist threat'.<sup>18</sup>

Big business in Argentina is clearly opposed to the government of President Alberto Fernández and Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. The vast majority contributes to the right and centre-right coalition of which former president Mauricio Macri is a member. The new right phenomenon, led by Javier Milei, does not have a substantial impact on the business world. For the moment, the capital of the traditional oligarchy has opted for conservative neoliberals over ultra-liberals and anarcho-capitalists.

These cases demonstrate that the ruling classes in our region are at a crossroads: either they continue to sustain a model of bourgeois democracy in crisis or they make the leap to an authoritarian form of government. In both cases, the only point of agreement is an anti-popular economic programme. The variable is how much political violence to allow while permitting economic violence to go unchecked.

**Hypothesis two:** The new right does not actually have an economic programme that can be appropriated by the main types of capital. Specifically, most of the economic policy measures of



governments considered to be of the ‘new right’, such as those of Bukele in El Salvador and Bolsonaro in Brazil, arguably follow the process of radicalising the Washington Consensus. This path is taken instead of offering novel initiatives to address the exacerbation of the knowledge economy – ‘Industry 4.0’ – or the adoption of the premises of the Austrian School. The central macroeconomic measures of these projects, like those developed by Sebastián Piñera in Chile and Mauricio Macri in Argentina, and those being implemented by Luis Lacalle Pou in Uruguay, are part of the programme of neoliberal globalism. Of course, the systematic exhaustion of this programme has been evident for decades, which is why the business community is beginning to sympathise with neo-reactionary approaches and the alternative right.

Perhaps the only deviation from this programme to produce new forms of a reactionary political economy that is appropriate today is El Salvador’s adoption of the Bitcoin cryptocurrency as legal tender. By promoting this law as a measure of great radicalism – which was approved by parliamentary majority – Latin America’s model neo-reactionary president introduced a very significant risk of instability. Freely converting dollars to Bitcoin can produce widespread speculative effects given the volatility of cryptocurrencies.<sup>19</sup> El Salvador already has a stunted monetary policy due to its dollarised economy, but the adoption of Bitcoin as legal tender directly pivots towards privatising the creation of money. Stripping the state of any capacity to intervene or regulate money is one of the great neo-reactionary dreams that seem to be coming true in the country.

With the exception of Nayib Bukele's leap into the void of cryptocurrencies, the economic policy proposals of the region's right wing are quite similar to classic neoliberal programmes. It is these economic proposals that big business advocates and upholds in order to oppose any programme of popular progress. In any case, it is clear that the different versions of the right are united by their fear and hatred of the working class.

**Hypothesis three:** The gap between the logic of capital accumulation and the political projects of the ruling classes is widening. Industry 4.0 dynamics of accumulation and extreme financialisation subordinate the ruling classes of the periphery to the dictates of global capital as never before. The response of big business in these countries, which seeks to survive the global competition that is increasingly tending towards techno-feudalism, is to resume the agenda of revived neoliberal reform. However, this agenda does not have the popular support that it had secured in the last decade of the twentieth century. The bourgeoisies of the Latin American periphery range from explicitly supporting traditional right-wing governments to increasingly sympathising with the still marginal sectors of the new right that promise new discourses, new reactionary utopias, and new forms of mobilisation to encourage a refoundation of capitalism.

A key point in this debate is to what extent today's dynamics of global and national capital accumulation require domination through bourgeois democracy, and whether other models are being sought.

## *Expanding the Discursive Boundaries to the Right*

The offensive waged in the last decade by the region's ruling powers has largely been geared towards the dispute over meaning. How are new discursive boundaries being forged by the actions of the right wing? As noted, in our region, this offensive is at its core a reaction to the progressive governments and the expansion of rights over the last two decades. Here, demonisation emerges as the guiding objective, and the issue of 'corruption' becomes a central feature of discourse.

The offensive of the 1990s was developed in the name of a market-centred utopia, which envisaged the logic of profitability and efficiency as a way of organising and modernising our societies and overcoming the problems faced by the former welfare states; however, this new offensive cannot be sustained by the same optimism. Following the economic crisis, the wave of protests against the neoliberal model, and the emergence of governments that expanded social inclusion, the ruling powers relaunched their project in the twenty-first century with a discourse that moved in two directions. On one hand, the origins of the neoliberal doctrine were re-examined to create its personification – the entrepreneur – based on the abstract and triumphalist macro-narrative about the virtues of the market. On the other hand, the dichotomy between freedom/democracy and authoritarianism remains, with

its anti-populist and/or anti-communist variants, depending on the country in question. Faced with the weakening of this market-based utopia, a former golden age is evoked – generally linked to an oligarchic and free market order – rather than the vision of an imminent future. Consequently, this offensive is largely deployed in the name of traditional institutions and values – from the family and the ‘natural’ role of men and women to the army and even religion – which give meaning to this new crusade.

That said, there are three aspects that characterise this conservative reaction across the continent to varying degrees in terms of communication strategies and the construction of discourses.

