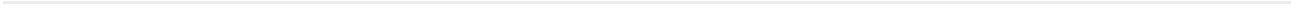


Latin A



Over the past 16 years in Latin America and the Caribbean, voter support for traditional parties that had been anchors for their respective democracies has been declining, as voters opt instead for independent candidates and new, smaller parties. In the first round of Colombia's recent election, none of the top three candidates represented either branch of Colombia's previous two-party system, long dominated by the Liberal and Conservative political machines. Instead, two polar opposite candidates — one from the right-wing Democratic Center party, Ivan Duque, and the other from Colombia's new left Progressive Movement, Gustavo Petro — faced off in the June 17 runoff election. Although Duque won Sunday's election with 54 percent of the vote, the first-round results showed that the country is extremely polarized.

It's a trend that is being repeated in Mexico and Brazil. Self-proclaimed outsider candidates offering easy, vacuous answers to voter malaise.

In Mexico, the projected leader in the one-round presidential election system is Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the head of his own National Regeneration Movement party. Twelve years earlier, running under the banner of another party — the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) — López Obrador lost to the conservative Felipe Calderón of the National Action Party by fewer than 300,000 votes and claimed fraud. He then led a two-month protest that blocked Mexico City's main thoroughfare and staged an inauguration in which he was sworn in as the "legitimate" president and named his own presumably legitimate Cabinet. Slowly, though, Mexicans tired of the performance, which hurt the small businesses along La Reforma avenue (some of them López Obrador supporters), where he maintained his protest. Eventually, he decamped and waited for the next election in 2012.

Today, reflecting popular disgust over recent corruption scandals under current President Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and concerns over security, López Obrador is leading in the polls. He has positioned himself ahead of Mexico's three traditional parties — PRI, which governed Mexico for more than 70 years, the National Action Party, and PRD — by depicting himself as an outsider, despite the nearly 40 years he spent in the political arena on behalf of two of the country's traditional parties, first in the PRI and later in the PRD.

In Brazil, a spreading corruption scandal has led to the imprisonment of the former but still-popular President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Five months before the country's first-round elections on Oct. 7, in a polling aggregate that assumes Lula will be disqualified, slightly more than 20 percent of Brazilian voters pledged their support for Jair Bolsonaro, a former Army captain whtrfor

In a region often considered to have the world's most enduring tradition of populism, Mexico and Brazil are poised to see its return, but this time the candidates are not the likes of Erdoğan, Orbán, Trump, or Bolsonaro, but rather López Obrador in Mexico and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil. While Bolsonaro's path to victory in Brazil's two-round presidential election, with the second round to be held, if necessary, on Oct. 28, is not as clear as López Obrador's in Mexico's one-round system, the popularity of their candidacies signals deeper structural and attitudinal changes to