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Chile

From progressive decline to reactionary advance in Chile

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Everything indicates that Chile will be governed for the next four years by a coalition of right-wing parties, headed by one of its most extreme factions, with José Antonio Kast at the helm. That right wing —Pinochetism— has existed in the country for decades, but for the first time it would come to power through elections, with the support of popular sectors and in an international context marked by the global advance of far-right forces.

The election results of Sunday, November 16, clearly demonstrate the magnitude of the right-wing victory. In the presidential election, the right-wing bloc garnered 50.3% of the vote, distributed among José Antonio Kast (23.9%, Partido Republicano or Republican Party), Johannes Kaiser (13.9%, Partido Nacional Libertario or National Libertarian Party), and Evelyn Matthei (12.5%, Chile Vamos or Let's Go, Chile).

At the same time, the right wing is consolidating its majority in Congress. Of the 155 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, the sector already aligned with Kast holds 76, compared to the 64 held by the left and centre-left. In the Senate, the right-wing bloc controls half of the seats.

If we take into account that the Partido de la Gente or Party of the People (PDG) won 14 seats in the Chamber, everything indicates that the right wing in government will be able to form a parliamentary majority capable of reaching even the 4/7 needed to promote constitutional reforms.

In this context, the traditional right wing —the Unión Demócrata Independiente or Independent Democratic Union, Renovación Nacional or National Renewal and Evolución Política known as Evópoli or Political Evolution, grouped in the Chile Vamos coalition— ends up aligning itself behind Kast after an internal dispute for the leadership of the sector and after suffering a resounding defeat. Their presidential candidate came in fifth, behind all other right-wing candidates; the bloc went from 12 to 5 seats in the Senate and from 52 to 23 in the Chamber of Deputies, and one of the coalition parties was dissolved.

Far from any policy of "cordon sanitaire" —such as those implemented by liberal-conservative sectors in other countries to isolate the far right—in Chile the traditional right maintains historical and organic ties with Pinochetism. This connection explains its rapid subordination to Kast's leadership in the current political cycle.

Meanwhile, the official candidate Jeannette Jara —nominated by the Unidad por Chile or Unity for Chile pact and from the Communist Party— won by a narrow margin in a campaign that, despite being the only progressive candidacy, was not a left-wing campaign. The 26.7% she obtained fell short of the expectations generated by her position as Minister of Labour and even below the 38% that supported the 2022 constitutional proposal.

It is true that Jara faced an adverse scenario: an unfavourable international situation, the strain of being part of the ruling party at a time of widespread challenge, and the weight of an effective anti-communist narrative. But it is also true that neither the government nor the candidate developed a policy aimed at confronting the extreme right. On the contrary, in sensitive areas such as migration and security, they chose to appropriate part of the narrative and programme of their adversaries. She also made no attempt to distance herself from the persistent neoliberal consensus that all institutional forces have embraced since the defeat of the constitutional proposal in October 2022, beginning with Boric's own government. This is one of the clearest expressions of the far right's advance: it not only persuades the electorate but also manages to impose its political agenda across the board.

The surprise from the first round of the presidential election was the 19.7% obtained by Franco Parisi, candidate of the PDG, a party that appeals to the aspirations of middle sectors through a combination of monetary populism, securitised xenophobia and crypto-digital rhetoric against corruption and the "privileges" of public officials. Although all the polls placed him fifth, he finished third, ahead of Kaiser and Matthei. In his third presidential bid, Parisi tripled his 2021 vote and won the most votes in all four northern regions, a key mining area marked by a widespread anti-immigration agenda due to its border location through which migrants from the rest of the continent enter. Parisi has thus become the main source of votes that Jeannette Jara will try to capture, something she made explicit in her speech on the evening of Sunday, November 16.

Initial analyses show a marked territorial division of the vote. A report from the Faro UDD think tank shows that Parisi triumphed in the "mining north" (regions of Arica, Tarapacá, Antofagasta, and Atacama), Jara obtained a majority in "central metropolitan Chile" (Metropolitan and Valparaíso Regions, as well as the far south of Aysén and Magallanes), and Kast dominated in the "agricultural south" (O'Higgins, Maule, Ñuble, Biobío, Araucanía, Los Ríos, and Los Lagos).

This fragmentation is also socioeconomic. A particularly critical piece of data for the government candidate is that her performance in low- and middle-income municipalities was worse than in high-income ones, a trend opposite to that of Kast, whose vote increased in lower-income municipalities and fell in wealthier ones. These differences are even more significant when you consider that voting was mandatory in the election and had a participation rate of 85% of registered voters, the highest since 1989.

Another relevant fact for the scenario that opens up for the second round and for the next government is that, of the 25 parties legally constituted at the time of the election, 14 are to be dissolved under the Political Parties Law, which requires a minimum of 5% of the votes in the last election of deputies or, alternatively, obtaining at least four elected parliamentarians in two different regions. Of the 14 parties that will disappear, 8 are left-wing, 4 centrist, and 2 right-wing. The result is conclusive: after this election, all left-wing parties outside the governing coalition are legally dissolved. One of the causes of this debacle is the inability to build a unified list in an electoral system—based on the D'Hondt method—that rewards pacts and severely punishes dispersion, since the most voted lists attract candidacies that, even with equal or greater individual support, are left out if they compete in isolation.

Political processes—including electoral ones—have a direct impact on collective emotions, and today that impact is expressed in a strong disillusionment within the left-wing forces. We also know that the social and electoral rise of the far right is not an exclusively Chilean phenomenon. It has occurred with Bolsonaro in Brazil, it is happening with Milei in Argentina, and in the United States with Trump. This present moment demands that we learn from the experiences of the people and left-wing movements that have already weathered the reactionary advance from within the government. Not all trajectories are the same, but internationalist dialogue is a necessary condition for understanding the tasks that lie ahead in the next political cycle and in the face of the most likely governing scenario.

In the immediate future, with the second round of the presidential election on December 14th approaching, it is worth asking whether the margin by which Kast may win is irrelevant or not. Calling for a vote for Jara means explaining why we do so even while holding a deeply critical view of her and her milieu, and why we do so even knowing that it's an election that will likely be lost. It's not that difficult: after all, a policy of radical transformation almost never starts under favourable conditions, and yet we persist in it.

The first political task of this situation is to deploy an anti-fascist pedagogy that reaffirms the importance of putting all our vital forces into preventing the most extreme version of the programme of exploitation from being imposed without counterweight and without resistance. It is essential that those who feel discouraged today can consciously come together for shared reflection and a call to resume organising and mobilising. To build a broad base of opposition to the future far-right government, it matters how one loses: it is necessary to lose with one's head held

high and with the greatest possible strategic clarity.

The recovery of our strength along with the construction of a response to the crisis from the point of view of the working class — in opposition to both emboldened fascism and bankrupt progressivism — will require serious programmatic work, which must be developed within the collective action of popular movements, and not only in progressive think tanks or from opposition parliamentary benches. Faced with the conservative, authoritarian, nationalist, patriarchal, and capitalist program of the Chilean right, popular movements will have the responsibility to become the first line of defense and the main trench from which to organise a counter-offensive.

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*Translated by David Fagan for **International Viewpoint** from [Revista Jacobin](#). The article is part of the series Latin American Situation and Argentine Elections 2025, a collaboration between Revista Jacobin and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.*

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