The first characteristic is the revival of conspiracy theories and a narrative centred on the image of the dangerous advance of the left, driven by a supranational structure. This includes constructing an external and powerful enemy reminiscent of the anti-communist discourse of the Cold War. This enemy can be epitomised in a government (as in the case of Cuba and Venezuela), in a leader (Lula da Silva, Nicolás Maduro and Evo Morales), or in a platform where common political positions are advanced.<sup>20</sup> This construction of discourse holds more sway among sectors that include figures from the armed forces, but not exclusively. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these conspiracy theories appeared in other narratives. This threat was complemented by the nomination of strong political figures who personify salvation or protection in the face of danger.

Second, with the weakened possibility of mobilising citizens in pursuit of a market-centred utopia capable of offering a better future that could easily be envisioned, appealing to ‘sad passions’ became a strategic line of action.<sup>21</sup> The defence of personal freedom and private property appear as the central elements of a common sense that is also encapsulated in hyper-individualistic perspectives. Communication strategies are used to encourage indignation, for which all tools are on the table: smear campaigns, fake news, and messaging targeted according to the audience. Examples of this abound. Once again, the cases of Brazil and Colombia are paradigmatic due to the intensity with which these actions were put into play, and because they served as a reference for other contexts.<sup>22</sup>

Third, we are facing a conservative reaction that justifies and endorses neoliberal policy in the economic and social spheres while centring the issue of insecurity. This is why it promotes punitivism and repression. The defence of liberty to ensure individual and collective fulfilment goes hand in hand with control, stronger sentencing, and empowering security forces. This contradiction becomes palpable and includes a shift from focusing on crime against private property to criminalising social protest.

A brief look at several countries in the region will allow us to see how these discursive strategies and forms repeatedly appear across the board.



THE ANTI-COMMUNIST SAVIOUR

## *The Peruvian Cold War*

Peru is experiencing a protracted political crisis that is most noticeable in the fragmentation of the party system and in the existence of equally fragmented leaderships.<sup>23</sup> The right-wing camp has its ways of communicating, but it is also characterised by heterogeneity. There are sectors that can be defined more as classical liberals, others that are more populist, yet other sectors with nationalist roots, and there is also the far right. There are traditional parties and new parties, forces that emerged from Fujimorism, and less institutionalised groups that express themselves above all through social media and direct action.<sup>24</sup>

One of the results of the June 2021 presidential run-off was the support that Keiko Fujimori of the Popular Force (*Fuerza Popular*) party secured from sectors identified with staunch opposition to the regime headed by her father in the 1990s. This shift was most illustrative in the case of writer Mario Vargas Llosa given his influence as a major public figure.<sup>25</sup> In a column published a few days after the first round of elections, the Nobel laureate did not mince his words when he associated Pedro Castillo with the idea of a 'communist dictatorship' that would bring more poverty to the country.<sup>26</sup>

It must be said that anti-communism is a central focus of the Peruvian right-wing discourse. This central discourse was strengthened by two factors: the revival of a conspiratorial narrative reminiscent of the Cold War at the continental level, and Castillo's surprising electoral success. In the case of Peru, from the 1990s

onwards, this anti-communism also became associated with ‘terrorism’; from there, it spilled over to the left wing and social protest in general. This was also a result of the repressive state policy under Fujimori, which had the Shining Path organisation as its primary target.<sup>27</sup>

In the run-up to the second round of elections, Congressman of the Popular Renewal party (*Renovación Popular*) Vice Admiral Jorge Montoya, who represented another right-wing sector more closely linked to the military, claimed that Peru was faced with a choice between ‘living in democracy or living in communism’. He linked Castillo’s success to ‘a plan by the São Paulo Forum’ and concluded: ‘we need an alliance between the right-wing parties of the entire continent to stop the advance of communism’.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, Keiko Fujimori referred to Castillo as the bearer of a class hatred that deepened the division between Peruvians while presenting herself as the ‘saviour’ and guarantor of ‘national unity’.<sup>29</sup>

These discourses converged in the construction of an enemy whose legitimacy to represent significant sectors of the population is not recognised. In doing so, these discourses fanned the flames of groups with an even more radicalised discourse, which went so far as to physically attack Castillo’s supporters. Among these sectors, two groups stand out: *Coordinadora Republicana* and *La Resistencia*.<sup>30</sup> Both have a strong presence on social media, a voice in the press, and devote their time to holding rallies to denounce journalists and civil servants. They preach anti-communism, have ties with religious fundamentalist sectors, and advocate ‘traditional family values’.



## *El Salvador's Neo-Reactionary Experiment*

As we have mentioned, one of the great novelties of the continental right wing is the figure of Nayib Bukele, who has been the president of El Salvador for two and a half years. His arrival to government and his profile can only be understood in the context of a profound crisis of legitimacy of the parties that alternated in power after the 1992 Peace Accords: the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).<sup>31</sup> Bukele's style – which is clearly reminiscent of Donald Trump – as well as his government's political communication and his key measures, point to a way of constructing his image as a strong leader.

