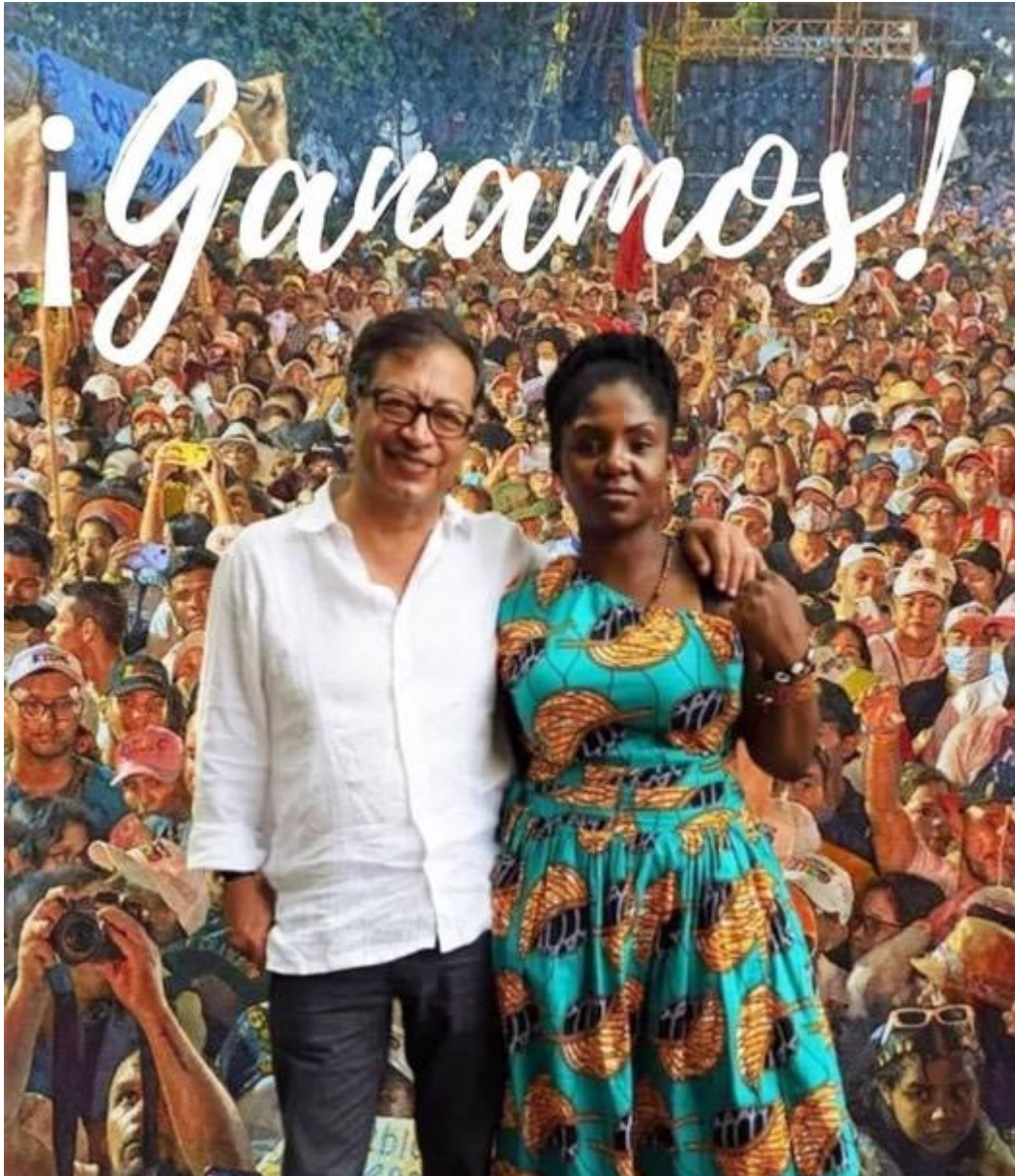




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Petro's historic victory in Colombia tilts Latin America more leftward

written by Alejandra Garcia and Gustavo A Maranges
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June 21 — This Sunday, Colombia made history. For the first time, a leftist candidate will become president of this Latin America nation that yearns for a definitive regime change. Gustavo Petro, the former rebel fighter who has promised a profound social and economic reform in that country, is the Colombian people's best option at this point in time to get them out of the poverty and violence that has shaken them for decades.

