



Written by [Steve Bonta](#) on January 4, 2023

## South America's Struggle for Liberty

For outdoor aficionados, there is no grander continent than South America. With its Andean peaks, Patagonian glaciers, world-famous Brazilian beaches, vast tropical rainforests, and gargantuan waterfalls, South America is arguably the most splendid tract of real estate on the face of the earth. Historically, it has also been blessed with more than its fair share of economic prosperity and comparative lack of major wars. During the two world wars of the 20th century, South America was left unscathed. Many South American countries, including Argentina and Brazil, have attracted huge numbers of immigrants. Last month, South Americans were overjoyed to see one of their own — Argentina — win the World Cup, a prize usually claimed by better-funded European nations like Germany, France, and Italy.



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Because of its tranquility and geographic isolation, South America seldom commands dramatic headlines reserved for the world's hotspots across the Northern Hemisphere. But trend lines are taking shape across the continent that could affect decisively the global balance of power between Marxists and the free world.

On January 1, Lula da Silva, Brazil's Marxist former and current president, was sworn back into power after months of electoral controversy, vowing ominously that "those who erred will answer for their errors." The chief target of Lula's wrath, ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, had already fled the country for the United States, where he is currently holed up in the state of Florida. But Bolsonaro's millions of supporters, who protested for weeks amid claims of a stolen election, are now to be targeted by Lula's regime, which has also proclaimed its intent to confiscate firearms and bring economic development in Amazonia to a screeching halt.

The sad state of affairs in Brazil, which saw widespread electoral fraud similar to what happened to President Trump in 2020, might seem to be emblematic of the entire continent, which in recent decades has struggled against the might of the global Marxist revolution. Once-free and prosperous Venezuela fell in the 1990s, and has since joined the ranks of the world's outcast tyrannical regimes, preferring the company of Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Russia, and China to former friends in the free world. Leftist regimes of various stripes are in power in Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and elsewhere. To any casual observer, it might appear that socialism and Marxism are sweeping across South America like an irresistible tsunami.

But beneath the surface, change is stirring. For one thing, Ecuador in 2021 elected Guillermo Lasso who, while more of an establishment center-right figure, is nevertheless a vast improvement over his



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Marxist predecessor (whose name, fittingly enough, was Lenin Moreno). Having lost a close runoff election to Moreno in 2017, Lasso finally prevailed on his third try for the presidency, his platform of lower taxes, free market reforms, and support for separation of powers having finally won over the Ecuadorian electorate after almost two decades of hard Left rule.

Another often-overlooked South American country is landlocked Paraguay, whose torrid swamp forests and lack of compelling tourism infrastructure have kept this country off the international radar screen for decades. Yet Paraguay has always been something of a free-wheeling frontier, attracting large numbers of German immigrants (only a very few of whom were Nazis fleeing postwar Germany). Paraguay has always been one of the world's most anti-communist countries, and is the largest remaining country that refuses to recognize the government of the People's Republic of China. It is no surprise, then, that Paraguay's current president, Mario Abdo Benítez, is a staunch conservative who opposes the legalization of abortion and same-sex marriage, who ended diplomatic relations with Marxist Venezuela, and whose father was a close aide to former Paraguayan military leader Alfredo Stroessner, one of the most principled anti-communists in Latin American history — his other policy failings and alleged human rights violations notwithstanding.

Unfortunately, Paraguay's economy has been in recession for several years, and public approval of Abdo Benítez has tanked, making his reelection prospects doubtful. But Paraguay is unlikely to veer hard Left anytime soon, thanks to a long-standing national hostility for Marxism.

Another oft-overlooked South American country, prosperous little Uruguay, has swung back to the right after a generation under the leadership of the Leftist coalition Frente Amplio (Broad Front). Luis Lacalle Pou, son of a former Uruguayan president, has governed as a surprisingly principled anti-Marxist, refusing to invite the leaders of Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua to his inauguration, and repeatedly singling out for public condemnation Nicolas Maduro's Marxist dictatorship in Venezuela. During the Covid pandemic, Lacalle Pou refused to institute lockdowns, declaring them to be incompatible with personal freedom. And he has vowed to privatize a number of cumbrous state-owned enterprises such as the national telecommunications and oil companies — much to the consternation of Uruguay's leftist unions.