Bukele's proposal has three clear symbolic pillars. The first is his differentiation from and systematic questioning of bipartisanship. He defines the country's political leaders as 'the same old faces' and/or 'the corrupt'.<sup>32</sup> He even referred to the civil war and the Peace Accords as a 'farce'.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, Bukele presents himself as being capable of controlling insecurity and keeping organised crime – mainly embodied in *las maras*, the name given to gangs in the country – in check. To this end, his Territorial Control Plan is a legal tool to increase the resources allocated to state security forces and to militarise the daily life of the population.<sup>34</sup> Thirdly, Bukele constructs an image of himself as a strongman, a young politician, a successful businessman, and a guarantor of change; this includes a politically incorrect and informal religious component that is in line with the precepts of the US alternative right.



THE TECHNO-FEUDAL LORD

Another characteristic feature that identifies him as a representative of the emerging right is the mixture between the use of social media and certain actions that constitute major shows of strength and that are on the margins of democratic institutionality. There are several illustrative examples in this regard.

In early 2020, Bukele invoked Article 167 of the Constitution, which empowers the executive branch to convene parliament to meet on a single issue. In this case, the issue was a loan from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to finance Phase III of the Territorial Control Plan. Faced with the refusal of the majority of ARENA and FMLN legislators to attend the session, Bukele sent troops into the Legislative Assembly and called on his supporters to gather outside the building. After an impassioned speech in which he sought to criminalise legislators, the president entered parliament and prayed in front of the empty seats.<sup>35</sup> On his way out, he said that God had asked him for patience and announced that he was giving parliamentarians a week to assent to the loan, which ended up being approved with the only opposition from the FMLN.

On May Day of 2021, the new Legislative Assembly took office; in its first session, it approved the dismissal of the members of the Constitutional Chamber and the Attorney General of the Republic – bypassing the mechanisms provided for in the Constitution – and replaced them with officials close to the president.<sup>36</sup> Bukele justified these actions on the grounds that they are part of a process of cleansing the political and judicial system through his leadership. This move received international condemnation and sparked

tensions with the US government in particular, which even asked Bukele to reconsider the measure.<sup>37</sup> In light of this reality, a new element appeared as part of the Salvadoran president's discourse characterised by pragmatism and an appeal to the value of national sovereignty. Bukele left behind the discourse that painted the US as El Salvador's chief ally and began to talk about the foreign interference that his country was suffering. It was in this context that the Salvadoran government highlighted the importance of the vaccine supply that the country received from China as well as the broader cooperation that has been established between the two countries.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Old and the New in Uruguay*

Uruguay is witnessing an unprecedented coalition government that brings together the entire political spectrum to the right of the Broad Front.<sup>39</sup> The Multicolour Coalition is made up of the two traditional parties (the Colorado Party and National Party) and other forces with less experience in power.<sup>40</sup> Among them is Open Cabildo (*Cabildo Abierto*), led by retired General Guido Manini Ríos.<sup>41</sup> This new party took the political establishment by surprise in the 2019 elections, winning seats in the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate.

Both the main measures of the government headed by President Luis Lacalle Pou and his coalition's discourse show elements of the most classical liberal ideology as well as other ideologies that update premises of neoliberalism. These include a range of

punitive discourses and other ways of demonising the left wing, even justifying the role of the military dictatorships of the 1970s.

The hegemony of the National Party, led by President Lacalle, is indisputable. This gives the government a centre-right, clearly pro-business profile; it presents itself as being modern and well-prepared to govern. Lacalle's style assigns a central role to social media and misses no opportunity to trivialise his own efforts leading the executive branch as a way of developing the image of a figure that is 'close to the people'. This strategy once defined the construction of the public profile of former Argentinian President Mauricio Macri. In this context, the coalition's most reactionary features are sidelined, but this does not make them any less relevant. The simple fact that Open Cabildo has obtained parliamentary representation and become a governing party legitimises these positions and places the larger forces of the coalition in the position of having to accommodate some of them, whether out of convenience or conviction.

The official discourse is constructed around criticism of the three previous Broad Front governments, whether explicitly stated or not. One of the core concepts of the official discourse is that of freedom and economic liberalisation as a vehicle of economic progress. This is complemented by the principle of fiscal efficiency, which is also one of the main bases for constructing this anti-Broad Front identity. Such elements can be identified in the criteria for managing the pandemic and are visible in Lacalle's speech to the General Assembly (the two chambers of the legislative branch), given one year after his inauguration in March of this

year.<sup>42</sup> Here, Lacalle highlighted liberty ‘as a central element of a person’s life’ and as a ‘necessary beacon for all of a ruler’s actions’. In this framework, he highlighted the strategy of ‘appealing to responsible liberty’ as the main tool to confront the pandemic, a principle that was combined with the premise of ‘taking care of resources in order to take care of people’.<sup>43</sup> Lacalle has also made a big deal of the fact that his government was able to meet the fiscal targets it set ‘without raising taxes, something it was said was impossible to achieve’.<sup>44</sup>

The other focus of this discourse, which can also be seen in the government’s key measures, is security. In fact, during the first part of its term in office, the government coalition promoted the Urgent Consideration Law (LUC), which was approved and led to substantive security reforms.<sup>45</sup> In his speech before the legislature, Lacalle himself highlighted the fact that the LUC developed the conditions to apply ‘legitimate self-defence, pickets were declared unlawful, the penalties for drug trafficking were increased, and the offence of resisting arrest was created’. All these measures add up to what he defined as ‘a major change of attitude regarding support for police work’.<sup>46</sup>

