

Ecuador: Guarantee the 2nd round and defeat financial capital

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This Sunday, February 21, the CNE, Ecuador's National Electoral Council, the constitutional body coordinating the elections in that Andean country, officially proclaimed the results of the general elections. The CNE, after announcing a preliminary result, between the 9th and 10th, based on the so-called "contorno rápido" (by sampling), although regimental, was correctly seen by many analysts as a hasty announcement, since the difference between 2nd and 3rd place was only around 30 to 35 thousand votes, i.e. less than 0.5%.

The proclamation of the result came after 15 days of controversies over appeals and recounts, accusations of fraud on the part of candidate Yaku Pérez, of the Pachakutik party, which has its main social base in indigenous and peasant groups.

Pachakutik called vigils of protest and even a march with support from movements in some provinces for this week, for a recount of 50% of the votes in 16 provinces and 100% of the votes in the largest constituency, which is the province of Guayas, based on an agreement meeting, broadcast by the mainstream media, that was held between Perez and Guillermo Lasso, the banker candidate of big business and the old right (who later backed out of the agreement). Subsequently, the CNE itself did not accept either Yaku's request or Guillermo Lasso's 2nd formal proposal, and decided to proclaim the result in order to open the time for appeals.

The fact is – the legal appeals and the appeals have not yet been heard – but, the second round is scheduled for April 11

between Andrés Arauz, of the Union for Hope Front, supported by former President, Rafael Correa, who obtained 32.72% of the valid votes (3,032,906 votes), and Guillermo Lasso who achieved 19.74% (1,829,378 votes), leaving Yaku Pérez in 3rd with 19.38% (1,796,542 votes), i.e. a difference of only 32,836 from the 2nd candidate.

Lasso's passage to the 2nd round does not change the majority message of the polls that are a reflection on the one hand of the repudiation of Lenin Moreno's turn to the right, whose candidate, Ximena Peña, of the Alianza País, had only 1.54% of the votes, and on the other hand, a vote for candidates and congressmen of the left and center-left. Adding up the votes for Andrés Arauz, Yaku Pérez and Xavier Hervas, 67.79% was reached. In the National Assembly of 137 legislators, adding these forces together resulted in 94 elected representatives who may have common programmatic agendas.

A dilemma for indigenous movements

Pachakutik is an important political party in Ecuador and represents the majority of indigenous movements and leaderships, many of which are linked to the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador – CONAIE, which has already led several social uprisings in the country, the most recent being that of October 2019 against the neoliberal package of Lenin Moreno's government in obedience to the dictates of the IMF.

Some territories and indigenous movements in the country have stood up against various measures of concessions from the governments of Rafael Correa (2007-2017) and their liberation projects in environmental preservation areas and ancestral territories in favor of mining companies that have generated environmental and social impacts. To date, there are still illusions from sectors of Ecuadorian progressivism that expanding direct foreign investments in predatory extraction by large mining companies would be the miraculous source of

tax resources to compensate, in the long term, the fall in oil revenues that are currently so decisive for the maintenance of the state.

The fact is that in addition to the strong negative environmental and social impacts, the historic pattern of exploitation of natural resources by mining transnationals, through mega-projects for exploitation of the subsoil and the use of water in large volumes, leaves, in the long term, a legacy of devastated land, generating enormous wealth for a few capitalists, associated companies, and a minority of specialists, based on the over-exploitation of local labor, environmental destruction, violation of human rights, and disarticulation of cultural patterns of the original populations. This has been the case for decades in Chile, Bolivia, Peru and also in Ecuador, where, in the vacuum of the copper, gold, silver and other mineral megaprojects, after a boom in foreign capital investments, what is left behind are environmental and social cemeteries, closely related to the highest rates of labor accidents and use of waste and chemical residues.

