

Right-wing oligarch defeats “pink tide” candidate in Ecuador

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16 October 2023

Daniel Noboa, the 35-year-old son of Ecuador's richest man and five-time presidential candidate Álvaro Noboa, has been elected president of the country with 51.95 percent of the votes in a second round against Luisa Gonzalez, the candidate hand-picked by former President Rafael Correa.

The election was held after millions had taken to the streets repeatedly to protest social inequality over the past four years, amid rising poverty. Six million out of 17 million Ecuadorians live on less than \$3 per day, and about 90 percent of workers make less than \$780 per month, the official cost of a family's basic needs.

Impermeable to the mass sentiments for radical change among workers and peasants, however, Ecuadorian capitalist politics vomited up the election of a man who personifies privilege and plutocracy.

Incumbent President Guillermo Lasso, himself a multimillionaire banker, is due to leave office in December as a result of a historic political crisis. In mid-May, Lasso preempted an impeachment vote over corruption charges by invoking for the first time a “mutual death” clause that dissolved Congress and triggered snap elections.

The Lasso administration, whose approval hovers near 10 percent, has implemented draconian austerity measures to fulfill the diktats of the International Monetary Fund of paying back debtors and cutting the fiscal deficit. This included massive cuts and layoffs in healthcare despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

With Lasso's failure to implement his broader plan for privatizations and other regressive measures, and fearing a revolutionary upheaval after a series of strikes led by teachers culminated in nationwide protests in June 2022, leading sectors of the ruling class pushed Lasso out.

Since the end in 2014 of the oil boom—the country's main export—the last three administrations, beginning with Rafael Correa (2007-2017) launched an onslaught of

social cuts that greatly discredited the entire political establishment. In response, the Ecuadorian oligarchy has been lurching toward authoritarian forms of rule.

Using a significant increase in gang violence as a pretext, Lasso has adopted increasingly dictatorial forms of rule, including 10 states of exception that involved suspending democratic rights and deploying the military regionally or nationally. This was followed by the autocratic decision to dissolve Congress and rule by decree since, implementing regressive taxes and pro-investor policies.

Several politicians have been killed this year, most infamously the presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio, whose candidacy won third place after his death and whose seven murder suspects were all killed in jail. Citing these killings, Lasso ordered nearly 100,000 heavily armed troops and police to effectively oversee the voting in the country's first elections under a state of exception.

Most significantly, the elections took place under the shadow of a new agreement of military cooperation between Lasso and the Biden administration earlier this month. For the first time since 2009, US troops will be allowed to carry out full-fledged operations on Ecuadorian soil.

The agreement with Lasso, whose regime has acquired a semi-dictatorial character and whose security forces massacred at least seven peaceful demonstrators during the 2022 protests, further unmasks the Biden administration's claim to defend “democracy” internationally. The deal follows repeated deployments of US troops to assist the murderous repression by the Dina Boluarte regime in Peru against demonstrations opposing the coup that brought it to power.

Rather than being aimed at “transnational drug cartels,” this alliance fully integrates Ecuador into the criminal onslaught led by US imperialism against workers and

toilers globally resisting oppression, inequality and dictatorship.

This closer alignment with US imperialism began under the Lenin Moreno administration (2017-2021), which ended the asylum of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at the Ecuadorian embassy in London. It handed him over to British authorities, who plan to extradite him to face life imprisonment or worse in the United States for exposing imperialism's war crimes and anti-democratic conspiracies worldwide.

Noboa, who is slated to rule for 15 months until the end of Lasso's original term, will continue his agenda of austerity, a turn to dictatorship and alignment with US imperialism.

Lasso signed a trade deal with China, and Noboa led a congressional delegation to Russia, reflecting the efforts of the ruling class to leverage these ties to get a better deal with US and European imperialism. However, these maneuvers are carried out within a framework of dependence and subservience to imperialism. Noboa and Lasso have both parroted the official US line of unconditional support for Israel as the supposed victim of "terrorism."

Noboa's National Democratic Alliance (ADN) party, moreover, is a new façade for the clique around the Lenín Moreno administration and other right-wing forces. It includes Mover, the new name of the former ruling party Alianza País, which brought both Correa and Moreno to power. As a legislator, Noboa backed Lasso's pro-business tax and regulatory bills and the "mutual death" decree.

It is worth adding that, while centering his campaign on "anti-corruption" slogans, Noboa, like Lasso, appears in the Pandora Papers as an owner of offshore entities in Panama, where the rich illegally hide their fortunes to evade taxes. Ecuador forbids presidential candidates from holding assets in tax havens.

To the extent that Noboa was able to absurdly pose as "center-left" and an outsider, it was only possible due to the political bankruptcy of the nominal "left" opposition.

His opponent, Luisa Gonzalez, is a career politician who rose through the ranks of the state bureaucracy under Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno. Her Citizen's Revolution Movement party was formed by Correa after breaking politically with Moreno, even though Correa had handpicked him as his successor. Correa currently lives in Belgium after being sentenced to prison *in absentia* for corruption.

Gonzalez was presented in the corporate media as a

"socialist," even though her campaign sought primarily to outdo Noboa from the right. She vowed a "war," a "state of emergency" and an "iron fist" against gangs, and repeatedly highlighted her meetings with US and EU ambassadors and officials to discuss cooperation on security. These meetings were a transparent commitment to the geopolitical agenda of US and European imperialism.

The electoral losses to the likes of Lasso and Noboa show that Correismo and the other "pink tide" bourgeois nationalist movements in Latin America have reached a political dead-end.

More broadly, the Stalinist Communist Parties, the union bureaucracies they lead, and the indigenous nationalist leaderships have maintained a policy for decades of backing one faction or another of the capitalist political establishment—including sections that have backed Correa, Moreno, Lasso and now Noboa. These forces and their pseudo-left apologists are primarily responsible for the lack of a genuine left-wing alternative to the reactionary politics of the entire Ecuadorian ruling class.

Now, the scion of the Bonita bananas will oversee a corrupt regime subordinated to its bosses on Wall Street and dependent on exporting oil, fish and bananas like the proverbial "banana republic." But Ecuador today is also a very different country. Since the 1960s, the urban population has grown from a third to over two thirds of the population, adding millions of workers closely integrated into the globalized economy.

In the context of a global resurgence of the class struggle, Ecuadorian workers must urgently draw the necessary conclusions from history. They can only unleash their massive objective power by mobilizing on the basis of an internationalist and socialist program, independent of all pro-capitalist and nationalist politicians. This requires the establishment of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International all across Latin America.



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