In this sense, in its almost five hundred articles, the LUC summarises the imaginary defended by the right-wing coalition that governs Uruguay. This includes:

- understanding insecurity as the central problem and presenting punitive measures as the solution, namely by

increased penalties and by providing greater legal support for the security forces

- deregulating economic activity and fiscal adjustment
- weakening the role of the public sector in producing goods and services
- concentrating previously decentralised powers in the executive branch
- weakening workers' rights vis-à-vis employers
- criminalising protests

### *Argentina and Twenty-First Century Anti-Populism*

In the case of Argentina, it is very clear that the offensive of the ruling powers both in discourse and in praxis is to a great extent a reaction to the expansion of rights spearheaded by the Kirchner governments and to the process of regional integration led by progressive and popular governments that were in power in the first fifteen years of this century. However, this progress comes alongside the worsening of structural economic problems and the limitations that the Kirchner experience itself demonstrated in reproducing its 'post-neoliberal' political project.<sup>47</sup>

The last decade has been characterised by the growing imposition of an agenda rooted in two major cornerstones of the business sector's agenda: the fight against authoritarianism, insecurity, and

corruption and the drive to liberalise and deregulate the economy. The business elite, traditional factions of the political system, and new forces – together with the mainstream media – have converged in a cycle of growing confrontation. They have even managed to mobilise important sectors – chiefly the middle and upper classes in big cities and the most prosperous rural areas – around these issues. The deployment of this social bloc has created conditions that are conducive to advancing a new reactionary common sense.

In the more strictly political sphere, two elements are worth highlighting. In 2015, a coalition led by Mauricio Macri and his Republican Proposal party (*Propuesta Republicana* or PRO) came to power. Since its emergence – and later while governing the city of Buenos Aires – this party has been promoting an image of itself as the ‘modern right’, which has eschewed major ideological debates and has mainly drawn on political management vocabulary. From 2015 onwards, PRO and its main leaders brought into play an agenda and forms of discourse that are more typical of the classical right, combined with means of intervention that stretch the limits of political correctness. This process has only deepened during the pandemic and since the PRO was removed from the presidency in 2019.

The second element to highlight is the emergence of formations to the right of PRO that are characterised by political incorrectness as a distinctive style, much like the precepts of the alternative right in the United States and Europe. In this ‘right of the right-wing’ world, we find two extremes. On one side of this extreme



are the followers of the liberal economists José Luis Espert and Javier Milei, who were elected as parliamentarians in the recent November midterm elections. On the other are those more closely linked to nationalist Catholicism and conservative evangelicalism, headed by figures who have a past in the PRO and who – for now – have only achieved minor prominence.

Although its influence is increasing, the radical right's position in the local political scene may be more significant today for its capacity to impose a discussion of certain issues and for the impact it can have on the electoral performance of the majority right-wing alliance than for the amount of institutional representation it is able to achieve. As mentioned above, big business does not currently see a viable alternative in these groupings of the radical right.

These variations of the right find common cause in a number of strategies and devices while differing in others. They share an agenda that can be summarised in the catchwords 'security' and 'anti-populism'. In the face of 'insecurity', they construct a punitive and increasingly xenophobic discourse, especially towards the sector of workers who are excluded from formal employment. This discourse seeks to legitimise and expand the security forces' scope for action and constructs culprits in the same way that internal enemies were constructed in the past, and against whom the violence of the repressive state apparatus was directed. Depending on the circumstances, these culprits can be the poor, or immigrants, or indigenous peoples.



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As has historically been the case, these right-wing formations strive to associate the term populism with other negative terms such as corruption and authoritarianism. The novelty here is the incorporation of the idea of privileges alongside these concepts. Populism is also presented as a synonym for clientelism and hand-outs, and a distinction is proposed between those who receive state assistance and ordinary people who 'work and pay their taxes'. In this way, the right wing appropriates the discourse of condemning privileges – which has historically been part of the actions of the left – in order to crush the benefits of a section of working people. The 'positive' counterpart of this is the appeal to a common sense linked to individual effort and meritocratic criteria in order to simultaneously delegitimise the very idea of universal rights (to employment, housing, food, and so on) and collective organisation.

We must add an element to this common discourse, which is very significant in the Argentinian case, even though it operates in the background. This is the attack on the struggle of human rights organisations that stand against impunity for the crimes of the last military dictatorship. The variants of the domestic right, starting with PRO's leading exponents, have tended to link these organisations to corruption. Although they have not gone so far as to propose explicit exonerations of state terrorism, as is the case in other countries, they have been silently complicit with the denial of these crimes.

