

Political-Economic Cycles in the Electoral Systems in Ecuador, 2021

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Abstract

This scientific contribution focuses on an interpretation within the framework of a qualitative and quantitative methodology, whose purposes are: in the first instance, to offer readers a brief theoretical perspective about the so-called political-economic cycles from the traditional and modern approach, as well as the macroeconomic objectives and the determining variables that make it up; and second, the presentation of the economic scenario and the results of the careful analysis of the electoral elections held in the Republic of Ecuador on February 7, 2021, in which the first round was held to elect constitutional president and constitutional vice president, to on a par with the election of the members of the legislative power for the period 2021-2025; and, on April 11, 2021, when the ballot was held among the candidates with the highest preference of the voters, as determined by the Political Constitution of Ecuador in its articles 143 and 118, consecrating the postulates of presidentialism as a form of government in democratic political systems under the horizontal dimension referred to by the principle of separation of powers: 1) Basic macroeconomic objectives and determining variables of economic policy; 2) Employment; 3) Price stability; 4) Economic growth.

Keywords

Political-Economic Cycle, Macroeconomic Variables, Electoral System, Employment, Economic Growth, Bibliographic Review

1. Introduction

This scientific contribution aims to offer a brief theoretical perspective about the so-called political-economic cycle from the modern approach, as well as the macroeconomic purposes and the determining variables that make it up; and secondly, the presentation of the economic scenario and the results of the careful

analysis of the electoral elections held in the Republic of Ecuador on February 7, 2021, in which the first round was held to elect constitutional president and constitutional vice president, to on a par with the election of the members of the legislative power for the period 2021-2025; and, on April 11, 2021, when the ballot was held among the candidates with the highest preference of the voters, as determined by the Political Constitution of Ecuador in its articles 143 and 118, thus consecrating the postulates of presidentialism as a form of government in democratic political systems under the horizontal dimension referred to by the principle of separation of powers.

The profile of a naive electorate, without the ability to decide on the lessons learned from the past due to its political “myopia”, nor criteria to avoid future errors, typical of electoral and partisan theories, was the pre-electoral scenario evidenced in Ecuador (Escobar, De Vicente Lama, & De Los Ríos Berjillos, 2016). The macroeconomic figures of the variables were manipulated: unemployment, inflation and GDP according to the partisan convenience of the candidates, declaring the speech that the people expected to hear without technical bases, which was revealed in the debates prior to the first and second lap.

The electoral exercise presented 16 political parties on the ballot that competed for both the presidency and vice-presidency as well as the legislative seats. Such party fragmentation is an obvious problem for the Ecuadorian presidential system because it promotes disagreements and differences between the executive and legislative functions, the president loses force and is forced to rely on an elusive coalition (Nath, 2019).

The electoral results of the first round showed that populism is the prevailing trend in the presidential system, it had a significant number of voters who blindly surrendered to their leader with few arguments, sharing their partisan ideology and motivating emotional adherence based on the principle of loyalty above all (Austin-Smith, 2000). However, in the ballot the consequence of a campaign that dismantled the corrupt acts of the previous regimes was evidenced, generating massive opposition that benefited the conservative party current, inverting the results by granting victory to the leftist binomial that in the first return was in second place with an important percentage difference with respect to the first (Poquet, 2017). Although, in the conceptual development of this work, the political-economic cycles were analyzed, it was shown that the Ecuadorian electoral system obeys the precepts of electoral theory, under the traditional approach (Rose & Mishler, 1998).

In this sense, the contribution of (Geys, 2007) develops an empirical research on Political Business (and Budget) Cycles is more supportive for electoral cycles in policies than in macro-economic outcomes. But even pre-election policy cycles receive no unanimous confirmation. In the present paper, we give credence to recent arguments that this may be due to the disregard for the political, economic and institutional context in which politicians make policy decisions. Specifically, we argue that the level of political fragmentation of the government affects both the need for and possibility to engage in opportunistic policy cycles.

An analysis of local public debt data for 296 Flemish municipalities provides empirical support for this contention.

