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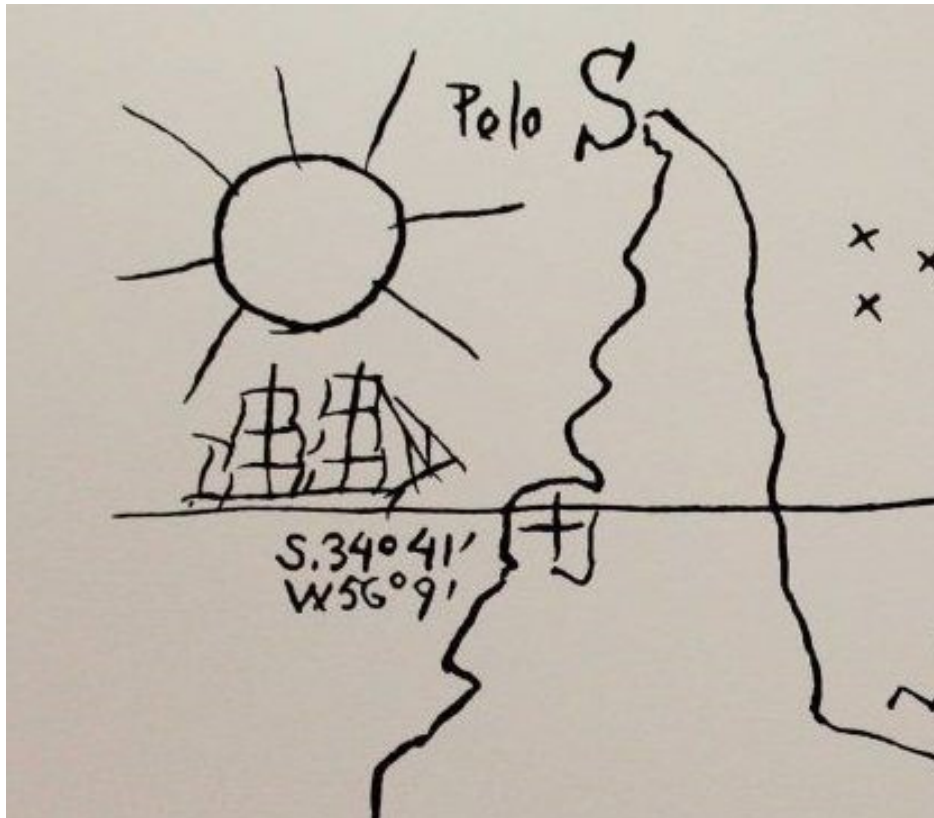
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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By Javier Tolcachier \wedge Latin America and the Caribbean
01.01.2023

Political balance and outlook for 2023



Sources: Rebellion - Image: "America inverted" (1943), Joaquín Torres-García

In the year that is leaving, in electoral terms, the outstanding thing has been the triumphs of the progressive forces in Colombia and Brazil, bringing Gustavo Petro to the presidency and for the third time, Lula da Silva, after the fierce judicial persecution of which he was subjected.

Of great importance is the strengthening of the peace process in Colombia and also the change of sign in the relationship between Colombia and Venezuela, governments that

have taken concrete steps with the opening of their borders and the progressive normalization of their relations.

Significant progress was also made in Cuba with the majority approval of a new Family Code, which expands and updates the protection rights of children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, condemns domestic violence and recognizes the diversity of realities that exist among Cuban families, among other positive issues.

In the English-speaking Caribbean, the re-election of Labour's Mía Mottley as Prime Minister of Barbados, which has become an independent republic from the British crown, stands out in a new advance of decolonialization.

Both in Grenada and in Saint Kitts and Nevis, the oppositions triumphed, being in the case of Dickon Mitchell from Granada, of the National Democratic Congress, a generational renewal in the political environment of the island.

The right was also able to reap some victories, such as the one obtained by Rodrigo Chaves in Costa Rica against José María Figueres Olsen, candidate of the now ancient National Liberation Party, former president and son of the founding caudillo of the Second Republic.

One of the most painful defeats of this year occurred in the constitutional plebiscite of exit in Chile, which was supposed to ratify the new constitutional text to leave behind the Pinochet legacy and was rejected by a bulky majority.

In Uruguay, despite the achievement of the left that garnered 800,000 signatures to raise the popular consultation on the Law of Urgent Consideration, the ruling neoliberal coalition of Lacalle Pou achieved a narrow victory that opens the door to a conservative restoration program.

At other levels of government, elections were held in Mexico in some states that resulted in the strengthening of Morena and the figure of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, while in municipal terms, the Sandinista Front won all the mayoralties in Nicaragua without major opposition and the extreme right took over the central mayor of Lima.

In what was thought to be a total political eclipse because of the World Cup in Qatar, several political events shook the regional map.

In Peru, after repeated and unsuccessful attempts, the centralist oligarchy violated the popular will by overthrowing the rural teacher and trade unionist Pedro Castillo less than a year and a half into his term.

