

Mexican election season begins

Part Two: Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's bankrupt third run for Mexican president

Don Knowland
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This is the second in a two-part series. Part one was posted yesterday.

In response to widespread opposition to the candidacies of the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) and National Action Party (PAN), leading figures of the political establishment have attacked National Regeneration Movement (Morena) candidate Andres Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), painting him as a left-wing threat to stability.

According to PAN candidate Ricardo Anaya Cortés, “We agree that we need a change of regime, not a replacement of autocracies. Let it be clear: Neither through PRI continuity nor through the authoritarian restoration, concentrator of power, unipersonal and caudillista that represents Morena”.

This is a barely veiled reference to López Obrador having praised Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro at times, such that he will operate as an, autocratic “caudillo,” a Latin American strongman, and run Mexico like Venezuela. In response to this threadbare propaganda López Obrador insists “I do not fight for money, I do not fight for power, I fight for ideals, I fight for principles, even if it seems strange.”

Leading figures like Javier Lozano, vice coordinator of messaging for Meade, who until recently was a PAN operative have accused Russia of meddling through the Internet on AMLO’s behalf. These attacks are so flimsy that the spokesperson of the presidency, Eduardo Sánchez, had to proclaim that they were without any proof. Undeterred, Lozano argued that mere accusation would open the door to attempts by the US to increase its influence in Mexico, given the anti-Russian hysteria in the US.

In December, US National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster also claimed that Russia has launched a campaign to “influence Mexico’s 2018 presidential election and stir up division.” The PRI’s president Enrique Ochoa Reza also affirmed that “Russian and Venezuelan interests” are supporting López Obrador’s campaign, again without offering evidence. When he was US Secretary of Homeland John F. Kelly, now White House chief of staff, warned that a “left-wing president in Mexico ... would not be good for America or Mexico”.

Not surprisingly, despite these smears, López Obrador, who

lost the 2006 presidential election to Calderon as the PRD candidate due to massive fraud, given the records of the PRI, PAN and PRD, has maintained a consistent, at times double-digit lead, in the polls, registering as high as 38 percent.

While the threat of increased intervention by US imperialism in Mexico’s affairs is real if he wins, in reality López Obrador represents little threat to the capitalist order in Mexico. Like Bernie Sanders, López Obrador is a bourgeois politician heading up a bourgeois party. If needed he will serve the Mexican ruling class as a means to forestall revolution, like Syriza in Greece.

AMLO’s electoral coalition, “Together we will make history,” is comprised of Morena, the Labor Party (Partido de Trabajo, PT) and the Social Encounter Party (PES), a right-wing party comprised mostly of Evangelical Christians that opposes gay rights, same-sex marriage and abortion.

Its vague program consists of little more than watered down nationalist-based reforms, much of which amounts to little more than populist demagoguery.

For example, López Obrador promises to undo much of Peña Nieto’s energy reform, to build more refineries, stop importing gasoline, and provide cheap energy.

AMLO proposes a 12-mile-deep “free or open zone” along the 1,800-mile border with the United States, which would include all of Mexico’s border cities with the US, such as Tijuana and Juarez, in order to “promote growth” in this region of Mexico. Under this proposal “incentives will be given, taxes will be lowered, gasoline prices will be lowered and job creation will be encouraged.” The 11-16 percent value added tax previously imposed in the order area would be repealed.

Neither AMLO nor Morena’s program mentions imperialism, despite over of a century under the boot of US dominance.

Instead, Morena, in the more nationalistic pre-1980 tradition of the Mexican bourgeoisie, seeks better terms for Mexican business when dealing with US capital. AMLO stresses that the largest plants installed in Mexico belong to American investors or businessmen “that export merchandise and their profits to the United States and leave very few jobs or taxes” in Mexico.

Morena's official program calls for "cooperative development" with US businesses and for "higher competition internally and competitiveness externally."

