

The Shrinking of the Pink Wave and the Rise of the Right-Wing in Latin America

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Abstract : Through free and fair elections and others less democratic processes, Latin America has been gradually turning into a right-wing political region. In order to understand these recent changes, this paper aims to discuss the origin and the traits of the pink wave in the subcontinent, the reasons for its current rollback and future projections for left-wing in the region. The methodology used in this paper will be descriptive and analytical combined with secondary sources mainly from the social and political sciences fields. The canons of the Washington Consensus was implemented by the majority of the Latin American governments in the 80s and 90s under the social democratic and right-wing parties. The neoliberal agenda caused political, social and economic dissatisfaction bursting into a new political configuration for the region. It started in 1998 when Hugo Chávez took the office in Venezuela through the Fifth Republic Movement under the socialist flag. From there on, Latin America was swiped by the so-called 'pink wave', term adopted to define the rising of self-designated left-wing or center-left parties with a progressive agenda. After Venezuela, countries like Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Equator, Nicaragua, Paraguay, El Salvador and Peru got into the pink wave. The success of these governments was due a post-neoliberal agenda focused on cash transfers programs, increasing of public spending, and the straightening of national market. The discontinuation of the preference for the left-wing started in 2012 with the coup against Fernando Lugo in Paraguay. In 2015, the chavismo in Venezuela lost the majority of the legislative seats. In 2016, an impeachment removed the Brazilian president Dilma Rouseff from office who was replaced by the center-right vice-president Michel Temer. In the same year, Mauricio Macri representing the right-wing party Proposta Republicana was elected in Argentina. In 2016 center-right and liberal, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski was elected in Peru. In 2017, Sebastián Piñera was elected in Chile through the center-right party Renovación Nacional. The pink wave current rollback points towards some findings that can be arranged in two fields. Economically, the 2008 financial crisis affected the majority of the Latin American countries and the left-wing economic policies along with the end of the raw materials boom and the subsequent shrinking of economic performance opened a flank for popular dissatisfaction. In Venezuela, the 2014 oil crisis reduced the revenues for the State in more than 50% dropping social spending, creating an inflationary spiral, and consequently loss of popular support. Politically, the death of Hugo Chavez in 2013 weakened the 'socialism of the twenty first century' ideal, which was followed by the death of Fidel Castro, the last bastion of communism in the subcontinent. In addition, several cases of corruption revealed during the pink wave governments made the traditional politics unpopular. These issues challenge the left-wing to develop a future agenda based on innovation of its economic program, improve its legal and political compliance practices, and to regroup its electoral forces amid the social movements that supported its ascension back in the early 2000s.

Keywords : Latin America, political parties, left-wing, right-wing, pink wave

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