

Mexico's ruling Morena party suffers losses in midterm elections

Don Knowland

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Mid-term elections held yesterday for the Chamber of Deputies of the Mexican Congress and 15 of 32 state governorships, along with the mayoral posts (*alcaldías*) of the 16 boroughs (*delegaciones*) of Mexico City, which holds a federal entity status akin to the states.

The preliminary results showed significant losses for the ruling party Morena (National Regeneration Movement) and its head, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (popularly known as AMLO), who was elected in a landslide in 2018.

Three hundred of the 500 congressional seats were up for direct election of candidates, the remaining 200 being allocated proportionally based on those results. Morena is projected to win about 190 seats in the lower house, a loss of about 60 seats.

Morena maintains a majority of upwards of 280 seats, in combination with its "Together We Make History" allies, the pseudo-left Labor Party (PT, Partido de Trabajo), the increasingly right-wing Ecological Green Party (PVEM), which picked up around 30 seats and the socially conservative Solidarity Encounter Party (PES), which will at most win a handful of seats.

However, the ruling party has lost its two-thirds supermajority that would empower it to implement changes to the Mexican Constitution without the support of additional parties. AMLO has said he wants to change the constitutional reform opening up the energy sector to private and foreign companies that was adopted at the outset of the term of the prior corrupt president, Enrique Peña Nieto.

That energy program was pushed through by the three parties that now make up the "right-left" Va por Mexico (Go for Mexico) electoral coalition consisting of the right-wing National Action Party (PAN), the previously governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) of Peña Nieto, and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the supposed "left" part of the coalition. They picked up the bulk of the seats that Morena lost.

Once the third-strongest party after the PRI and PAN, the PRD, "social democratic" in name only, will gain just over a

dozen seats, having pursued a trajectory which in fact is ever more to the right.

Morena did considerably better in the state elections for governors. It won 10 or 11 of the 15 seats up for grabs, in addition to the one it previously held. That will extend its power over a number of states, several largely rural—Baja California, Baja California Sur, Colima, Guerrero, Michoacán, Nayarit, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tlaxcala, Zacatecas, and possibly oil-rich Campeche, while an allied PT/PVEM candidate will likely win in San Luis Potosí.

Morena's biggest defeat was in Mexico City, a stronghold of parties aligned with AMLO since the late 1990s. AMLO was once mayor, and the current mayor is Claudia Sheinbaum, a leading contender to succeed him as Morena's next presidential candidate in 2024. Morena had held 11 of the 16 *alcaldías*, but appeared likely to win only six or seven of them.

COVID-19 hit especially hard in the city, and discontent simmered over the collapse of an elevated metro line in May, killing 26 riders and injuring many more. AMLO's current Foreign Minister Marcel Ebrard was mayor when this train was built. The criminal negligence and corruption involved was clear for all to see.

Monday morning, AMLO still claimed to be "happy, happy, happy" with the results of the lower house election, and he emphasized Morena's gains in the governors' races. He also claimed that the vote showed the Mexican people supported his call for a "fourth transformation" of Mexico, as epoch-making as independence from Spain, late 19th-century bourgeois liberal reforms and the Mexican Revolution a century ago.

AMLO continues to claim that he has used the first half of his six-year term to lay the foundations for his fourth transformation, and will get down to reforms "in earnest" in the next three years of his term in office. He has maintained a favorability rating of upwards of 60 percent, and Morena yesterday had more than double the votes in the lower house elections than the next closest party, the PAN.

But his alleged accomplishments have amounted to

nothing and class tensions in Mexico are boiling over.

Over 56 percent of the working population continues to work in the informal sector and lacks social security. This is a proportion that has grown over time and will not disappear with AMLO's promised "fourth transformation." Rather, it is the product of a system unable to sustain Mexico's population.

In the early 1990s, former PRI President Carlos Salinas de Gortari signed the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Canada, privatized the economy, including the banks, and opened the country to market forces, that is to increased exploitation by US and European imperialism. His claim was that the economy would grow and ultimately bring prosperity to all.

That never happened. Mexico's growth since has averaged a mere 2.2 percent annually. Poverty only grew. The 10 richest people in Mexico accumulated the same wealth as the poorest 50 percent of the country, according to a 2018 report by Oxfam, and that gap has only been exacerbated under AMLO.

Corruption became endemic, an issue that AMLO claimed he would take head on. The government's "war" on the drug cartels, which ended up favoring certain cartels over others, led to many thousands killed or disappeared. Under AMLO murder rates remain at near record highs.

López Obrador has elevated the political influence and budget of the Mexican military, which has a long record of corruption, extrajudicial killings of workers and other abuses. This is part of a turn of the Mexican oligarchy toward authoritarian forms of rule anticipating the further discrediting of the entire political establishment. The Morena administration even created a new National Guard to perpetuate the military's internal deployment and used it increasingly to harass striking workers.

The latest elections proved the bloodiest in modern Mexican history. Over 800 candidates were subjected to violence, and 36 were murdered.

While AMLO did increase the minimum wage slightly, and makes murky claims to have established billions of dollars of direct social transfers to underprivileged groups, there is very little to show for it. In truth his government's financial policy has been along neoliberal lines: aversion to indebtedness, control of inflation, austerity and balance in public spending and rejection of any expropriation of the private sector.

The policies of AMLO and his government as to the COVID-19 pandemic have been nothing short of criminal. Factories were to remain open, and especially those of big US companies; profits could not be impaired. The Morena government refused to expand fiscal spending to counteract the impact of COVID-19 on employment, forcing many to

work in dangerous conditions.

Health measures and spending were utterly inadequate. Vaccinations have proceeded at an appallingly slow pace.

The result has been at least a half million excess deaths. And by all estimates, an additional 10 million were pushed into poverty.

A guest column by a Mexican economist on the Spanish web page of the *New York Times* on Sunday recognized that Mexico had long since become two countries, one composed of a small sliver of the rich, and the other of masses of poor people.

Emphasizing that López Obrador "is a less radical politician than he is accused of being and more responsible for public affairs than he is given credit for," the column went on to argue:

This disparity threatens the very social fabric of the nation. For ethical reasons but also for political prudence, it is urgent to avert the risks of social instability that derive from the difficult coexistence of these two Mexicos. And given that the opposition has so far been unable to offer an alternative to this problem, I am convinced that López Obrador is the only viable option to avoid the despair of the majorities and what it could entail.

In other words, this despair could easily lead to a popular rebellion. This expresses the true function of López Obrador and his political program: to promote the deception that it can meet the needs of the vast majority of the population.

AMLO is nothing more than a fake left representative of the class interests of a criminal Mexican bourgeoisie, and is fully complicit in its crimes.

The Mexican working class must be organized independently of all such political figures and political formations. It must take power to organize the socialist reconstruction of society. This requires building a Socialist Equality Party in Mexico as part of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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