The most radical formations distinguish themselves based on certain fundamental uses of discourse. On one level, there is a specific position that results from the combination of three elements: the

figure of the new outsider to the political system; the idea that the real antagonism is that which exists between ordinary people and politicians; and – perhaps most importantly – the idea that an anti-system force is required. On another level, it is the discourse of the new right that has secured the most media coverage and electoral results and that explores the premises of economic ultra-liberalism in the greatest depth. The attack on all kinds of ways of regulating the economy, the idea of abolishing taxes, and the call to reduce the state to its minimum expression are the main pillars of a narrative that presents itself in the name of freedom, but which in fact vindicates authoritarian governments. In addition, this discursive construction is characterised by mixing the classic reference to a golden age – set, in Argentina’s case, in the oligarchic regime of the late nineteenth century – with the allusion to a ‘liberal utopia’, whose intention is to dispute the meaning of the future. This position is very close to the neo-reactionary concept most fully developed in Nick Land’s *The Dark Enlightenment* (2013), which is understood as a reactionary uchronia based on progress towards individualism and in which an anti-egalitarian logic reigns and monarchical and exclusionary forms of government return.

### *Brazil Caught between Neoliberalism and Neo-Fascism*

At first glance, Brazil appears to be another laboratory of the new right. How can we understand the contradiction between a classic neoliberal economic programme and the excesses that President Jair Bolsonaro produces in the Brazilian political system? We can

analyse this process as part of a discursive tension that does not appear to be clearly resolved. While the representatives of big business place themselves in the rhetorical camp of neoliberalism, value its institutions, and concretely advance globalist projects, the president intensifies his neo-fascist rhetoric. Let us consider three concrete examples of these discursive elements.

Firstly, as a parliamentarian and even more so as president, Bolsonaro puts forward an anti-Workers' Party (PT) and anti-communist position, which discriminates against left-wing stances and resembles the case of Keiko Fujimori in Peru. These stances are associated with Lula da Silva and the left wing in general as well as with a continental project born in the São Paulo Forum and which has its most obvious expression in *castrochavismo* (Castro-Chavism).<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, Bolsonaro's discourse clearly reveals a growing attempt to bypass the rule of law. At the time of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, the now president of Brazil dedicated his vote to oust Dilma in memory of the late Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, who was in charge of a torture centre during the military dictatorship, and called Ustra a 'national hero'.<sup>49</sup> From then on, Bolsonaro's celebratory mentions of Brazil's military dictatorship have multiplied, which sheds light on his profoundly anti-democratic and politically incorrect side. He has managed to transform the unsayable into the sayable and move the discursive boundary one point further to the right.

Thirdly, Bolsonaro has tried by all means to connect with the big players of the alternative right in the United States. He expressed his support for Donald Trump on a number of occasions during the then-president's years in office and participated in meetings of the regrouped formations of the global right. His alignment with the United States is in clear opposition to the more pragmatic sector of the government, which maintains the agenda of globalism as a possibility.

Though we cannot delve into all of these elements in the scope of this text, we can at least situate Bolsonaro's interventions and discourse in an authoritarian, anti-popular, and repressive agenda. To a large extent, this approach follows the classic positions of the coup-mongering Latin American right wing. Bolsonaro also embodies a neo-fascist position; however, the Brazilian government as a whole cannot be characterised as neo-fascist because of the tensions that are developing within the Brazilian bourgeoisie and even within the military high command. If it were not for the reactionary unity sparked by the possibility of the advance of a popular project that could once again lead state power in Brazil, the economic powers would seek other alternatives that are more acceptable in democratic terms.



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## *What's New and What's Old?*

We have presented what we consider to be one of the central problems of the times we are living in: the right-wing offensive. Much of the current reality of the capitalist world – its profound economic, political, cultural, and civilisational crisis – once again poses the idea that there is no alternative. In the face of this anguish, the levels of discontent are becoming more acute, and popular and left-wing projects seem capable of obtaining partial victories and even putting limits on the advances of the reactionary offensive. However, these projects face serious difficulties in constructing a new narrative that could unleash a real wave of popular progress capable of bursting the seams that hold together the new right and the old right.

In Latin America, the adoption of the neo-reactionary and alternative right projects of the North appears to be a launching pad from which to modify the cognitive maps of the people and to shift political and discursive positions and public agendas to the right. However, the main right-wing forces in the region have exposed the old threads that stitch together their new clothes. This is above all because big business has no choice but to stick with its familiar programmes to avoid perishing in the face of the relentless advance of the global concentration and centralisation of capital led by the high-tech/finance conglomerates. Moreover, this is because the extreme uncertainty from which the peoples of the South most suffer evokes a defensive unity amongst the ruling classes, which above all want to prevent new processes of popular progress. This is the red thread that stitches together the views of



the old and new right wing: anti-populism, anti-communism, and other ways of naming any project that puts equality, solidarity, and the rights of the masses above all else.

The challenges posed by the present historical moment are enormous, but the struggles of popular movements, political imagination, and the commitment to life are on our side.