In Argentina, while popular euphoria was unleashed before obtaining its third soccer World Cup, the popular field suffered a strong setback. Handcuffed the country by an

odious debt contracted by the Macri government and with clear pre-electoral overtones, the judicial-media mafia, in its capacity as manager of the groups of concentrated power and the US *lawfare* strategy, managed – at least for the moment – to remove from the field the main progressive reference, the current vice president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. proscribing his possible candidacy by means of a flawed sentence.

Meanwhile, in the convulsed and intervened Haiti, the popular movements reached an agreement with the irregular government of Ariel Henry, which stipulates an institutional solution to the difficulties that its population is going through and the threat of a new invasion of multinational forces.

Likewise, in Chile a new chapter is opening to move towards a new constitutional text. Constitution that will emerge (in the best of cases) from a modality "as far as possible" and will unlock some issues, but given the cupular nature of this renewed attempt, in no way will it be able to meet the needs for change expressed by the Chilean "Awakening" of 2019.

Already in the throes of the year, the arrest of one of the main agents of the coup in Bolivia, Luis Fernando Camacho, who together with the dominant Santa Cruz lodges staged this year a new attempt to shock the country, of the same racist and secessionist character revealed in the course of the constitutional process that led to the founding of the Plurinational State or with the ignorance of the electoral results in 2019.

Outlook for 2023

If the context of a hyper-concentrated and financialized capitalist system is maintained, there are few – if any – in this scheme that are the escape valves for the Latin American peoples.

The low digital technologization of the economy and social relations promoted by the same actors (corporations and investment funds) without control or social impact, is revealed as a false promise of "innovations", fulfilling the function of distractive fetish, of reconversion of the productive forces without real human progress and therefore, of postponement.

In geopolitical terms, the increasingly hard bid of the United States to stop the advance of a more multipolar world generates a framework of permanent tension against the aspirations of sovereignty and self-determination of the peoples of the region, who will have to strengthen intra-regional alliances of emancipatory sign (such as CELAC) and extra-regional (such as BRICS +) so as not to be dragged by neo-colonizing intentions.

In this context, it is foreseeable that the right will continue to use all the stratagems at its disposal to avoid, minimize the scope, isolate and even liquidate new progressive or leftist experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this way, we should not be surprised by a combination of strategies of media demonization, judicial banning, parliamentary blockades, unilateral commercial and financial coercive measures, new coup attempts or even assassinations against governments prone to produce changes in favor of their populations. That is, the complete repertoire of tricks of the established power to curb popular demands.

On the other hand, it is evident that widespread and fair popular dissatisfaction persists, which does not leave much room for medium-term processes. The peoples demand from their elected representatives coherence and speed in the solution of the serious problems they are going through, coherence and speed that find barriers difficult to overcome in the closed opposition of economic and media power – the main executors of capitalist cruelty. In this way, there will also be new mass protests, strikes, popular rebellions and also repression in the face of the pretensions of conservative governments to maintain and deepen the decrepit and suffocating established system.

In general, the political map has become somewhat more favorable to transformations, focusing on three blocks. On the one hand, the "moderate hexagon" of social democratic inclination, made up of Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Honduras and Chile, governments fruit of unity in diversity. On the other hand, the "square" formed by Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia, whose anti-imperialist character is much more defined. Finally, the archipelago of English-speaking nations of the Caribbean, whose sign, by necessity of the present and shared past, is in general of collective action in pursuit of greater self-determination.

Faced with this, reactionary enclaves persist such as Paraguay, Guatemala, Ecuador, Uruguay, El Salvador, Costa Rica or Panama, which testify with the increase in violence within them, the urgent need for a change of direction at the political helm.

In summary, the outlook for 2023 presents similar challenges to that of the year that ends.

Given the deterioration of formal democracy, it is necessary to move towards a real democracy of a multidimensional nature, that is, of progressive distribution of power in all areas, strengthening the decision-making capacities of the social base.

In this direction, the conquest of plural communication, the redistribution of income, the growing decentralization of political power, the direct election of the judiciary, the

democratization of the digital space, collaboration for the joint resolution of common challenges through regional integration, the expansion and fulfillment of human and social rights, the full inclusion of generational demands, The transformation of the consumption model that generates indebtedness and environmental depredation, the suppression of multinational corporate management of common natural resources, the decommodification of health and education, are some of the measures to be directed in the immediate.

However, for these transformations to acquire again a character of revolution, it is necessary to include in the conception of it, simultaneously with the social conquests, to put energy into promoting changes in human interiority.

It is unthinkable to believe that the collective historical struggle towards liberation can be undertaken without modifying the common senses that guide the current actions of the great human groups.

From the perspective of a new humanism, to deepen the endless and unstoppable route from the field of determination to the field of freedom, it is essential to reflect on the deepest meaning of existence and on the need to modify in each home, block and neighborhood, habits imposed by violence, which hinder, slow or reverse progress.

A revolution is needed that couples the transformation of the outer world, that of the inner world of each person, that structures both worlds in the same unit, endowing it with coherence between thinking, feeling and action. In short, an integral revolution, outside and inside, whose advent will not depend on mechanical forces but on the intentionality of the peoples.

May the new year and the tide of history find us strengthened in the task of humanizing and humanizing ourselves, of learning without limits, of overcoming resentment and contradictions and of loving the reality that we build, day by day, of all and for all! So, the new year will be really new.

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Rebelion 31.12.2022