With 99.5 percent of the votes accounted, Gustavo Petro held an unassailable lead of over three points, some 700,000 votes ahead of his rival, Colombia's "Donald Trump" Rodolfo Hernandez.

Another historic moment of the election is the rise of 40-year-old environmental, social and feminist activist Francia Marquez, who will soon be Colombia's first black female vice-president.

"The great challenge that all Colombians have is reconciliation. The time has come to build peace, which implies social justice," said Marquez, who was the target of numerous death threats during the campaign.

"Today is a celebration for the people. Let's celebrate our first popular victory," Petro, the candidate of the leftist Colombia Humana party, wrote on Twitter.

Quickly after Petro's words, the billionaire Hernandez acknowledged his defeat by saying on his twitter account. "I hope Gustavo Petro will be faithful to his talk against corruption."

This victory may be the light in the dark for those who take the brunt of the widespread poverty, rising violence, and many other deep-rooted social issues. Once the result is made official, Petro will succeed the unpopular Ivan Duque who like his mentor Alvaro Uribe, benefited by the enormous drug trade in Colombia and his pit dog like relationship to Washington. Both of them encouraged and allowed attacks on Venezuela that originated in their country and have allowed for nine US military bases on their soil to menace the region. It remains to be seen how Petro will handle all that.

It also remains to be seen how he will be able to get progressive legislation passed in a congress where he has little support and the representatives of the oligarchy are predominate. Petro is not a socialist and he made it clear in his victory speech by

saying he was going to fix the country's problems with capitalism. That gesture from the former M-19 guerilla was an olive branch to calm not just the local oligarchy but more importantly the financial centers of the North.

None of these looming problems can take away from Petro's openness to engage in closer regional relationships with Latin American countries reflecting this revived trend of the region, but centuries of dependence, colonialism and meddling from the north cannot be swept away in four years, and that will be another of Petro's major challenges.

The People's Choice

What really got Petro and Marques elected was their campaign promises to bring peace, stability and prosperity to those that have none. Colombia is sick and tired of the death squads connected to Duque and Uribe that murdered hundreds of union leaders, activists and community leaders, they are tired of the corruption, they are tired of the wrenching poverty that went on and on. They were the refreshing candidates of hope promising ambitious reforms in pensions, taxes, healthcare, and agriculture, as well as changes in Colombia's fight against drug cartels and other armed groups.

"As of today, Colombia is changing, a real change that orients us toward one of our objectives: the politics of love, understanding, and dialogue," Petro said from the Colombian capital, Bogota.

The victory of Petro, a former senator and former mayor of Bogota, marked a drastic change in presidential politics in a country that has long marginalized the left-wing for any links they had to the long-standing armed struggle. None of that mattered because this new president could not possibly be worse than what the Colombian people had to endure over the last 4 years under Duque. In his first words, he said that, he will advocate unity and respect.

“Expect no political persecution or legal persecution from my government. There will only be respect and dialogue”, the politician said and added that he will listen not only to those who have taken up arms but also to “that silent majority of farmers, Indigenous people, women, and youth who suffer the consequences of violence with greater force.”

All Eyes on Latin America

Today, all eyes are on Latin America as the peoples of the region remove the ultra-right from power. This was the case in Chile, with the triumph of Gabriel Boric; Bolivia, with Lucho Arce; Argentina, with Alberto Fernandez, and now Colombia.

Up next is the election in Brazil, the largest country in Latin America, where former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva leads the polls to unseat the ultra right wing President Jair Bolsonaro next October.

According to experts, a Lula victory would mean that all the region’s largest countries, including Mexico and Argentina, are led by leftist presidents. Little by little, justice is appearing for our peoples of Latin America.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano – English](#)