THE SPECTRE

## Endnotes

- 1 **Translator's note:** Here the term *popular* is translated as 'grassroots', since this leaderships emerged from struggles linked to excluded sectors and saw the emergence of figures that were not attached to traditional political parties.
- 2 Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Hants: O Books, 2009), 4.
- 3 **Translator's note:** A soft coup, sometimes referred to as a silent coup, is a coup d'état without the use of overt physical violence based on a conspiracy or plot that has as its objective the taking of state power. The concept of a soft coup as a strategy is attributed to US political scientist Gene Sharp, a theorist and author of works on the dynamics of nonviolent conflict. In Latin America, examples abound of destabilisation attempts against popular governments. In some cases, these efforts are linked to lawfare, the misuse of legal systems and principles against an 'enemy', such as by damaging or delegitimising them. This was most clearly seen in the case of Brazil and the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and later imprisonment of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.
- 4 **Translator's note:** In this text, *Nuestra América*, or 'Our America', is translated as Latin America. *Nuestra América* is a concept stemming from Jose Martí's seminal 1891 work on Latin American nationalism, which argues for the rejection of European and United States cultural values in the forging of a Pan-Latin American identity and unity among nations.
- 5 International Labour Organisation, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future* (Geneva: ILO, 2021).

- 6 Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research. *CoronaShock: A Virus and the World*. 5 May 2020. <https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-28-coronavirus>.
- 7 'By cognitive capitalism we mean, then, a mode of accumulation in which the object of accumulation consists mainly of knowledge, which becomes the basic source of value, as well as the principal location of the process of valorisation' (Moulier-Boutang, 2011: 57).  
**Translator's note:** Cognitive capitalism is a form of capitalism based on the accumulation of 'immaterial capital', which is often protected through Intellectual Property Rights (i.e. legal means such as patents), the dissemination of knowledge, and the driving role of the knowledge economy. Knowledge, science, and technology become leading productive forces.
- 8 Cédric Durand, *Tecnofeudalismo. Crítica de la economía digital* (Buenos Aires: La Cebra, 2021); Laura Raim, 'La derecha alternativa que agita Estados Unidos', *Revista Nueva Sociedad*, no. 267 (2017): 59, <https://nuso.org/articulo/la-derecha-alternativa-que-agita-estados-unidos>.
- 9 Esther Dyson, George Gilder, George Keyworth, and Alvin Toffler, 'Cyberspace and the American Dream: A Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age', *Future Insight* (1994). <http://www.pff.org/issues-pubs/futureinsights/fi1.2magnacarta.html>.
- 10 Durand, *Tecnofeudalismo*, 49.
- 11 Mariana Mazzucato, *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy* (New York: Public Affairs, 2018).
- 12 Raim, 'La derecha alternativa', 55.
- 13 **Translator's note:** The Rio is the fifth longest river of North America, forming the border between Mexico and the US state of Texas.

- 14 Augusto Taglioni, 'El mercado evalúa acercarse a Bolsonaro ante la posibilidad de un triunfo de Lula', *LaPolíticaOnline*, 24 September 2021, <https://www.lapoliticaonline.com.ar/nota/136780-el-mercado-evalua-acercarse-a-bolsonaro-ante-la-posibilidad-de-un-triunfo-de-lula/>.
- 15 Luiz Filgueiras, 'As classes dominantes e o governo Bolsonaro', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, no. 163, 1 February 2021, <https://diplomatique.org.br/as-classes-dominantes-e-o-governo-bolsonaro>.
- 16 On agribusiness see: 'Bolsonaro e Tereza Cristina recebem bancada do agronegócio no Planalto', *Poder360*, 6 October 2021, <https://www.poder360.com.br/governo/bolsonaro-e-tereza-cristina-recebem-bancada-do-agronegocio-no-planalto/>; on banks see: Olyntho Contente, 'Bolsonaro governa para os bancos, ilhas de prosperidade em meio ao caos económico', *SEEBRIO*, 8 February 2021, <https://www.bancariosrio.org.br/index.php/noticias/item/5800-bolsonaro-governa-para-os-bancos-ilhas-de-prosperidade-em-meio-ao-caos-economico>.
- 17 **Translator's note:** Peronism (*Peronismo*) is an Argentinian political movement based on the ideas and legacy of former President Juan Perón. Peronism has played an important part in Argentina's political history since the mid-1940s, with the majority of presidents since then emerging from this camp. Peronists espouse Juan Perón's policies of social justice and economic nationalism, to varying extents.
- 18 Francisco Cantamutto and Emiliano López, 'Voces que gritan fuerte: posiciones del bloque de poder durante el gobierno de Cambiemos', *Mediações: Revista de Ciências Sociais* 24, no. 1 (2019): 74, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5433/2176-6665.2019v24n1p74>.
- 19 BBC Mundo, 'Bitcoin: El Salvador se convierte este martes en el primer país del mundo en adoptar la criptomoneda como divisa de curso legal', 7 September 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-5844156>.

20 **Translator's note:** The *Foro de São Paulo* (São Paulo Forum), is a conference of leftist political parties and other organisations from Latin America and the Caribbean. It was launched by the Workers' Party of Brazil (PT) in 1990 in the city of São Paulo with the objective of debating the new international context after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequences of the implementation of neoliberal policies by right-leaning governments in the region at the time.

The *Grupo de Puebla* (Puebla Group) is a political and academic forum made up of representatives of the Ibero-American political left, founded in 2019 in the Mexican city of Puebla. According to its founders, the main objective is to articulate ideas, productive models, development programs, and state policies of a progressive nature. It is composed of presidents, former presidents, political and social leaders within the socialist movement, and academics from twelve Latin American countries as well as Spain.