On the other hand, the research of the authors (Poquet, 2017) establishes that Corruption is one of the most worrying problems currently in Spain. Its damage to the public economy has become visible and unquestionable. Moreover, there is a sense of impunity for the corrupt that de-legitimizes the democratic system and is provoking the political disaffection of many Spaniards. However, there has been some civic response that calls for reforms and there is a proliferation of proposals for measures to combat corruption. These are measures of very diverse nature and scope. This generates a sense of chaos and improvisation. We consider that it is only apparent chaos, that behind these proposals there is a logic that arises from the particular perspective and concern of the one who proposes it. The object of study is the Spanish case of public corruption, although we do not have a precise definition nor with universal validity. It is logical because the phenomena of corruption are complex, multidimensional, with a strong moral burden and each one approaches them in their own way according to their analytical interest. Here we do not propose another one of definition, we are enough with the usual definition umbrella: “abuse of power in private benefit”. In the Spanish case, although corruption itself is not typified, there are crimes of “corrupt type”. However, we have expanded the subject of study beyond the crimes of corruption typified in the law, incorporating other forms of “abuse of power (public) in private benefit” that may even be legal. They are not crimes that a court can judge, but they are “bad manners” of doing things that citizens can punish with their vote, if they want. The approach taken to deal with this issue is based on the fact that the relationship between the citizen and the politician is of “principal-agent” and that it is developed in a market of “lemons”. The Agency Theory, although developed for the private sector, serves to address the issue of delegated responsibility in the field of public policies. In an advanced democracy, each voter decides who has her trust in her to manage their priority interests from public institutions. From that moment on, the citizen (principal) is in the hands of the politician (agent) until the next elections (electoral cycle), during which the agent has to account for his management from him to the principal. Then the citizen can reaffirm his confidence in a certain politician, his questioning or his withdrawal from her. But it is not easy to make that decision because the information is asymmetric: the politician knows what’s really behind his story about him, but the voter not, he only has signals. This refers us to the market of “lemons”. The voter knows that he participates in a political market of lemons, in which the candidates, to win, promise beyond their possibilities and hide their limitations, even lie. The voter’s responses to a politician he distrusts may be mainly: give him another chance (loyalty), claim him to do better (voice) or trust another politician (exit). When he does not trust any politician, the reactions are the same but the consequences not; in this case the exit is of the whole political market (disaffection), the voice calls for changes but not in the political one but in the functioning of the whole system (for ex-

ample, transparency). We are especially interested in the voice, particularly the one that claims less public corruption (both typified and paracorruption). The objective of this work is to order the different proposals in some way that allows us to obtain an overview. To this end we have considered that public corruption is a crime, albeit with specific traits, and we have resorted to Criminology. In particular, we have integrated the Theory of Rational Expectations (TRE) and the Routine Activity Theory (RAT) as working hypothesis. The first allows us to make explicit the rationality of the corrupt. The second allows us to incorporate three key elements: victims, guardians and crime scene. We have adapted TRE + RAT to our object of study: crime is corruption, criminals are corrupt, guardians are those who face corruption, victims are citizens in general and change of routines or lifestyle is, in the Spanish case, the political-institutional reform initiated with the Transition. Combining both theories, we have four basic elements (delinquent, victim, guardian and scene) that explain the most recommended criminal (preventive) policy measures: discouraged potential criminals (motivated offenders), more trained guardians (capable guardianship), restructure crime scenarios to reduce exposure to the risk of crime and educate potential victims to be more careful. Starting from a review (not exhaustive) of the proposals made both for the particular situation of Spain and for this phenomenon in general, he has analyzed the nature of each of them. This analysis has allowed to classify them according to which of the previous elements is affected. In the case of the heart rupt (criminals) four types of proposals have been identified: those that increase the opportunity cost of performing a corrupt act, those that reduce the income obtained with it, those that increase their costs and those that increase the sanctions. With regard to the guardians, four main types have been identified: those proposing more/new guardians and those seeking to increase their effectiveness both police and judicial and deterrent. Regarding the crime scenario, the cycle of public policy, three types have been identified: those that aim to improve this scenario, but also to improve political procedures and actors involved in the cycle. Finally, with regard to the victims, measures have been identified which seek to increase their knowledge of the crime, their ability to fight it and their willingness to act against it. The result obtained is a kind of map that allows to locate the anti-corruption proposals in fourteen different territories, articulated around the cycle of public policies. This map can be a useful tool for the analysis of anti-corruption policies, in particular it facilitates: discovering territories that are left out of the anti-corruption measures (unprotected) and others that are overloaded with measures; identify inconsistencies and incompatibilities between different proposals; detect vicious circles of corruption (more harmful) and virtuous circles of corruption reduction (more effective in the fight against this crime); assess which territories are the most appropriate to concentrate the resources aimed at combating corruption and in which may have an excess; to use a common language in the interdisciplinary discussion, since proposing a map that integrates the political, economic, legal and sociological visions; improve synchronization between measures that have different

maturing times, that is, the political times.