More generally, while Morena's program calls on the state to promote the national economy, AMLO insists that Mexican development is to be accomplished without increasing taxes on the wealthy, by freeing up funds lost to corruption, and by the government "acting with austerity," that is, not spending significantly on social programs or infrastructure. The country, AMLO says "should no longer be indebted." This is a right-wing, reactionary program through and through.

AMLO opposes the interests of the working class in calling for uniting all sectors of society, "women and men, poor and rich, religious and free thinkers," as long as they do not partake of the corruption endemic to the Mexican ruling class. Thus, billionaire Carlos Slim Helú, once the world's richest man, is welcome to participate in AMLO's "unity campaign," because he is allegedly an "honest businessman," rather than part of what AMLO calls the corrupt "mafia in power" who "traffic in influence."

But Mexico's main problem is not corruption as AMLO would have it, but capitalism. Corruption goes hand in hand with capitalism, and it will not disappear without its demise.

Rather than critiquing capitalism, AMLO puts forth universal civic, social and democratic values such as all that it takes to bring about social and economic "rebirth." Such vague moral appeals will solve nothing, and can only serve to shield the actual mechanisms of capitalist exploitation.

According to AMLO the middle classes have a "profound desire for liberation, to make justice a reality and establish an authentic democracy." But the nine percent under the top one percent in Mexico is the upper-middle-class layer that Morena and AMLO politically represent; they view the masses of workers as a threat to their wealth and privileges. This layer includes trade union operatives, academics and state bureaucrats.

In 2015 AMLO sold out the struggles of teachers in poor southern Mexico states who were opposing Peña Nieto's education "reform," that is, the attacks on their wages and rights. He pushed them to sit down with intransigent federal officials such as Osorio Chong, who were heading up these attacks.

Not surprisingly, when masses of Mexicans in last year's "gasolinazo" protested a 20 percent hike in gas prices, AMLO attacked those who blocked refinery facilities or looted stores for employing "fascist strategies." Order, he said, had to be brought to such "chaos." Any and all violence had to be avoided in order to assure a "peaceful and democratic" road to change, despite the ever-increasing violence of the Mexican state and its military and police agencies against the population.

AMLO and Morena deny the masses of Mexico their political independence, or a road to pursue their own class interests and taking power. AMLO's call for a "moral and cultural

revolution" rules out social revolution.

AMLO's nationalistic point of departure completely abstracts from the globalized economy that has predominated the Mexican economy the last three decades, the rule of giant transnational corporations and banks. His ideology offers no solution to the crisis that continues to crush Mexican workers and peasants.

The essential democratic and social needs of the working class and Mexican masses cannot be met under the rule of any wing of the Mexican national bourgeoisie, all of whose own privileges depend on the brutal exploitation of workers and poor farmers and on their ties to imperialism.

All of the major parties routinely engage in diversion of funds to buy votes of poorer voters, not just the PRI. Given vicious infighting amongst sections of the Mexican bourgeoisie widespread electoral fraud can be expected once again this year. According a December 2017 *New York Times* article Peña Nieto spent on the order of two billion dollars on publicity during his first 5 years as president. So the sums available for electoral abuse are massive. Electronic hacking of polling stations is also to be expected, not by the Russians, but by the warring factions of the Mexican bourgeoisie. The PRI already faced allegations of widespread electoral fraud in 2017 as to the election of Peña Nieto's cousin Alfredo del Mazo as governor of the state of Mexico.

More dominant sections of the American and Mexican bourgeoisie may well oppose even AMLO's mild proposals for reform. But the Mexican bourgeoisie remain well aware that the greatest danger facing them is an explosion of mass opposition by the Mexican working class. In the face of that danger it is to López Obrador they may well turn.

Whatever the course the elections take, the Mexican working class can have no illusions that any section of the ruling class will protect its fundamental interests. Those interests can only be accomplished through building an independent political movement, based on a socialist, anti-capitalist program, that unites the working class of North, Central, and South America, which faces the same concerted attacks by their ruling financial oligarchies.

Concluded



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