

# The political significance of the Colombian and Peruvian elections

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3 July 2026

Within days of each other, far-right candidates were declared winners of presidential elections in Colombia and Peru, adding two more governments to the roster of Latin American regimes aligned with the Trump White House. Outside of Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay and Nicaragua, the map of Latin America is now dominated by governments that openly mimic the fascistic politics of Donald Trump. This map could soon extend further with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva facing a real possibility of defeat in October to Flávio Bolsonaro, son of the convicted coup plotter Jair Bolsonaro.

The corporate media is presenting these results as a popular mandate for the far right on the basis that Latin American voters have turned decisively against the “left” governments that emerged out of the 2018–2023 wave of protests.

This is false. What the elections in Colombia and Peru actually reflect is not the will of the masses, but the terminal crisis of bourgeois democracy in both countries, the outcome of naked intervention by US imperialism, and the political bankruptcy of the governments that promised reform and delivered austerity.

Nowhere do these results indicate an active turn to the right by the working class or the broad mass of the population. What they express is disgust with an entire political establishment that offers workers, youth and poor farmers nothing—and conditions so volatile that a mass upsurge on the scale of Bolivia’s protests, or even open civil war, could erupt at any time.

## Manufactured majorities

In Colombia, Abelardo de la Espriella—a fascistic lawyer personally endorsed by Trump was declared the winner over Iván Cepeda, the candidate handpicked by outgoing President Gustavo Petro, by a margin of under one percentage point: 49.66 to 48.70 percent. De la Espriella has vowed to abandon the negotiated peace process with guerrilla groups and resume Colombia’s decades-long internal war with direct US military participation.

Results from more than 33,000 polling stations remain contested. Spoiled and blank ballots, numbering roughly 675,000, far exceeded the entire 250,000-vote margin of victory. De la Espriella has already announced 90 executive decrees that will impose sweeping changes to security, the economy, healthcare and education, despite only three senators of his own party having been elected and depending on the traditional right-wing Democratic Center’s 17 senators and 30 representatives to govern at all.

In Peru, Keiko Fujimori—daughter of the late imprisoned dictator Alberto Fujimori and leader of the far-right Fuerza Popular—was declared the winner over Roberto Sánchez by fewer than 50,000 votes. In the first

round alone, 30.8 percent of voters cast null or blank ballots or simply stayed home, more than the combined vote share of the top two finishers. While the opposing candidates have conceded and the election authorities certified the results, both results are clouded by credible allegations of manipulation that cannot be dismissed.

In particular, the results from both elections bore Washington’s fingerprints. Trump endorsed de la Espriella throughout the campaign, violating Colombian sovereignty. In Peru, the US ambassador declared that the American embassy was “monitoring the electoral process,” a claim with no basis whatsoever in Peruvian law.

In Colombia, the private firm contracted to conduct the rapid vote count faces credible accusations of manipulating its “quick count” to manufacture an early, decisive-looking lead for de la Espriella. In Peru, the head of the National Office of Electoral Processes was driven to resign amid mounting irregularities, including polling stations that never opened in working-class districts and ballot boxes found abandoned. Throughout both campaigns, the corporate media waged a sustained anti-communist offensive against Cepeda and Sánchez, branding two bourgeois-nationalist politicians who posed no threat whatsoever to capitalist interests as dangerous radicals who would turn their respective countries into another Cuba or Venezuela, in a deliberate campaign to terrorize the electorate.

## A still-born “turn to the right”

Predictably, the Western press has celebrated what *The Economist* calls an “Orange Wave”: in barely a year, the magazine notes, right-wing candidates have won seven consecutive presidential elections across the region.

Yet the organs of finance capital cannot fully suppress their doubts. *The Economist* itself warns that El Salvador under Nayib Bukele, the supposed model for the region’s new right, has attracted less investment relative to the size of its economy than any other country in Central America since he took power. It casts similar doubt on de la Espriella’s promised 7 percent growth and cheap mortgages, or José Antonio Kast’s pledge of 4 percent growth in Chile, given a decade of regional stagnation.

A *Latin Times* analysis found that the five riskiest investment markets in Latin America are all governed by Trump’s closest regional allies: Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia and El Salvador. Access to Washington, it concluded, does not translate into confidence on Wall Street.

Even the more triumphalist accounts that claim this shift reveals an active popular support for right-wing policies cannot fully suppress the underlying reality.