The present scientific contribution exposes the following group of results: 1) Bibliometric study of research related to Political-economic cycles in the electoral systems; 2) Basic macroeconomic objectives and determining variables of economic policy; 3) Employment; 4) Price stability; 5) Economic growth.

2. Materials and Methods

This scientific contribution carries out a bibliometric analysis of the main scientific article-type publications related to the subject, political-economic cycles in electoral systems, subject to the area of public economy. In the Scopus database and using the phrase “political-economic and electoral systems” as search criteria in the title, keywords and summary of the publications. 37,000 contributions were detected, distributed between the years 1988 and 2021, only 12,000 of the totals of these publications are Open Access, and only 300 of the totals of these publications are review type.

According to the statements of (Rose & Mishler, 1998), due to the nature and objective of this document, the methodology used was of a mixed type, since both the quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied; the first, in the analysis of macroeconomic figures of the dependent variables: unemployment, inflation and GDP, the same ones that make up the political-economic cycles; and, the second, by exploring the behavior of the candidates during the campaign offers that were largely the product of political and social pressure to win over supporters of party tendencies; and, of the voters, who, immersed in the precepts of electoral theory, reveal their political “myopia” when electing their representatives.

The exposed methodological application demanded, on the one hand, that specialized documentation be reviewed based on primary sources that included books, articles, official documents of Ecuador, which allowed identifying the conceptual basis that supports the emergence and incidence of electoral interests in the electoral cycles. politico-economic. The economic scenario prior to the elections was presented based on the results of the variables: inflation rate, unemployment rate and economic growth rate; Finally, the official results of the electoral elections obtained in the first and second rounds of the Ecuador-2021 elections, contributed to the debate on the existence of electoral, partisan or rational partisan cycles, based on the recent Ecuadorian electoral experience (Bravo Hidalgo & León González, 2018).

In addition, virtual dialogue tables and conversations were participated in, the public debates carried out by presidential candidates in the first round and in the ballot were analyzed to analyze the plans of proposed governments and monitor the preferences of the voters during the presidential elections carried out in the Republic of Ecuador in two rounds, on February 7 and April 11, 2021 to elect constitutional president and constitutional vice president for the period 2021-2025; and, the legislative elections, on a par with the first presidential round.

On this basis, important conclusions are unfolded about the Ecuadorian political-economic cycle and electoral interests, considering the use and political interpretation that were given to the economic figures of the determining variables mentioned in previous lines, within the framework of party fractionation and the difficulty in establishing legislative coalitions, as a trigger for possible deinstitutionalization and ungovernability.

3. Bibliometric Study of Research Related to Political-Economic Cycles in the Electoral Systems

Within the Scopus database, the five scientific journals that most socialize research related to this topic, in the last 21 years, are presented in **Figure 1**. It can be seen that in the last year the journal Sustainability Switzerland is the one that publications present related to political-economic and electoral systems.

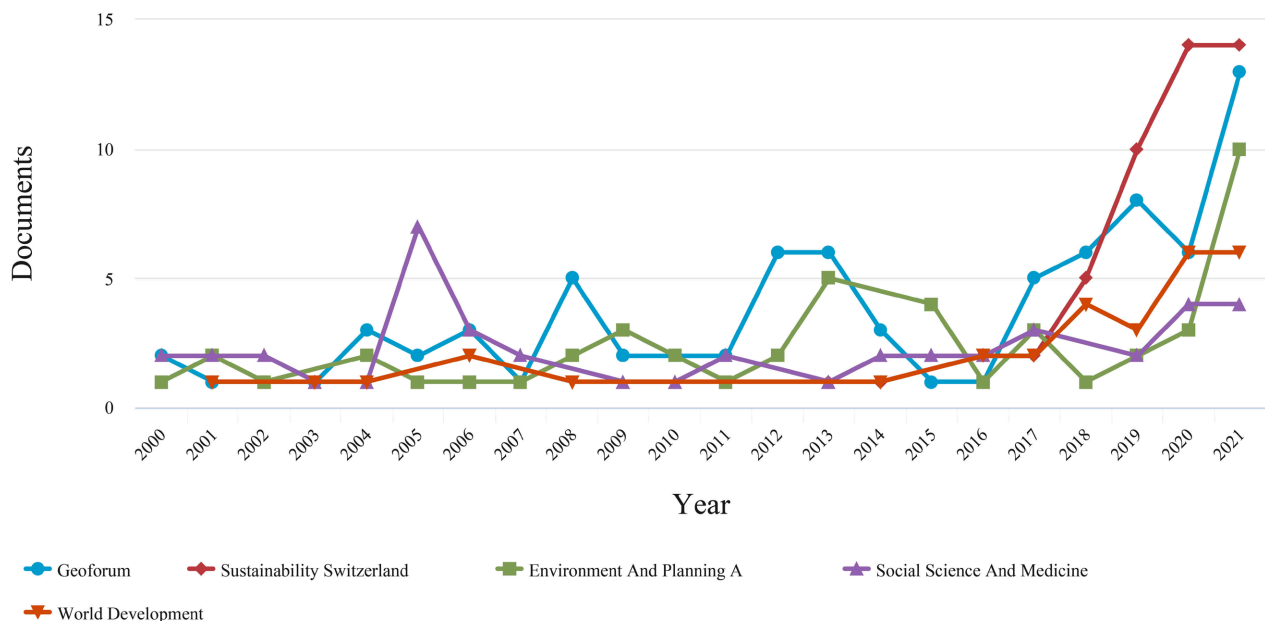
The countries that have published the most scientific contributions on this tetanus in the last 21 years within the Scopus database are the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Germany. **Figure 2** shows the amount of research published by country or territory, in the previously declared period of time.