21 According to Baruch Spinoza, sad passions refer to exploiting in individuals everything that separates them from well-being and favours hatred. Antonio Gramsci contrasted this with political passions, which aim towards a collective and transformative will.

22 El Espectador, 'La cuestionable estrategia de campaña del No', 6 October 2016, <https://www.elespectador.com/politica/la-cuestionable-estrategia-de-campana-del-no-article-658862>.

23 Laura Capote, 'Y Perú despertó. Crisis institucional, movilización antineoliberal y propuesta constituyente', *OBSAL*, no. 2 (December 2020), <https://thetricontinental.org/es/argentina/obsalcuaderno2>.

24 **Translator's note:** Fujimorism (*Fujimorismo*) denotes the policies and the political ideology of former dictator of Peru Alberto Fujimori as well as the personality cult built around him, his policies, and his family. This ideology is defined by its support for neoliberal economics, fierce opposition to communism, and socially and culturally conservative stances such as an opposition to LGBTQ+ rights and school curriculums that include gender equality or sex

education. Alberto's daughter, Keiko Fujimori, remains a central figure in Peruvian politics, having run for president three times (most recently losing to Pedro Castillo). Like her father, she has been caught up in several corruption scandals and now stands accused of taking illicit money from Brazil's construction giant Odebrecht. Keiko's Popular Force party is the second largest force in Congress.

25 **Translator's note:** Jorge Mario Pedro Vargas Llosa is a Peruvian writer, journalist, essayist, college professor, and former politician. He is one of Latin America's most significant novelists and essayists and one of the leading writers of his generation and the literary movement known as the Latin American Boom. In 2010, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

26 Mario Vargas Llosa, 'Asomándose al abismo', *La Tercera*, 17 April 2021, <https://www.latercera.com/opinion/noticia/columna-de-mario-vargas-llosa-asomandose-al-abismo/66J4RIVJD5EWTBZ6JRDEG AOBHQ>.

**Translator's note:** José Pedro Castillo Terrones is a Peruvian schoolteacher, union leader, and politician who has been serving as the 130<sup>th</sup> president of Peru since 28 July 2021 following the 2021 general election. He attained prominence as a leading figure in a schoolteachers' strike in 2017 and ran in the election as the candidate of the left-wing Peru Libre ('Free Peru') party.

27 Capote, 'Y Perú despertó'.

**Translator's note:** *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) is a Peruvian revolutionary organisation founded in 1970 that endorsed Maoism and employed guerrilla tactics. It began its campaign in remote areas of the Andes and spread to various urban centres, including Lima and Callao.

28 Jovel Álvarez Solís, Jorge Montoya, congresista de Renovación Popular: "Perú decide si quiere vivir en democracia o en comunismo", *La Gaceta*, 6 June 2021, <https://gaceta.es/gaceta-tv/>

[jorge-montoya-congresista-de-renovacion-popular-peru-decide-si-vivir-en-democracia-o-en-comunismo-20210606-0950](https://www.nodal.am/2021/06/cierres-de-campana-castillo-se-reunio-con-pepe-mujica-y-keiko-volvio-a-pedir-salvar-a-peru-del-comunismo).

**Translator's note:** Popular Renewal (*Renovación Popular*) is a conservative political party founded in 2020 as the successor of the former National Solidarity Party founded and led by former Lima Mayor Luis Castañeda Lossio.

29 'Castillo se reunió con Pepe Mujica y Keiko volvió a pedir "salvar a Perú del comunismo"', *NODAL*, 4 June 2021, <https://www.nodal.am/2021/06/cierres-de-campana-castillo-se-reunio-con-pepe-mujica-y-keiko-volvio-a-pedir-salvar-a-peru-del-comunismo>.

30 On Coordinadora Republicana see: Carlos Bedoya, 'La cabeza política del complot contra Vizcarra', *La Mula.Pe*, 14 September 2021, <https://carlosbedoya.lamula.pe/2020/09/14/la-cabeza-politica-del-complot-contravizcarra/carlosbedoya/>; on La Resistencia see: 'La Resistencia: la radiografía de un grupo violento', *Perú21*, 18 July 2021, <https://peru21.pe/politica/la-resistencia-la-radiografia-de-un-grupo-violento-noticia>.

**Translator's note:** *Coordinadora Republicana*, founded in 2019, is a far-right organisation that includes figures linked to Fujimorism. It brings together some of the most extreme sectors of the anti-communist right wing. Its central banner is that the greatest risk facing Peru is communism.

*La Resistencia* is a Peruvian far-right collective linked to the Popular Force and Popular Renewal parties. The collective was founded in 2018 and is led by Jota Maelo, pseudonym of Juan José Muñoz Gonzáles, who defines himself as a Fujimorist, patriot, and anti-communist. Its motto is 'God, Homeland, and Family'.

31 **Translator's note:** The Nationalist Republican Alliance (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* or ARENA) is a conservative political party in El Salvador, founded on 30 September 1981 by retired Salvadoran



Army Major Roberto D'Aubuisson. It defines itself as a political institution constituted to defend the democratic, republican, and representative system of government as well as the social market economy system and nationalism.

