

## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---



The candidate lists are now set for Ecuador's February 17, 2013 elections. Current president Rafael Correa formerly registered his candidacy on November 12 by leading a sea of supporters on bicycles dressed in the green colors of his party Alianza País (AP) to the offices of the National Electoral Council (CNE).

While the reelection of Rafael Correa may seem to be a foregone conclusion, the eight candidates competing for the office point to the ongoing fragmented and volatile nature of Ecuadorian politics.

To win outright, Correa must win either a simple majority of the popular vote, or at least 40 percent of the vote with at least 10 points over his closest challenger.

Currently conservative Guillermo Lasso is Correa's closest challenger and the one most likely to push the election into a second runoff race. Polls give Correa 46 percent of the vote, and Lasso 19 percent of the vote.

## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---

Correa's most serious challenge from the left comes from his former ally and fellow economist Alberto Acosta. Acosta currently comes in fourth in the polls with about 7 percent of the vote, although indications are that his support is rising.

### The Left Opposition

Acosta led a march of his supporters to the CNE the day after Correa's inscription. Along the way, the candidate made eight stops representing the key themes of his campaign: the rights of nature, the role of women, food sovereignty, freedom of expression, sexual and reproductive rights, a fight against corruption, defense of the Yasuní National Park, and cultural diversity.

Acosta is running as the candidate of the Coordinadora Plurinacional por la Unidad de las Izquierdas (Plurinational Coordinating Body for the Unity of the Left).

Acosta as the candidate of *Montecristi Vive* (Montecristi Lives) won a September 1 primary against five other challengers. The other candidates were Azuay's provincial prefect Paúl Carrasco of Poder Ciudadano (Citizen Power);

## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

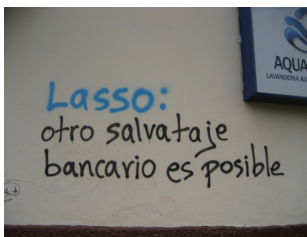
Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---

Zamora Chinchipe perfect Salvador Quishpe of the center-left Indigenous movement Pachakutik ; Manuel Salgado of Socialismo , a dissident wing of the socialist party; Lenin Hurtado of the maoist Movimiento Popular Democrático (MPD, Popular Democratic Movement); and Gustavo Larrea of Participación (Participation).

Some of these leftist dissidents were initially strong Correa supporters but later had a falling out with him over his neo-extractivist policies and growing authoritarianism. Other social movement activists do not trust Correa to represent their interests because he did not emerge out of their ranks.

Although Acosta's supporters recognize that their chances for victory remain slim, they hope that their campaign serves to push Correa in a positive and leftist direction. Some Correa supporters criticize Acosta for running on a platform similar to that of the president but without the charisma and political strategizing they believe is necessary to implement such policies.



The Right Opposition

## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---

Five candidates are challenging Correa's reelection from the right. Their failure to rally behind a single candidate points to disparate economic interests that divide the oligarchy. A collapse of the country's traditional political parties allowed Correa's initial election in 2006 and his rapid consolidation of power. In comparison, the left provides a much better organized and more coherent challenge to the Correa administration.

Correa's most popular challenger is the photogenic banker Guillermo Lasso, who is running with a new political party Movimiento Creando Oportunidades (CREO, Movement Creating Opportunities). Correa has attempted to associate Lasso with corruption in the banking industry in 1999 that led to the collapse of Jamil Mahuad's government.

Lasso is the author of the book *Otro Ecuador es Posible* (Another Ecuador is Possible), whose title plays on the theme of the World Social Forum and points the ability of conservative populist candidates to capitalize on leftist discourse. Lasso's candidacy appeals to the clientelistic nature of the Ecuadorian electorate. An early campaign promise was to raise a monthly human development bond that provides poor people with payments from \$35 to \$50 a month.

Correa promptly undercut Lasso's platform by pushing through congress an emergency measure that increases payments by that amount before the election. Pachakutik and MPD criticized the bill as a neoliberal style handout, while assembly member Gilmar Gutiérrez promised that if his brother Lucio were elected in February the amount would be raised to \$65.

## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---

Lasso also attempted to coopt support from the left by naming Auki Tituaña as his running mate. Tituaña had been a popular Indigenous mayor of the northern highland town of Cotacachi before losing the last election to a member of Correa's Alianza País party.

Tituaña had previously competed unsuccessfully for the presidential slot on the Pachakutik ticket, and for the leadership position of the powerful Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador).

Tituaña's candidacy promptly led to calls for his expulsion from both Pachakutik and CONAIE, and strong declarations from Indigenous movements that despite their disagreements with the Correa administration they would never ally with the political right.

The CNE, however, disqualified Tituaña's candidacy because of his failure to resign from Pachakutik as required 90 days before attempting to register as the candidate of a competing party.

### The Usual Suspects

Currently ranking third in the polls is previous president Lucio Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez emerged on the political scene in 2000 when he led a failed coup attempt against neoliberal president Jamil Mahuad. He subsequently won election as president with leftist support in 2002, but soon had a falling out with his base when he implemented neoliberal economic policies similar to those against which he had previously rallied.

Massive street protests from urban middle class sectors led to Gutiérrez's removal in 2005. Those sectors now form Correa's base of support. Before Lasso's rise, Gutiérrez presented Correa with his most serious conservative electoral opposition.

At the tail end of the pack are previous power brokers Álvaro Noboa and Abdalá Bucaram. After repeatedly coming in second place in the vote, this is banana magnate Noboa's fifth and hopefully last attempt to gain office.

Former president Bucaram was removed from office in 1997 after implementing strident neoliberal economic measures. He has spent the last fifteen years living in Panama. His populist and clientelistic style always played well with the Ecuadorian electorate and for a while it seemed as if he could easily win reelection were he to return. However, it now appears that Lasso has taken over that space.

## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---

The CNE excluded Bucaram's candidacy on a technicality, although some suspect an underlying political motivation because he would appeal to poor urban voters who are critical to Correa's electoral success.

In Bucaram's stead, the conservative evangelical pastor Nelson Zavala will run for the presidency. Zavala campaigned against the progressive 2008 constitution because of what he considered its immoral stances on abortion and gay marriage.

Ironically, a dissident leftist group is also running against Correa because of perceived shortcomings in the 2008 constitution. Norman Wray is the candidate of Ruptura de los 25 (R25, Rupture of the 25), a group of progressives who were dissatisfied with Ecuador's direction 25 years after return to civilian rule in 1979.

R25 is campaigning in support of hot button social issues such as abortion rights and gay marriage. Correa, who is a strong Catholic, opposes such measures. R25 failed to ally with Acosta's leftist coalition because of its primary emphasis on economic rather than social issues.

## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---



### Probable Outcomes

While most leftist dissidents to the Correa administration would never consider allying with a conservative opposition, many are hoping that Correa does not win in the first round because it could provide a check on his growing authoritarianism and neo-extractivist policies. A tight race might serve to make the president more responsive to social movement demands.

Polls also indicate that Correa's Alianza País may also lose its control over the congress. Particularly in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city, poor urban dwellers have been splitting their votes between Correa at the top and conservative candidates further down the ballot.

A leftist fear is that a minority congress will not push Correa to rebuild alliances with estranged allies in the MPD and Pachakutik and that he will instead turn to conservatives for support. An unfortunate outcome of that development would be to push a third Correa administration further to the right.



## Ecuador's Election: Correa, His Opponents, and Possible Outcomes

Written by Marc Becker

Tuesday, 27 November 2012 11:47

---

An indication of the possible direction of the next Correa administration is the selection of his running mate. Current vice president Lenin Moreno declined to run for another term. Moreno is a paraplegic who has served to raise international attention to disability issues.

In his place, Correa's running mate is Jorge Glas, an electrical engineer and technocrat who has served in various ministries. Glas' election is intended to contribute to a promised revolution in knowledge, science and technology.

Marc Becker is the author of *Pachakutik: Indigenous Movements and Electoral Politics in Ecuador* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., updated paperback edition, 2012). He was in Ecuador for a conference on the history and sociology of the Ecuadorian lefts.