As for the other two countries that, along with Uruguay, make up South America's "southern cone," Argentina and Chile are both run by leftist governments, including the unabashed Marxist and Chilean president Gabriel Boric. However, Boric was elected after a hotly contested election that pitted him against José Antonio Kast, a staunch proponent of limited government and individual liberty who has earned the media label "far right." A supporter of former Chilean military leader Augusto Pinochet, Kast is both a strict adherent of laissez-faire economics and a superlative social conservative. He is opposed to abortion and same-sex marriage, and has summarized his platform as "less taxes, less government, pro-life." For his first run at the Chilean presidency in 2017, Kast garnered less than 8 percent of the votes and finished in fourth place, a seemingly insurmountable electoral repudiation. Yet in the next presidential election, in 2021, Kast received the most votes of any candidate in the first round, propelling him to a runoff against Marxist candidate Boric. Boric won the runoff with 55 percent of the vote, but Kast has established himself as a Chilean voice for conservatism to be reckoned with. Boric's presidency has spiraled downward rapidly as the Chilean economy has contracted and crime and social unrest have risen sharply. From a 50-percent approval rating in 2021, Boric is now below 30 percent and falling, with 65 percent of Chileans strongly disapproving of his policies. Boric's clumsy attempt to rewrite Chile's constitution was rejected overwhelmingly by Chilean voters. All in all, the final chapter



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of Kast's political career may not yet be written, as Boric tutors Chileans in the realities of Marxism.

Even more compelling is Argentina's Javier Milei, a fiery, fearless Austrian economist-turned-politician whose national movement "La Libertad Avanza" ("Liberty Advances") has ignited a nationwide passion for liberty and laissez faire unexampled in Latin American history. A member of Argentina's Chamber of Deputies (the Argentine equivalent to the American House of Representatives) since 2021, Milei has his sights set on the presidency in this year's elections — and polls show him to be by far the most popular candidate. Milei, a sort of hybrid of Donald Trump and Ron Paul, has been a professor of economics for many years, as well as a popular media figure. Nicknamed "la Peluca" ("the Wig") for his trademark mop of uncombed hair, Milei owns an English mastiff named after Austrian economist Murray Rothbard. Milei is a very popular guest on Argentine media, where — in keeping with his focus on teaching the doctrines of liberty — he constantly seeks to help Argentines understand why freedom works, and socialism does not. A ferocious and feared debater, Milei is unfazed by entire panels of hostile leftist reporters and media-anointed experts, as countless entertaining videos on YouTube attest.

Milei's name is in almost every household in Argentina these days, as this author discovered on a trip there a few months ago. He holds huge Trump-esque rallies across the country, and has become the libertarian and free-market standard-bearer across the Spanish-speaking world, as evidenced by recent appearances in Mexico and Spain.

Milei is a principled social conservative, being a vocal opponent both of abortion and of sex education in public schools. He also frequently denounces the ravages of cultural Marxism. Milei is also friends with Chile's Kast and Brazil's Bolsonaro, and has joined with them and other like-minded politicians and public figures across the "Iberosphere" (the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking world) in support of the Madrid Charter, a document pledging support for liberty and opposition to all forms of Marxism, communism, and socialism in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. The charter singled out international communism, orchestrated by Cuba and financed by drug trafficking and Venezuelan oil, as the single greatest threat to the region.

As for Brazil itself, all is not bleak. Although Jair Bolsonaro has been driven from power by a Marxist ex-con, his supporters gained many seats in the Brazilian Congress. Anger over the 2022 election results is still widespread, and Bolsonaro may yet return to office someday.

South America has several characteristics that may bode well for future enclaves of liberty on the continent. One is its geographic and political isolation from the world-churning cataclysms of the modern age — cataclysms that have given birth to organizations like the United Nations and NATO, membership in which has led America down the primrose path to military adventurism and international socialism. Another important characteristic is South America's still-vibrant Christian culture. Radical secularism, while making inroads, has not yet won a decisive victory there in the international culture war. For example, in South America, abortion is still prohibited except to save a mother's life in Paraguay and Venezuela (as well as in Guatemala in Central America), and is prohibited except to save the mother's life and in the case of rape in Brazil. Still another important factor is the long string of infelicitous examples radical leftism across the continent, from bloody Marxist insurgencies like the former Shining Path in Peru and the FARC rebels in Colombia, to the ongoing catastrophe in Venezuela. Millions of South Americans have observed or experienced the fruits of Marxism, and want no part of it.

Finally, despite their often turbulent histories, the nations of South America, like the United States, paid for their liberties and independence with blood, and many of them — Argentina in particular — ended



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up with constitutions framed by wise founders who strove to import the best elements of the American Constitution and to create conditions amenable to free enterprise and progress. After decades of contagion with various strains of Leftism, many South American countries appear ready to move in a different direction, one more in keeping with their Christian faith and foundational principles.



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