The lines of research most worked on by researchers on the subject of political-economic cycles in electoral systems are: Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, and Economics. **Figure 3** shows the percentage distribution of the investigative

Documents per year by source

Scopus

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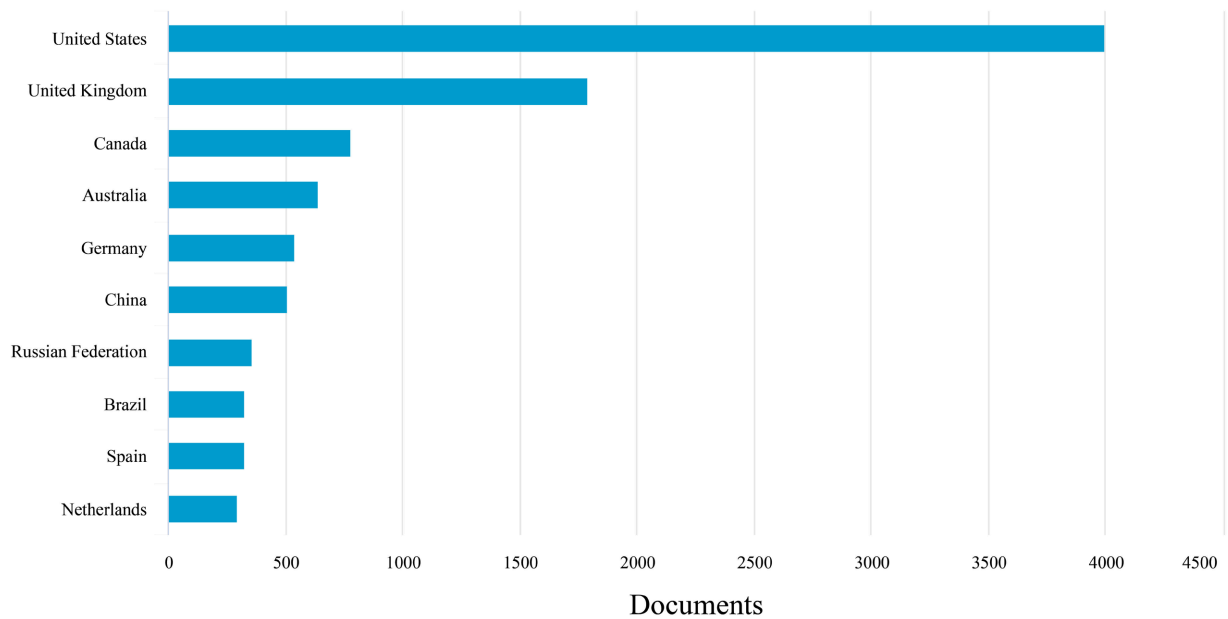
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Figure 1. Documents per year by source.