The *Wall Street Journal* writes glowingly, for instance, “From the Andes to Central America, new leaders are taking power with populist

mandates centered on free-market economic policies and iron-fisted security strategies.” However, the same piece recognizes that de la Espriella has “little support in Congress” and “faces headwinds to cutting ministries and shedding state jobs;” that Kast’s “disapproval ratings have risen sharply” in Chile; and austerity measures in Bolivia “have stoked nearly two months of protests and roadblocks.”

A *New York Times* op-ed by Michael Reid concedes that what drives these results is not enthusiasm for the right but fear of “a failed left-wing dictatorship next door”—a reference to Venezuela—compounded by the failure of the previous “pink-tide” governments to secure stable work, affordable food or basic safety for the poor.

Germany’s Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung foundation (associated with the right-wing Christian Democratic Union) is more explicit, describing the trend as a wave of “protest votes against disappointing left-wing incumbents” and citing Chilean analyst Jorge Sاهد’s observation that the desire for change remains Latin America’s largest party. The *Los Angeles Times* cites the Stimson Center’s Benjamin Gedan making the same point: voters are simply unhappy and lose patience quickly with whoever holds office.

This is not a movement of the masses toward the right. It is the volatile anti-incumbency of a working class and poor left without any political vehicle of their own.

### **Inequality deepens under “progressives”**

The Associated Press captured half of the picture in a survey published as the Colombian and Peruvian results were being finalized. At the start of this decade, it noted, so-called progressives “seized on public outrage over entrenched inequities exacerbated by the pandemic,” and were swept to power across Chile, Peru, Colombia, Brazil and Bolivia.

What the AP account omits is what happened next. Under Gabriel Boric, Pedro Castillo, Gustavo Petro, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Luis Arce, the inequities that propelled these governments into office did not recede. They deepened, or at best stagnated at extreme levels.

In Colombia, official poverty fell to 31.8 percent in 2024, the lowest level recorded since the current methodology was adopted in 2012—yet 16.2 million Colombians remain below the poverty line, and informal employment has risen under Petro. The Gini coefficient, at 54.4, has barely moved in a decade, leaving Colombia among the most unequal societies on earth.

In Peru, monetary poverty rose from 20.2 percent in 2019 to a peak of 29 percent in 2023 before easing only slightly to 27.6 percent in 2024—still far above pre-pandemic levels—while the World Bank’s broader \$8.30-a-day poverty measure put the rate at 36.2 percent in 2024. More than 70 percent of Peruvian workers remain trapped in informal employment, the highest rate in Latin America alongside Bolivia.

In Chile, Boric’s own Presidential Advisory Commission on poverty found, after 18 months of study, that a more rigorous, consumption-based methodology puts the real poverty rate at 22.3 percent—more than triple the official 6.5 percent figure Boric has touted as a historic achievement. The country’s Gini coefficient remains above 43; the wealthiest 1 percent still control roughly a quarter of Chile’s wealth; and labor informality stood at 26 percent in 2025.

In Brazil, inequality actually reversed course under Lula. After the Gini coefficient touched a historic low of 50.4 in 2024, it climbed back to 51.1 in 2025, according to the national statistics agency IBGE, as the income of the richest 10 percent grew nearly three times faster than that of the poorest 10 percent. Close to 40 percent of Brazilian workers remain informally employed.

In Bolivia, Arce’s government presided over the collapse of the “plurinational” economic model it inherited from Evo Morales: inflation surged past 24 percent in 2025, the highest in three decades, dollar reserves evaporated, a black-market exchange rate emerged for the first time in 40 years, and roughly two-thirds of urban workers remain informally employed, all while the IMF flatly noted that poverty was increasing.

This is the material substrate that the corporate press occludes whenever it debates whether Latin America has swung right or left. Mass poverty and precarious, informal employment—not any shift in political consciousness—remain the two most persistent features of Latin American social reality under governments of every stripe. It is this same reality that fuels the extortion rackets, gang recruitment and desperate migration that the far right exploits as an “insecurity” crisis, and that fuels the strikes and protests.

### **The Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine**

What is taking place, in other words, is not a shift to the right in the consciousness of the working class or broad sections of the middle class. It is a deliberate, coordinated policy carried out by US imperialism, in alliance with the dominant sections of the regional oligarchies, to aggressively tilt elections—through media bias, financial pressure and direct manipulation of the electoral machinery—toward far-right governments answerable to Washington. This is the content of what amounts to a Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine: the explicit declaration, in the administration’s National Security Strategy, of the goal of restoring American “preeminence” throughout the Western Hemisphere.

