

The New Right-Wings

This shift has come at the cost of human rights.

And yet — paradoxically — El Salvador is today the country with the highest level of satisfaction with democracy: sixty-four percent.

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Welcome to *Nova Americana*, the podcast series that brings together writers, ideas, and reflections on literature, history, culture, and society across the Americas — with a special focus on Latin America.

This first series is titled *Transiciones inconclusas y nuevos autoritarismos in America Latina (Unfinished Transitions and New Authoritarianisms in Latin America)*.

I'm Tiziana Bertaccini, and I teach Latin American History at the University of Turin.

Today, I'll be talking about **the new right-wing movements in Latin America**.

Over the past few years, new forms of authoritarianism have emerged in the region.

Among them, new right-wing forces — movements that have grown out of the democratic erosion we discussed in our first episode.

But there's something else going on: these aren't isolated phenomena.

They're part of a **global movement**, one that connects Latin America to Europe and the United States through powerful transnational networks.

We're not talking about traditional center-right or liberal parties.

These are radical, populist, ultra-right movements — the so-called *new right*.

Let's take a quick look at their rise.

After Jair Bolsonaro's election in Brazil in 2018 — which became a symbol of this new wave — José Antonio Kast in Chile founded what would later become the Republican Party.

That same year in Mexico, Eduardo Verástegui launched *Viva México*, a small but ideologically significant movement.

And in El Salvador, Nayib Bukele came to power.

Bukele's case is particularly striking.

He's young — often called *the millennial president* — and by far the most popular leader in the region, with almost eighty percent approval.

Re-elected in 2024, he became famous for an extremely hardline security policy.

By maintaining a constant state of emergency, he brought homicide rates down from some of the highest in the world to the lowest in Latin America.

But, of course, this came with a cost — serious violations of human rights.

Still, in a twist of irony, El Salvador is now the country where citizens report the greatest satisfaction with democracy.

Now, let's turn to Argentina.

In 2021, Javier Milei founded *La Libertad Avanza* — and just two years later, he won the presidency.

An economist by training, Milei was already known for his explosive TV appearances, where he blamed the State for all of Argentina's problems.

With his aggressive and irreverent tone, he called for what he described as a *moral revolution* against the political elite — what he calls *the caste*.

His symbol, the chainsaw, represents his plan to cut down the State, slash public spending, and

dismantle social programs.

He's reduced ministries, frozen public works, and ended social funding — decisions that have already caused growing tension among ordinary Argentines.

So — what defines these new right-wing movements?

They call themselves patriotic, sovereigntist, anti-globalist, anti-system, and anti-elite.

But their unifying thread is **a moral agenda**, summed up in the familiar slogan: "*God, Homeland, Family.*"

This agenda positions itself against what they label *gender ideology* — a concept largely created within the right to attack progressive movements.

This moral vision resonates deeply in Latin America, where conservative thought has spread, often in connection with the rise of evangelical — especially neo-Pentecostal — churches.

These churches have entered politics, winning the support of poorer voters.

Remember Bolsonaro's case: he rose to power with the strong backing of evangelical congregations, which now hold significant power in Brazil's Congress.

What's new is that many of these parties didn't grow out of traditional political structures.

They've been supported by **foundations, think tanks, and international networks** that work through civil society — spreading conservative values and mobilizing citizens.

Their goal? To wage what they call **a cultural battle**.

And this "cultural battle" is at the very heart of the new right.

It's an ideological war against the left — and against what they describe as the domination of intellectuals.

At the latest Conservative Political Action Conference, Milei himself declared that the right had "finally awakened" — that now they must fight to defend traditional values against what he called *the woke ideology*.

This conflict — this polarization — has become almost an obsession.

Figures like Donald Trump speak of an "ideological colonization" that threatens family and life itself. And this cultural war isn't confined within borders; it's being fought internationally, especially through opposition to global institutions and multilateralism.

These movements are united under a shared project — a vast network of organizations that gather at events such as the World Congress of Families and CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Born in the United States in 1974, CPAC is now held in Latin America as well.

At the most recent one, this past February, Milei appeared waving his signature chainsaw, calling on the audience to "fight, fight, fight!" — joined by Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and Giorgia Meloni.

Finally, a brief mention of Spain's Vox party.

Vox emerged from pro-life associations, many of whose strongest supporters are in Latin America, and is believed to have ties to *El Yunque*, an old Mexican secret society.

Vox has even coined a new term — *the Iberosphere* — a kind of neo-colonial project to unite right-wing movements across the Spanish-speaking world in a global cultural crusade.

So — if you'd like to learn more, read the book.

And thank you for listening. [Music fades out]