Documents by country or territory

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

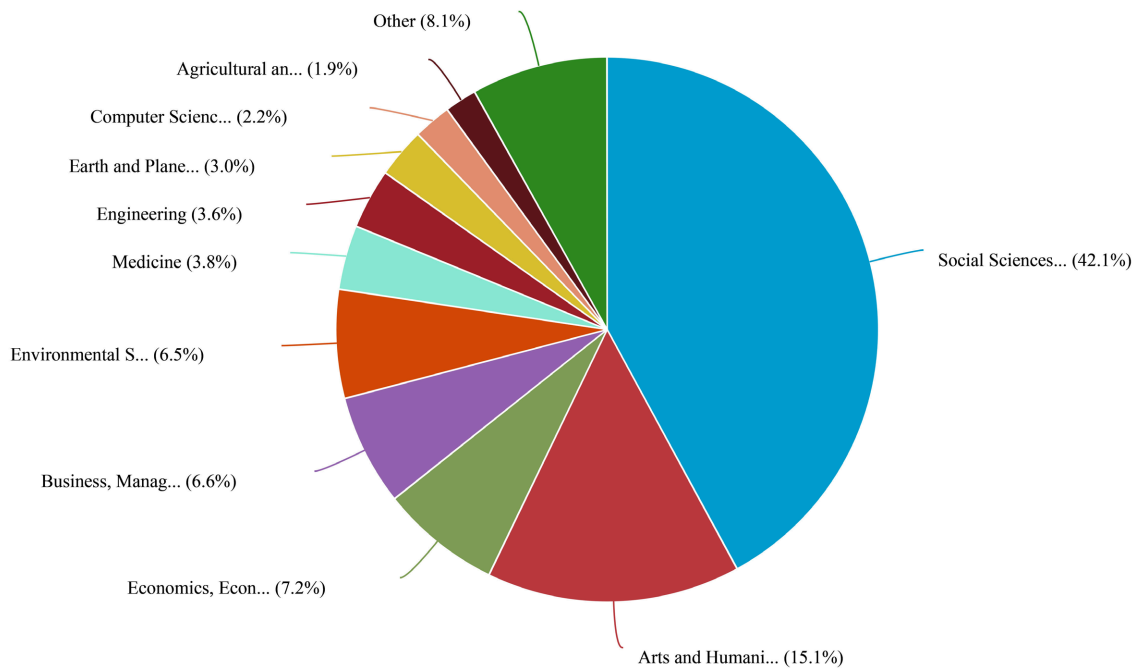


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Figure 2. Documents by country or territory.

Documents by subject area

Scopus



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Figure 3. Documents by subject area.

areas in which the 37,000 publications detected in the Scopus database are focused, under the previously declared search criteria.

There is a growing trend in the number of publications related to this line of research. This is due to the increased interest of the international scientific community regarding this subject. **Figure 4** shows how the scientific contributions published in journals contained in the Scopus database have evolved quantitatively, in the time period 2000-2021.

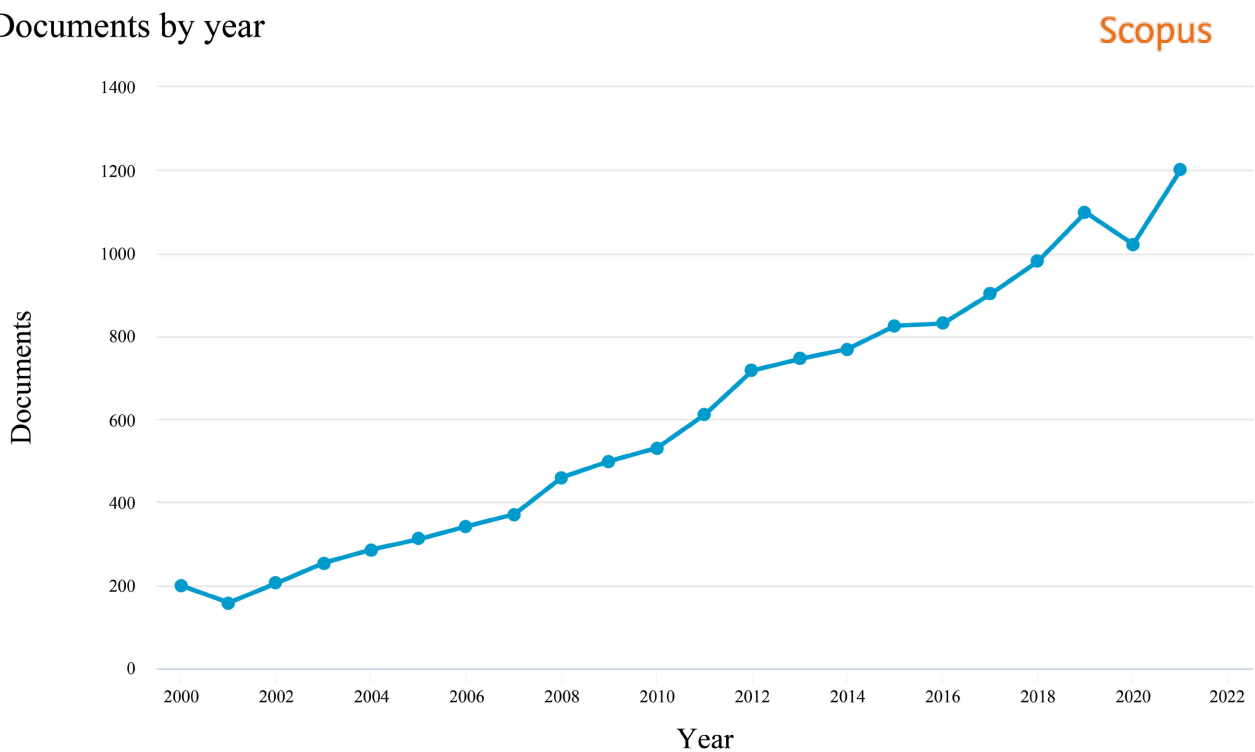
Figure 5 shows the most productive authors in this line of research or theme. Some of them are cited in this scientific contribution.