In the path of protest against these megaminer projects, on election day there was a popular consultation in the city of Cuenca, the third largest city in the country and capital of the province of Azuay, which rejected by more than 78% the exploitation of metals in areas of drinking water. So was the Consultation question, "Do you agree with the prohibition of large-scale metal mining in the Tarqui River water recharge zone, according to the technical delimitation made by the municipal telecommunications, drinking water and sanitation company Etapa EP?" and repeating the same question for four other rivers in the region. Such a consultation model should be followed for all regions of the country, and also for other countries whose populations are victims of large predatory extractive projects.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that there have been

partial shocks of the Correa period, with measures that have partially stood up against imperialist domination in the region, such as the auditing of the public debt, with the help of the Citizen Debt Audit, an institution coordinated by Maria Luiza Fatoreli; the non-renewal of military and intelligence agreements with the US State Department, such as the end of the Manta Base concession in 2009; the promotion of multilateral agreements with the Southern Cone countries; the guarantee of political asylum to the cyber-activist, Julian Assange, who revealed secret U.S. military actions with several human rights violations; and the strengthening of social public policies that promoted health and public education in the country, among others.

The current phase of global capitalism has entered a stage of deepening of its crisis of expanded reproduction, especially since the financial crisis of 2008 and now even more so with the economic and social consequences of the global pandemic, resulting from the paralysis of world productive forces. In this spectrum, for a long time any minimally sovereign, national-reformist or neo-developmental project, even within the framework of capitalism itself, has generated political, military, diplomatic and economic offensives against the most dependent countries that dare to challenge the dominant tentacles of the empire.

Some of Rafael Correa's political actions, even if partial, have evidently generated lawfare operations in the same pattern that has occurred in several Latin American countries, like Brazil, Honduras, and Paraguay, or in a more offensive version, as has occurred in Bolivia and Venezuela.

Ensure the 2nd round against coup attempts and defeat the bank in the vote

Given the confirmation of a center-left candidate, represented by Andres Arauz, and another from the right and big capital, the main task of the entire social movement in the country,

supported by the Latin American left, is to defeat the banker. Even though Arauz has several programmatic limits, such as not proposing, as no other candidate has, the recovery of the monetary sovereignty of the country, to put an end to dollarization.

For their part, the leaders of the social movements and activists of the so-called Citizen's Revolution Movement are increasingly responsible for finding ways to make the necessary and loud criticisms of the Correa government in relation to the questioning of the predatory extractive projects of the big mining companies, as well as other agendas that were left pending from that period.

But the big question in the face of a future government of Arauz is how the workers and the indigenous movements can obtain victories by strengthening their independent organizations and with their own mobilization force, as was demonstrated recently in October 19.

Pachakutik and Yaku Perez had their highest electoral performance since their founding, reaching about 20% of the valid votes, increasing their vote by 230%. They do not necessarily have the obligation to compose a probable Andrés Arauz government, but the greatest tragedy would be to repeat the mistake of 2017, where Yaku defined his vote with the false concept "better a banker than a dictator" or even calling for a null vote. This is the motto that the Washington embassy surely intends to repeat, since the more confrontations between the various sectors of the left, the more easily Ecuador's right wing and the White House will gain strength to prepare the way for the return, or even make it difficult to pass laws and public policies that favor the large majorities in the new National Assembly.

The great challenge of the second round is in the first place to guarantee the election itself, because the news that are coming in is that both the Attorney General's Office and the

Comptroller's Office have extrapolated their constitutional prerogatives, trying to stall the 2nd round with unconstitutional audit requirements. Let's remember what happened in Bolivia, where the incentive for the fascist coup occurred precisely with the successive obstructing of the elections during the counting process.

We must seek a sense of strategy, preparing the strengthening of autonomous social organizations to demand that the future government take measures in favor of the workers, the indigenous populations, and the popular communities. This seems to be the most sensible path to take, without seeking shortcuts through alliances with political factions of the country's dominant classes.

Starting with a critical vote for Andrés Arauz, while maintaining political and class independence, it is possible for the organizations to re-present their immediate and historic demands based on social mobilization. Encouraging a sign of equality between Andrés Arauz/Correa with the candidacy of Guillermo Lasso, a banker supported by the country's agrobusinesses, the former super-minister of dollarization in the government of Jamil Mahuad, who was ousted from power by a popular rebellion, is a sectarian road that does nothing to help in the construction of the organizations of the anti-capitalist left in the country.