

## Political shift to the right across Latin America

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October 2026

### Introduction

Across Latin America, there has been a noticeable movement toward right-wing, conservative and security-focused governments. This does not appear to represent a simple ideological conversion across the continent. Instead in many countries, voters have rejected their incumbent governments because of the rising crime, inflation, corruption, weak economic performance and frustration with established political parties.



### The domino effect across the region

Argentina remains one of the clearest examples of this. Javier Milei's 2023 victory marked a strong rejection of the country's prior economic and political model characterised by extremely high inflation, lack of fiscal liquidity and prolonged economic instability. Milei's government has pursued aggressive economic reform and greatly reduced the role and size of the state. So far, the results have been positive for the country.

Subsequently, Chile has moved in the same direction. José Antonio Kast defeated left-wing candidate Jeannette Jara in the December 2025 presidential runoff with 58.17% of valid votes, replacing the left-wing government of Gabriel Boric. Kast formally took office in March 2026. Crime, immigration, economic concerns and dissatisfaction with the outgoing administration were important features of the election.

Peru has also shifted decisively. Conservative leader Keiko Fujimori narrowly won the June 2026 presidential runoff against left-wing candidate Roberto Sánchez, receiving 50.135% of valid votes. She was inaugurated on 28 July 2026. Her victory continued the broader regional movement toward politicians campaigning heavily on security, economic stability and restoring political order.

Colombia is another example. Gustavo Petro became Colombia's first left-wing president in 2022, but his political movement failed to retain the presidency in 2026. Right-wing candidate Abelardo

de la Espriella defeated left-wing candidate Iván Cepeda in the June presidential election after campaigning particularly strongly on crime, security and economic policy. The result marked a significant reversal after only one presidential term under the Colombian left.

Honduras extends the trend into Central America. Conservative National Party candidate Nasry Asfura won the November 2025 presidential election, replacing the left-wing government associated with President Xiomara Castro and the LIBRE party. His campaign emphasised employment, investment and security. The Honduran election was highly contested and followed by disputes over the count, but the electoral authorities eventually declared Asfura the winner in December 2025.

El Salvador is somewhat different because Nayib Bukele does not fit neatly within the traditional left-right party structure. Nevertheless, his emphasis on law and order, strong executive authority and his confrontation with criminal gangs have made his government influential among conservative and security-focused politicians elsewhere in Latin America. His popularity has helped demonstrate that voters may accept much stronger state action when personal security has become a dominant political issue.

Taken together, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Honduras demonstrate why the development increasingly looks regional rather than consisting of isolated national elections. Several countries have recently replaced governments of the left with governments or presidents of the right. Although the reasons differ locally, crime and personal security appear repeatedly alongside economic dissatisfaction and rejection of incumbent political establishments.

### **Brazil next?**

Brazil therefore becomes particularly important. The first round of its presidential election on 4 October 2026 produced approximately 47% for Flávio Bolsonaro and 45% for incumbent President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, forcing a runoff on 25 October. Brazil is Latin America's largest country and economy, meaning the result will have considerably greater regional importance than an ordinary change of government. The first-round result itself demonstrates that the Brazilian right remains an extremely powerful political force.

USAID adds another, more controversial, dimension. The Trump administration's dismantling of USAID as an independent organisation removed or substantially reduced US funding streams supporting NGOs, civil-society organisations, democracy programmes, media initiatives, human-rights projects and other organisations throughout Latin America.

One theory, particularly promoted by sections of the American and Latin American right, is that these programmes had over time created an institutional environment disproportionately supportive of progressive political causes. Under this interpretation, ending USAID funding did not directly cause voters to move right, but removed financial and organisational support from parts of the civil-society infrastructure surrounding the political left.

## **Conclusion**

What makes the current period noteworthy is the concentration of changes. Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Honduras have all recently moved away from governments of the left, while El Salvador has demonstrated the popularity of a security-first political model. Brazil now represents the largest remaining test of whether this constitutes a durable regional realignment or another stage in Latin America's traditional cycle between left- and right-leaning governments.

The Brazilian runoff on 25 October 2026 will therefore be particularly significant. It should not be treated as predetermined, but whichever government emerges will strongly influence perceptions of whether Latin America's current movement toward the political right is continuing or beginning to level out.

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