4. Basic Macroeconomic Objectives and Determining Variables of Economic Policy

In the scientific contribution (Racz, 2003) he points out that, “Although economic policy as one of the fields of applied economic theory is as old as economic science itself, the more systematic treatment of it that means the Economic policy theory” began much more recently, closely related to econometric developments, which determined a formal line of economic policy development.

The economic policy paradigms constitute elementary orientations that concentrate their attention on the identification of independent variables (economic policy instruments and exogenous variables) and dependent variables (economic policy objectives). The role of these paradigms is very important because they decisively limit the complexity of reality to a reduced set of aspects. In this way,

Documents by year



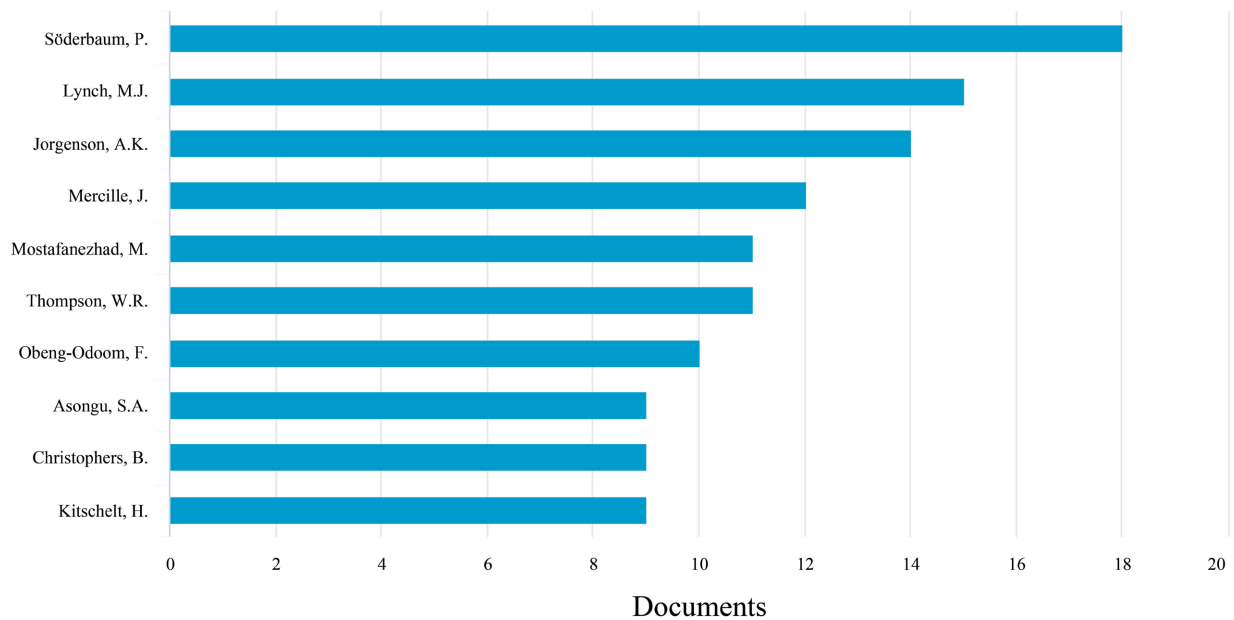
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Figure 4. Documents by year.

Documents by author

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.



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Figure 5. Documents by author.

the diagnosis and the formulation of strategies for the elaboration of economic policies are facilitated (Silva, 2018; Valdez Zepeda, Viramontes Saldivar, & Finol, 2016).

