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The Colombian crossroads

Proper management of the process can offer alternatives to the Colombian left to achieve important objectives. The obstacles are not small but they are not impossible to overcome.



The recent parliamentary elections in Colombia have once again registered an abstention of more than 50% of the electoral roll, a phenomenon barely highlighted by the local press and little worked by the country's social science. This abstention is already a characteristic of the Colombian political system and has been registered since the 50s of the last century and although there are hardly any studies in this regard, everything would indicate that it has its roots in the primitive nature of an electoral system that allows all kinds of maneuvers to buy votes and guarantees of massive fraud that favor the so-called political "caciques" of the traditional parties; a political system that operates in the midst of an atmosphere of endemic violence especially in some regions and is spreading more and more every day in a country with a huge discredit of institutions (in particular

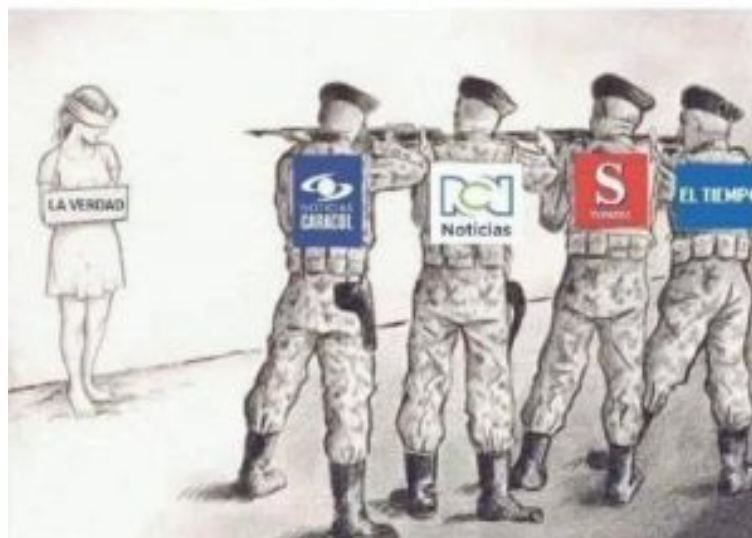
parliamentary and justice institutions) and that naturally provokes massive disinterest in political participation.



[Abstention on election day remained above 50%](#): There was a participation of at least 45.87 percent in the elections of the Senate of the Republic.

To this be added the enormous manipulation practiced by a mass media of information that rather than promoting a modern and democratic citizen consciousness play rather the role of sectarian agitators and propagators of lies and hoaxes to favor the right.

Una imagen dice. Más que mil palabras



To all this be added the little or no democratic control of the various bodies that must guarantee the validity of the electoral processes. More than a democratic game in this country, there has always been a generational change of the ruling elites. It is not surprising then that a high percentage of presidents, parliamentarians and politicians in general turn out to be children, grandchildren or direct relatives of former presidents, former parliamentarians and prominent politicians of the past, if not with direct links with recognized criminals of corruption, drug trafficking or paramilitarism, nor the enormous social and racist brand that can be seen with a slight glance at those who get the positions of representation: a very high percentage turn out to be "white" (at least what is meant here by "whites") and characters from these groups that control the fundamentals of national wealth.



The new revelation of Colombian politics, Francia Márquez and the leader of the Historical Pact, Gustavo Petro.

That a black woman of humble origins (Francia Márquez) has obtained a greater vote than several of the traditional political leaders has been almost scandalous for not a few in this racist and exclusive country. Nor is it that a politician outside the traditional elites, surnamed Petro, has obtained the largest vote of all the candidates and is emerging as a possible winner in the presidential elections next May, if some incident so typical of democratic Colombia does not prevent it: massive fraud in the counting of votes giving advantage to the candidate of the system, violence of all kinds to intimidate and quell the very likely general protest of the popular sectors, disinformation campaigns and mass manipulation (a weapon already discovered in its day by the German Nazis and that today reaches terrifying dimensions), torticero use of the current legislation to sabotage an

undesirable election for the elite, without ruling out some form of coup d'état, as the head of the hardest right, former President Uribe Vélez, has already requested, or an assassination, which is also not alien to the tradition of this Andean country.



There are, however, other aspects that introduce changes in the political scenario of this country. Not only is the electoral result, very positive for the political and social forces that drive the candidacy of Petro but some variations that are registered and do not cease to have relevance even if they do not change the essence of the panorama, since the forces of the right (political and social) continue to be the majority in the institutions of the State and keep intact the mechanisms of real power (also in the new parliament).

Indeed, one can observe the emergence of new forces on the moderate right with parties other than the traditional ones but that share with them the support for the current neoliberal model, the nature of the social order and the type of international relations of the country, although with certain nuances that may well enable specific alliances with the forces of change when the correlation of forces advises it in an exercise of political realism (with all the risks that this entails). But at the same time the presence of politicians whose social (and above all economic) support shows clear links with illegal activities (yesterday, traditional smuggling especially in the Caribbean; now, drug trafficking that is far from disappearing) or turn out to be a direct expression of the criminal forms of paramilitarism is maintained. All of them are far from being isolated or smaller phenomena because in fact they have a very specific social base that will have to be managed by a possible new government of the left, however moderate it may be.



In spite of everything, there are many possibilities that candidate Petro has even to win the presidency in the first round. It all depends on how the election campaign unfolds in the weeks until May. The Historical Pact (its electoral platform) would have to be extended to other political and social forces whose programs may be compatible with some of the proposals of the Historical Pact. Nor should it be ruled out that the left seeks mainly regional rapprochements with the social bases of some traditional parties (over the liberal party) that have progressive sympathies, especially if the leadership of its party finally decides to support Gutiérrez, candidate of the extreme right (apparently, the big bourgeoisie has decided to withdraw Uribe Vélez, at least from the front line, given its enormous discredit and its very low electoral support registered in the recent elections). The dialogues, open or discreet as the case may be, with the great nuclei of the country's economic power and with the Western powers will surely not go beyond being inevitable contacts that if they occur would only indicate that the big bourgeoisie, national and international, assumes as a fact the very possible presidential election of a leftist candidate.

If Petro wins, he will surely not be able to make far-reaching reforms given the current correlation of forces; it will happen more or less like Boric, in Chile. However, if the process is managed with prudence and skill, these reforms, however small, can also open the avenues through which an effective democracy is advanced and a hopeful horizon for greater changes opens, as Allende proposed when he resisted in the Government Palace the bombing of the coup military. Let's hope that in Colombia there is no Pinochet and that Biden does not have another Henry Kissinger to do the dirty work. Proper management of the process can offer alternatives to the Colombian left to achieve important objectives. The obstacles are not small but they are not impossible to overcome.



Juan Diego García for La Pluma, March 23, 2022

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

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