

Elections in Uruguay. Victory for the Frente Amplio

Wednesday 11 December 2024, by [NAVARRO Ruben](#) (Date first published: 30 November 2024).

On Sunday, November 24, the Frente Amplio won the second round of the presidential elections. The ticket made up of Yamandú Orsi and Carolina Cosse obtained 49.8% of the votes compared to 45.9% for the right-wing National Party [1] .

A clear victory. The coalition-movement, as it is statutorily defined, won in 5 of the 19 departments, whereas previously it had only won in the 2 largest cities, Montevideo and Canelones. The FA has 16 of the 30 senators and 48 deputies out of a total of 99.

The FA won in 53 of the 62 neighbourhoods in Montevideo. The 9 neighbourhoods in which the National Party won correspond to the coastal sector, those located “south of Avenida Italia”, a dividing line between the well-off population and the popular sectors that live north of it and in the western part of the Uruguayan capital. Despite this, the percentage distance between the FA and the right-wing coalition in government was shortened between 6 and 13 points in this sector, according to an analysis by the newspaper El Observador on November 27.

When the results were announced, spontaneous demonstrations took place all over the country. After 5 years of right-wing government, the victory of the FA was seen as a relief. The working classes expressed hope in the Orsi-Cosse government. Since Covid, the transfer of wealth to capital at the expense of workers has continued to grow and despite the recent improvement in economic indicators, the working classes have been forced to continue tightening their belts [2]

The evolution of Uruguay’s GDP was above the levels prior to the crisis caused by Covid, but “this evolution did not translate into distributive improvements,” as indicated in the report of the Department of Economics of the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences [3]

Now, “if today, five decades later, in the social bases, the militancy and even a not inconsiderable part of its leadership, these aspirations (of a transformation tending towards socialism) are still alive, it is not evident how this will be transferred to an eventual Frente Amplio government , ” said the journalist Gabriel Delacoste in the weekly *Brecha* on 1/11/2024 [4]

Delacoste’s question is legitimate. The first round of elections, the parliamentary elections and, above all, the plebiscite against the social security reform had taken place on October 27. Internally, the MPP, the majority and most moderate current of the FA led by former President Mujica, was consolidated. This sector opposed the referendum in defense of social security organized by the PIT-CNT trade union and was supported by the PC, the PS and the PVP, parties that claim to be of the working class. These last sectors remained in the minority within the FA. The plebiscite against the pension reform did not obtain a majority, and although almost 40% of Uruguayans voted “Yes”, it was a defeat for the popular movement. [5] This defeat and the new internal reality within the FA, to which must be added the incorporation of dissident and minority sectors of the National Party and some minor figures of the conservative party Cabildo Abierto, led by retired general Manini Ríos,

open few prospects for deep or significant changes.

What are the prospects?

The results - parliamentary elections and plebiscite - have created a gap between the FA and the aspirations of the workers. But this gap is not yet an organised one. The number of blank votes - 38,500 - is certainly a first indication of this. Furthermore, a part of the spoiled votes, which cannot be quantified, probably corresponds to the fact that some voters had expressed their wish to put the "Yes" ballot paper of 27 October in their voting envelope, a way of expressing their rejection of the two candidates present in the second round.

The elected candidate, Yamandú Orsi, expressed his willingness to engage in dialogue on social security, but the statements of the future Minister of the Economy, Gabriel Oddone, are an example of the policy that the next government will follow: "between the [economic proposals of the Frente Amplio](#) and those of the Republican Coalition (right) there were not two radically opposed models of the country, but rather differences in priorities, in the approaches to certain issues and in how to implement changes" [6]. Thus, although one cannot speak of continuity, neither can one expect a rupture.

In statements to the weekly *Búsqueda*, the president of the PIT-CNT trade union said that "points of programmatic convergence" with the government can be found in this period." [7] The position of the workers' union will be analyzed at the next congress, scheduled for mid-May 2025, that is, a month and a half after the installation of the Frente Amplio government on March 1, 2025.

Also at the union level, the Tendencia de Militantes Clasistas, a very small minority, describes the confrontation between the leadership of the PIT-CNT and the leadership of the FA during the campaign for the plebiscite as a "pseudo confrontation" and considers that "it is necessary to continue imagining and fighting for a world where social justice is more than an empty promise" [8].

There is a beginning of a process of recomposition of the popular movement and although it has not yet managed to take shape at the union or political level, it allows us to ask ourselves: Will it remain still while the progressive government resolves its problems? Will it continue to have initiatives such as the plebiscite of the LUC [9] or the one on Social Security when it feels that its expectations are not being met? Will the behavior of the social movements be the same as it was during previous progressive governments? Will there be political space for the recomposition of an anti-capitalist left? These are some of the questions that remain. The answer will come from the measures adopted by the progressive government, but also from the balance of forces that political activists, both within and outside the FA, as well as the labor and popular movement, will manage to impose.

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P.S.

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Footnotes

[1] The FA obtained 49.8 percent of the votes (1,212,833), while the governing coalition obtained 45.9 percent (1,119,537). The difference was 93,296 votes.

[2] See Uruguay – Class conflict is expressed in the social security plebiscite, not in the national elections , Mario Pieri, Press Correspondence, 1-10-2024

[3] An unequal recovery: wage mass and income distribution after the crisis, Department of Economics, Faculty of Economic Sciences and Administration, 17-9-2024
<https://fcea.udelar.edu.uy/blog/8161-una-recuperacion-desigual-masa-salarial-y-distribucion-del-ingreso-despues-de-la-crisis.html>

[4] What is chosen?, Gabriel Delacoste, Brecha, 1-11-2024 <https://brecha.com.uy/que-se-elige/>

[5] See Le référendum en defense de la sécurité sociale au center de la lutte de classes en Uruguay .

[6] What can be expected for the economy after the victory of the Frente Amplio in the Uruguay 2024 Elections, El Observador, 11-25-2024
<https://www.elobservador.com.uy/economia-y-empresas/lo-que-se-puede-esperar-la-economia-el-triunfo-del-frente-amplio-las-elecciones-uruguay-2024-n5971855>

[7] Search, 11-28-2024
<https://www.búsqueda.com.uy/informacion/el-presidente-del-pit-cnt-ve-posibles-puntos-de-convergencia-programatica-el-nuevo-gobierno-n5394606>

[8] Trend Mail, November 2024

[9] On the LUC (Law of Urgent Consideration), see “Despite sustained criticism of the LUC, the Broad Front included few proposals for change among its priorities.”
<https://correspondenciadeprensa.com/?p=43885> . It was adopted in July 2020. The PIT-CNT and the FA, together with other social and political organizations, organized a referendum. It took place in March 2022 and obtained the support of 48.7% of valid votes, so the annulment of the law was rejected.