Based on the aforementioned statement and on the numerous concepts that have been poured around the definition of economic policy, it is identified that such definitions are made up of four common elements: the existence of an authority, be it called the central or local government, the objectives pursued, the actions developed by said authority in the economic field and the means used to achieve the proposed objectives (Lopez, 2008).

The challenge for all governments lies in achieving economic stability, which is not easy to achieve because it requires the intervention of highly qualified personnel with vast experience in managing and interpreting macroeconomic variables, capable of offering valid technical elements for decision-making, of decisions. The variables analyzed are: full employment, price stability, economic growth factors and external balance (Eccleston et al., 2018).

4.1. Employment

Economic stability fundamentally refers to two types of market: the market for goods and services and the labor market, in the latter the objective of full employment is immersed, which is determined by the supply and demand of the labor market, while the production is in the goods and services sector (Hawkins, 2011); being the counterweight of this section is determined by unemployment

which according to (Kasapović, 2012) unemployment is the greatest weakness of the market economy system.

Full employment is the basic pillar of Keynesian-style politics, considered the main objective of government policy (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2015), so when it comes to electoral processes, this aspect is the one that generates the most interest, in the voters because the whole society is interested in having a decent job that allows a life in satisfactory conditions of an individual and family nature. On the other hand, it is important to point out that the unemployment rate is a determining economic variable in the measurement of the levels of well-being achieved in the population, demanding detailed attention and monitoring by professionals in the field, because, if it is high or is on a rising trend, denotes the weakening of the economy and its disastrous psychological and socioeconomic consequences on the unemployed.

Unemployment is a countercyclical type variable, the importance of monitoring it lies in two fundamental aspects: first, it reveals whether the national or local economy is developing at normal levels; and the second, because through the early or timely detection of the aforementioned problem, it allows the adoption of solution strategies that are visualized through the public policies of a country (Bishop, Corbett, & Veenendaal, 2020).

The analysis of the labor market is essential considering its relationship and impact on production, wages, savings and the economic cycle (Basáñez, 2018). Understanding and monitoring labor indicators contributes to the design of public policies. In this segment, the analysis of the variation of the unemployment rate at the national (Ecuador) and local level (Quito, city of residence of the undersigned) will be carried out, in order to evaluate its behavior in the last five years 2015-2019, for which, previously and concisely, a review of the conceptual basis and basic terminology will be made.

4.2. Price Stability

Although price stability has been a topic dealt with since ancient times, its emergence dates back to recent decades as one of the objectives of economic policy where it is presented as the effect of a balanced trend in the economy. Therefore, price stability reflects “the lack of important variations in prices in an economy, and therefore, the permanence of the general level of prices over time” (Gałuszka, Gałuszka, & Libor, 2013). The negative or opposite factor is represented by inflation, which in turn derives effects such as deflation and disinflation.

Several specialists in economic science agree in defining inflation as the sustained process of raising the general level of prices that leads to the consequence of a decrease in the purchasing power of the currency or purchasing power; while deflation is the opposite, it occurs when there is a process of sustained decline in the general level of prices; and, disinflation constitutes the decrease in the rate of inflation in the rate of growth of prices (Facal, 2020).

4.3. Economic Growth

The publications (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2015) point out that there are numerous post-Keynesian contributions that highlight the importance of investment in the expansion of the national product of nations, studies and research were developed that refer both to the economic evolution of nations in the long term, and to the causes and consequences of economic backwardness. Subsequently, the growing use of the expressions economic growth and economic development could be noted, both in public discourses and in the academic field of the Anglo-Saxon countries, as similar terms or synonyms.

Despite the indisputable and copious bibliography that conceptualizes the theme and proposes different treatments from different schools of thought of classical and neoclassical, Marxist, neo-Marxist or structuralist origin; or, from those derived from the so-called “world system”, it is necessary to differentiate each of the expressions under study (Bishop, Corbett, & Veenendaal, 2020).

Economic growth is known as the process of sustained increase in the total of goods and services produced by a society over time. For this purpose, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or National Income and statistical measures are adopted as a unit of measurement, related. For international comparisons of well-being, the increase in per-capita product is the relevant magnitude, unequivocal and symptomatic of the existence of «growth», it is important to explain that there is extensive and intensive growth; understanding by extensive growth when the global increase in income is considered without weighting that of the population; and, intensive growth refers to the increase in the product or per capita income of the country under analysis.

Complementing the above, it is pertinent to cite the contribution of the renowned economist Albert O. Hirschman, who conceptualizes economic growth as the increase in a country's products and services. On the other hand, Economic Development focuses on the quality of life of the inhabitants of a given nation or region, understood as: level of education, health, services, security, technological increase (Hawkins, 2011).