The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* or FMLN) was formed as an umbrella group on 10 October 1980 from five leftist guerrilla organisations. After the Chapultepec Peace Accords were signed in 1992, all armed FMLN units were demobilised and their organisation became a legal left-wing political party in El Salvador.

- 32 Nery Chaves García and Esteban De Gori, 'Nayib Bukele: las ansias por la centralidad del poder', *CELAG*, 19 March 2020, <https://www.celag.org/nayib-bukele-las-ansias-por-la-centralidad-del-poder>.
- 33 'Presidente Bukele visita caserío El Mozote', *ContraPunto*, 19 December 2020, <https://www.contrapunto.com.sv/video-presidente-bukele-visita-caserio-el-mozote>.
- 34 **Translator's note:** On 20 June 2019, President Nayib Bukele, together with security authorities, announced the implementation of the Territorial Control Plan (*Plan de Control Territorial*), a multi-phase national security strategy that focuses on regaining control of territory from organised crime and modernising the police; it includes the incursion of police and army personnel into gang-controlled areas.
- 35 Nery Chaves García & Esteban De Gori, 'Nayib Bukele: entre los militares y Dios', *CELAG*, 12 February 2020, <https://www.celag.org/nayib-bukele-entre-los-militares-y-dios>.
- 36 Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, 'Atravesando la nueva ola. Cambios, continuidades y disputas en la situación política continental', *OBSAL*, no. 12 (March–May 2021) <https://thetricontinental.org/es/argentina/obsal12>.

- 37 ‘Enviado especial de EE. UU. pide restituir a jueces y Bukele dice que la decisión es “irreversible”’, *NODAL*, 13 May 2021, <https://www.nodal.am/2021/05/el-salvador-enviado-especial-de-eeuu-pide-restituir-a-jueces-y-bukele-dice-que-la-decision-es-irreversible>.
- 38 Government of El Salvador, ‘El Salvador recibe trato preferencial de la República Popular China con otro envío de 500.000 vacunas anti-COVID-19’, 18 May 2021, <https://www.presidencia.gob.sv/el-salvador-recibe-trato-preferencial-de-la-republica-popular-china-con-otro-envio-de-500000-vacunas-anti-covid-19>.
- 39 **Translator’s note:** The Broad Front (*Frente Amplio*) is a centre-left to left political coalition that governed Uruguay from 2005 to 2020 under presidents José Mujica and Tabare Vazquez.
- 40 **Translator’s note:** The Multicolour Coalition (*Coalición Multicolor*) is a centre-right political coalition formed ahead of the general elections in 2019 and led by current Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou. It is composed of National Party (PN), Colorado Party (PN), Open Cabildo (CA), Independent Party (PI), and the Party of the People.
- 41 **Translator’s note:** *Cabildo Abierto* (Spanish for ‘open cabildo’ or ‘town council/hall’) is an Uruguayan political party founded in 2019. It is led by Guido Manini Ríos, a former commander-in-chief of the Army and the descendant of a traditional Colorado Party family.
- 42 ‘Discurso de Lacalle Pou a un año de asumir: anuncios, balance y “la necesidad de flexibilizar el Mercosur”’, *NODAL*, 3 March 2021, <https://www.nodal.am/2021/03/uruguay-discurso-de-lacalle-pou-a-un-ano-de-asumir-anuncios-balance-y-la-necesidad-de-flexibilizar-el-mercosur>.
- 43 Pablo Álvarez, ‘Uruguay: un año de Lacalle y su coalición de derechas’, *CELAG*, 1 March 2021, <https://www.celag.org/uruguay-un-ano-de-lacalle-y-su-coalicion-de-derechas>.

- 44 'Discurso de Lacalle Pou a un año de asumir: anuncios, balance y "la necesidad de flexibilizar el Mercosur"', *NODAL*, 3 March 2021, <https://www.nodal.am/2021/03/uruguay-discurso-de-lacalle-pou-a-un-ano-de-asumir-anuncios-balance-y-la-necesidad-de-flexibilizar-el-mercotur>.
- 45 **Translator's note:** The *Ley de Urgente Consideración* (LUC), or Law of Urgent Consideration, saw strong opposition from the Broad Front and the population. The LUC is made up of 476 articles proposing neoliberal reforms that would impact various aspects of the public sector such as health, education, housing, employment, economy, and security. This legislation promotes budget cuts in the public sector, supports the privatisation of public companies, increases the powers of law enforcement forces, and restricts workers' right to strike, among other issues.
- 46 *NODAL*, 'Discurso de Lacalle Pou'.
- 47 **Translator's note:** Néstor Kirchner and his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner served as presidents of Argentina from 2003-2007 and 2007-2015, respectively. Cristina now serves as vice president to Alberto Fernández.
- 48 **Translator's note:** *Castrochavismo* (Castro-Chavism) is combination of Castroism (*castroismo*) – the theory and practice associated with Fidel Castro, leader of the Cuban Revolution – and Chavism or Chavezism (*chavismo*) – based on the ideas, programmes, and government style associated with former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.
- 49 Télam, 'Bolsonaro llamó "héroe nacional" a un coronel que dirigió un centro de represión'. 8 August 2019.

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