

Ultra-right gains in Chilean election dominated by anti-immigrant, law-and-order campaigns

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In the most right-wing campaign since Chile's return to civilian rule 35 years ago, the general elections held last Sunday strengthened the radical-right, populist, and fascistic conglomerations in the Congress, which will now control 90 of the Chamber of deputies 155 seats.

Unity for Chile, the incumbent alliance including the pro-1973 coup Christian Democrats, President Gabriel Boric's Broad Front, the Stalinist Communist Party and the Socialist-PPD, Radical, Liberal and Humanist parties lost 11 seats. In the Senate the ruling coalition gained one seat reaching 20, three less than the 23 now held by the right.

In the presidential race, Jeannette Jara, a member of the Communist Party and candidate of Unity for Chile, was the front-runner in the first round with 26.9 percent of the vote, not enough to win outright. Her main contender, José Antonio Kast of the fascistic Republican Party came a close second with 23.9 percent.

The country now heads to a second round vote scheduled for Sunday 14 December. Johannes Kaiser, a fascist Libertarian with 13.9 percent of the vote, and Evelyn Matthei of the Pinochetista Independent Democratic Union (UDI) with 12.5 percent, have already pledged their support for Kast, the son of a Nazi German officer who escaped to Chile via the so-called "rat line" after World War II and collaborated in the Pinochet dictatorship's repression.

Another presidential contender, Franco Parisi, a free-market economist who heads the right-populist Party of the People, came a close third with 19.7 percent of the vote.

All the candidates, from Kast and Kaiser to the Maoist Eduardo Artés and the Stalinist Jara, focused their campaigns on xenophobic anti-immigrant appeals in combination with vows to get "tough on crime," promising to shower the murderous Carabineros police, intelligence and state apparatus with infinite resources.

All the presidential hopefuls campaigned heavily with this message in the predominantly mining regions of the north, which received no government assistance, funding, resources or any infrastructure to cope with the influx of refugees and immigrants from Venezuela and other parts of Latin America. The National Migration Service estimates 336,984 undocumented and irregular immigrants entered Chile over the last ten years.

In a modern tragedy, seven million people fled Venezuela beginning in 2015, when the Obama administration imposed crippling economic sanctions that were ratcheted up by the next two US administrations, and which plunged the mass of the South American nation's population into dire hardship. With the doors closed to the United States, desperate Venezuelans detoured to neighboring Colombia

(2.85 million), Peru (1.54 million), Brazil 648,200), Ecuador (444,800) and Chile (532,700).

The exodus of Venezuelans took a sharp upturn with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic as the working class internationally was forced to pay for the shutdown in international trade. The world economy, stagnant since the 2008 financial meltdown, fell into deep crisis causing inflation levels not seen since the 1990s and forcing up prices of basic staples amid conditions of double digit unemployment.

The Chilean ruling class had been thrown into a profound crisis of rule in late 2019, when long-standing and deep-seated opposition to capitalism, the state and the civilian political caste brought millions into the streets of Santiago, Valparaíso, Concepción, Antofagasta and every other regional city. The mass uprising's three general strikes and the largest demonstrations in the country's history defiantly opposed President Sebastián Piñera's imposition of a state of emergency that left 36 dead, hundreds mutilated and thousands detained and tortured in the ensuing mass sweeps.

The ruling class relied heavily upon the corporatist trade unions, the Stalinist Communist Party and the pseudo-left Broad Front to disorient and divert anti-capitalist sentiment behind appeals to replace the authoritarian constitution that Gen. Augusto Pinochet imposed after taking power in a US-backed military coup in 1973.

Beginning in 2019, the predominantly rightist corporate media saturated the airwaves with nightmarish scenarios of cities besieged by crime and a country facing an extreme security crisis. It explicitly associated this crisis with the struggle for democratic and social rights, vilifying the mass mobilizations as an explosion of criminality.

Student strikes and school occupations against dilapidated infrastructure and lack of resources now were labeled as delinquency, while shantytowns built by desperate immigrants and the homeless on occupied land were alleged to be infested with narco-trafficking and criminal gangs. The deliberate aim of this rightist-backed media offensive was to cultivate among more backward sections of the population xenophobic demands to expel migrants and for an iron fist against crime.

Piñera could only proceed with this agenda because the Stalinist Communist Party along with Boric's Broad Front worked might and main to smother the latent revolutionary situation of 2019 with cynical promises of social reforms if elected. The Chilean "left" also promoted the shibboleth of the parliamentary process and of "change through the ballot"—a rude lie especially for the youth, the sick, the elderly, migrants and the indigenous communities, which represented the most vulnerable and oppressed sections of the working class.