This corollary has been enforced through the January 3, 2026 military kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who remains illegally jailed in New York while an “interim” government signs away control over Venezuela’s oil reserves to Washington; through an energy blockade of Cuba producing what has been described as “a Gaza without bombs”; through the designation of Brazilian gangs as “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” following Trump’s Oval Office meeting with Flávio Bolsonaro; and through direct political and financial backing for far-right candidates from Argentina to Honduras to Colombia and Peru.

Washington’s aims are to expel Chinese economic influence from the hemisphere, install pliable client regimes, and ready the repressive state apparatus for the social explosions this program guarantees.

### **The Pink Tide’s self-exposure**

The governments elected following the 2018-2023 protest wave bear direct responsibility for this outcome. In April 2026, Lula convened a “Global Progressive Mobilization” summit in Barcelona with Spain’s Pedro Sánchez, South Africa’s Cyril Ramaphosa, Mexico’s Claudia Sheinbaum, and representatives of Germany’s Social Democrats, Britain’s Labour Party and the US Democratic Party. There, in a rare moment of candor, Lula admitted: “We have become the system. That is why it comes as no surprise now that the other side presents itself as anti-system.” Days later, at the G7, he reassured the IMF that his government followed the middle path and that he was “never a leftist.” This was not a prelude to any change of course but an open adaptation to the far right, offered as the price of continued “governability.”

Petro's Colombia is the paradigmatic case. Elected in 2022 in the wake of the 2021 national strike, Petro declared within months that his government would "develop capitalism." His healthcare, pension and labor reforms were gutted or abandoned; the hated riot police were merely renamed. Colombia's six wealthiest oligarchs saw their combined fortune surge from \$28.3 billion to nearly \$50 billion under his presidency. Petro then flew to Washington to praise Trump as "terrific." Now, his response to de la Espartero's victory has been to propose a "national agreement" with the fascist right and to appeal to the US administration that endorsed his opponent to guarantee it.

The same trajectory—mass upheavals, a government elected on reformist promises, capitulation to imperialism and the oligarchy, and the channeling of the resulting disillusionment toward the far right—runs through Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, and Peru, where Pedro Castillo's 2021 election on a wave of urban-rural revolts gave way within months to guarantees for the bond markets, then to a CIA-backed parliamentary coup and the massacre of 50 protesters under Dina Boluarte.

### **Radicalization, not reaction**

The clearest proof that these elections express no rightward shift in mass sentiment is the immediate eruption of resistance to the very governments the far right has installed. Protests broke out shortly after election results were announced in Bogotá and Cali in Colombia, and Lima, Puno and Juliaca in Peru, with demonstrators burning American flags and denouncing foreign intervention.

In Panama, mass protests have erupted against President José Raúl Mulino's austerity measures and his proposed reopening of the open-pit mine shut down by mass action in 2023. In Bolivia, a general strike against Rodrigo Paz's austerity program has paralyzed the country. In Chile, students are in the streets against Kast's fuel price hikes. In Argentina, mass protests continue against Javier Milei's shock therapy. In Honduras, Nasry Asfura has faced over 150 labor conflicts and social protests by doctors, university students and indigenous and peasant organizations.

The growing militancy is also evidenced where the "left" nationalists still governs. In Brazil, strikes rose 14 percent in 2025, with more than 50 universities on strike and app-based workers walking out in four states. In Mexico, truckers and farmers have blockaded roads in 20 states while teachers have carried out repeated national strikes.

The economic shocks flowing from the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the US-Israeli war against Iran—surging fuel and fertilizer costs, rising food inflation—are only accelerating this eruption of class struggle across the continent. Such disruption has historically always fueled mass struggles across Latin America with revolutionary potential.

None of this can find political expression through Petro's Historic Pact, Lula's Workers Party, Sheinbaum's Morena, the trade union bureaucracies, or the Pabloite, Morenoite or other pseudo-left organizations internationally—including the DSA and Jacobin in the United States—that have functioned for decades as the left face of bourgeois politics, funneling mass opposition behind the Petros, Cepedas, Lulas and Castillos.

In Brazil, the leader of the CUT trade union federation recently told Lula: "Here is your army, and you are our general"—a wartime subordination of the working class to the national bourgeoisie dressed up as anti-fascism.

The tasks posed by this crisis can be resolved only through the political independence of the working class from every faction of the bourgeoisie

and their apologists. The same ruling US oligarchy seeking neocolonial dominion over Latin America is simultaneously engaged in the destruction of democratic and social rights within the United States itself. Building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Colombia, Peru, Brazil and across the hemisphere, uniting the struggles of Latin American and North American workers under a common socialist program, is the only viable answer to the drive toward fascism, war and social counterrevolution now unfolding across the Americas.



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