As a conclusive aspect, it points out that there is an appreciation that “economic growth would generate restrictions that would end abuses of power, unjust exactions and, in short, despotism” (Lopez, 2008).

Economic development refers to the existence of economic growth accompanied by structural changes. From the point of view of Kuznets, economic development is typified by the growth of the product per inhabitant or eventually per man employed, accompanied by structural changes in the productive sectors, employment or the proportion of factors (Basáñez, 2018).

In other words, economic development includes the ability of a country to generate wealth, which should be reflected in the quality of life of citizens, therefore, this expression is related to the productive capacity of the nation. However, it is important to rescue the notion of development in two dimensions: that of development as a process and that of development as a state or sit-

uation. The first refers to the dynamic evolution of an economy over time. The second allows qualifying in a static time frame, situations of development and non-development or underdevelopment, which obviously implies less development for the latter than others, particularly with respect to a group that is taken as a model or pattern. In terms of countries, we are facing the dichotomy of our time (Lopez, 2008).

Finally, it should also be associated with the terms studied, the explanation of the meaning of economic progress, which could be confused with the meanings of progress and development; however, the difference in Olivera's opinion cited in (Silva, 2018; Valdez Zepeda, Viramontes Saldivar, & Finol, 2016) involves a value judgment: it is the transition from one state of the economy to another that is judged more satisfactory, the move in a direction that is considered positive. In this order of ideas, it is clear that there can be growth without development and there can also be development without progress. The underlying idea in such differentiation is that growth and development, unlike progress, are concepts that, in principle, are not chained to ethical norms.

Another reason why the terms growth and development are not similar to progress is that the growth of per capita income does not indicate anything about the distribution of said income, adding that the good or bad distribution of income is a normative issue.

Concluding the topic, the motions presented by (Eccleston et al., 2018) are brought up, which points out that economic growth is perhaps the best weapon to fight against the poverty of the people, reduces scarcity and allows the well-being generated by the access to goods and services. It constitutes a key factor that builds long-term success, the basic reasons that mark its importance being the following:

- It allows the increase in the standard of living of the population;
- Sustained GDP growth will allow countries to come out of underdevelopment;
- Facilitates the reduction of unemployment;
- It allows a better and fairer redistribution of wealth;
- Motivates the sustainability of productive resources.

5. Conclusion

The Ecuadorian electoral process revealed how politicians can try to strategically manipulate the performance of the economy in order to win votes to be elected or to achieve certain partisan objectives. The content of the government plans lacked conjunctural political-economic foundations, degrading to a basic level with campaign promises that were difficult and impossible to fulfill in an economy deteriorated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The profile of a naive electorate, unable to decide on the lessons learned from the past due to its political "myopia", nor to avoid future errors, typical of electoral and partisan theories, was the pre-electoral scenario evidenced in Ecuador, in which the economic

indicators were manipulated according to the partisan convenience of the candidates, declaring the speech that the people expect to hear, which was revealed in the debates prior to the first and second rounds.

The parallel election mechanism of the executive and legislative can turn them into natural opponents, leading to confrontation and little collaboration between the two powers, revealing a disastrous political scenario in which the motivations of the decisions adopted respond to short-term partisan interests. The electoral results of the first round showed that populism is the prevailing trend in the presidential system, it had a significant number of voters who blindly surrendered to their leader with few arguments, sharing their partisan ideology and motivating emotional adherence based on the principle of loyalty above all. However, in the ballot the consequence of a campaign that dismantled the corrupt acts of the previous regimes was evidenced, generating massive opposition that benefited the opposition party current, inverting the results by granting victory to the binomial in the first round. It was in second place with a significant percentage difference with respect to the first.

Party fragmentation is an obvious problem for the presidential system because it promotes disagreements and differences between the legislative and executive functions, the president loses strength and is forced to rely on a coalition. In Ecuador, one of the ways to alleviate the pressures on the prevailing system would be to execute amendments to the corresponding legal body, in order to limit the significant fragmentation of the party system. The existence of a government with a clear minority in the seats of the assembly constitutes a danger for the Ecuadorian political-economic system, because the ghost of deinstitutionalization and ungovernability could be visualized and influence the implementation of decisions and public policies. The foundation and practice of political-economic cycles should be considered as susceptible to new research from complementary and alternative perspectives that motivate (force) politicians to develop knowledge and skills in the analysis of economic indicators to support their government plans, and promote effective decision-making; and, in the voters, encourage criticality when choosing their constituents.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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