During the 2025 campaign, every candidate pledged to deal with “illegal” migration. The fascists and populists, being more adept at dog-whistling and emboldened by the US president’s evisceration of the American Constitution as the whole oligarchy turns towards dictatorship, pulled out all the stops.

Parisi at one televised debate promised to landmine the tri-border area that Chile shares with Bolivia and Peru. Kaiser proposed during the election campaign to detain all undocumented migrants, including children, in transit camps before expulsion. He also promised to send “illegal foreigners with criminal records” to El Salvador’s infamous mega-prison, the Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT), while Matthei proposed to make irregular entry into Chile a crime and to “close the border” within one year, using satellites, drones, and a new border police force.

Not to be outdone, Kast’s “Border Shield” program promises to build five meter high walls, electric fences and three meter deep trenches along the border while increasing the presence of the Armed Forces. In April 2024, Kast visited El Salvador where he met with the fascist President Nayib Bukele and conducted a “technical” tour of CECOT with the intention of implementing something similar in Chile.

Kast has also drawn inspiration from Trump and the European fascists, meeting with kindred spirits in Spain, Italy and Hungary in May 2024, and participating in the Budapest Conservative Political Action Conference. There he paraphrased Trump claiming that “hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants entered Chile clandestinely. And they never left. Among them were criminals, hire assassins, members of international gangs, rapists, and abusers.”

He continued, “We are going to close our borders. We are going to build detention centers. We are going to apply tough measures so that they cannot work, so that they no longer receive subsidies, so that they cannot send resources abroad.”

The fascists promise to commit crimes against human rights; the pseudo-left government has enacted them. More than 4,350 undocumented immigrants have been expelled by the National Migration Service established in 2021 by the late billionaire president Piñera and employed to the full during Boric’s administration. In 2024 alone, 1,100 immigrants, predominantly Venezuelan nationals, were expelled while another 12,130 immigrants were threatened with an expulsion order.

The Boric government is also forcibly evicting tens of thousands of families living in shantytowns, many of them immigrants, following the signing in of the “Law of Usurpations” in November 2023.

The same law, which was designed to protect with lethal force the private property of developers, large landowners, mining, forestry and other sectors of the Chilean capitalist class, is being used against the Mapuche indigenous people claiming ancestral lands. Almost from the moment Boric assumed power, he declared a state of emergency over the regions of Biobio and Araucanía—historically Mapuche territory—imposing virtual martial law, while using the authoritarian State Security Law against indigenous leaders.

Boric has also pushed through a battery of repressive laws that eclipses anything passed in the last 35 years of civilian rule. These include a law bringing together the various intelligence apparatuses and broadening their spying powers, a revamped Anti-Terrorist law, measures that retroactively protect state agents from prosecution for using lethal force and a law that orders the military to protect public and private “critical infrastructure.”

At the last televised debate on 11 November, the presidential

candidates were asked whether they would support Trump’s invasion of Venezuela. All the right candidates said yes and with gusto. Jara said: “I couldn’t disagree more with Maduro’s regime, but international law must be respected, and I am not in favor of endorsing an armed invasion of another sister country.”

Jara, in true Stalinist form, lied. Her partner in crime, Boric, became President Joe Biden’s attack dog within South America, speaking at all the international forums on behalf of American foreign policy attacking Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua as authoritarian to ingratiate himself with US imperialism. His services rendered assisted in their own way the Trump administration’s attempt to reassert Washington’s hegemonic control over the hemisphere.

Police state dictatorships are being scaffolded internationally in line with the drive to war abroad and against the working class at home. No one more so than “Washington, which is driven to seek by means of criminal violence solutions to intractable problems rooted in the contradictions of US and global capitalism. There is an appearance of lunacy in the war aims of US imperialism in Latin America. It cannot reverse the rise of China as South America’s premier trading partner with bombs and missiles, outside of an all-out world war. But that, along with drive toward fascist dictatorship, is the road upon which it is marching,” the WSWS wrote 13 November.

Latin America’s Pink Tide governments, which in an earlier period postured as an alternative to what they called “neo-liberalism,” are today aiding and abetting the Trump Administration’s preparations to invade Venezuela. At the same time, the Maduro government, representing the interests of sections of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and foreign capital, is incapable of making any genuine anti-imperialist appeal to the working class and the oppressed masses of Venezuela and the Americas.

The working class must intervene with an internationalist perspective, one that eschews the poisonous fumes of xenophobic and anti-immigration nationalism promoted by both the right and the so-called “left.”

The nationalist orientation espoused by all the parties running in the 2025 elections is aimed at driving a deadly wedge between the proletariat on totally secondary and irrelevant differences such as foreign or native-born, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference and skin color as they prepare to extend and entrench a social counterrevolution. The only objectively real enemy of the working class is the bourgeoisie, its bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties and its servants in the capitalist state.



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