



Winfried Weck is Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Ecuador.

ELECTIONS IN ECUADOR

PRESIDENT CORREA'S ELECTION VICTORY ALLOWS FOR UNLIMITED CONTINUATION OF THE "PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION"

Winfried Weck

The incumbent president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, won the 17 February 2013 presidential election with 57.17 per cent of all votes in the first ballot with no problems, achieving an absolute majority and clearly prevailing over his seven fellow contenders. At the same, his movement Alianza PAÍS itself won a two-thirds majority in the Asamblea Nacional, Ecuador's national parliament.

Virtually no one in and around Ecuador was in doubt that Rafael Correa would be re-elected as president. The question was simply: how great a victory would he achieve, would a second ballot be necessary, and how would the majority ratios themselves be established in a likewise newly-elected parliament? Although the official final result of the presidential elections was announced by the National Electoral Council (Consejo Nacional Electoral, CNE) on 8 March, the first election night projections had already proved to be true based on the distinctiveness of the results: Rafael Correa and his vice-presidential candidate, Jorge Glas, emerged from the first ballot as the clear winners with 57.17 per cent. The middle-class candidate, Guillermo Lasso, who had stood for election for the first time with his new political movement, CREO, followed as the runner-up and gained 22.68 per cent. On the one hand, that is a dramatic 34 percentage points below Correa's sterling results; on the other hand, Lasso could clearly distance himself from the other candidates with these results. Former President Lucio Gutiérrez won third place with only 6.73 per cent, followed by the second middle-class candidate, Mauricio Rodas, with 3.90 per cent, the banana magnate, Álvaro Noboa, with 3.72 per cent, the socialist collective candidate, Alberto Acosta, with 3.26 per cent,

the social democrat, Norman Wray, with 1.31 per cent, and finally the pastor Nelson Zavala with 1.23 per cent.

Table 1

Results of the 2013 parliamentary elections in Ecuador

Candidate	Votes	Share in per cent	Men pro rata	Share in per cent	Women pro rata	Share in per cent
Rafael Correa Delgado	4,918,482	57.17	2,390,913	56.54	2,527,569	57.79
Guillermo Lasso	1,951,102	22.68	977,474	23.12	973,628	22.26
Lucio Gutiérrez	578,875	6.73	308,806	7.30	270,069	6.17
Mauricio Esteban Rodas Espinel	335,532	3.90	144,358	3.41	191,174	4.37
Álvaro Noboa	319,956	3.72	166,202	3.93	153,754	3.52
Alberto Acosta	280,539	3.26	139,505	3.30	141,034	3.22
Norman Wray	112,525	1.31	51,818	1.23	60,707	1.39
Nelson Zavala	105,592	1.23	49,656	1.17	55,936	1.28

Source: CNE Ecuador.

In his first statements, Rafael Correa declared that he values this verdict of the electorate as a mandate to continue his government's so far successful economic course. At the same time, he surprised the audience of the Columbian radio station *LaFM*, which was the first foreign station he gave an interview with, with the declaration that he would not run for the presidency again in 2017 because the Ecuadorian constitution does not allow a third successive term of office. With this statement to a non-Ecuadorian station of all things, Correa has apparently particularly rejected the supposition discussed in international circles that, should he win a new term in 2013, he would change the constitution in order to be able to run again in 2017.¹

1 | At the same time, it can be taken as a political signal of good neighbourly relations that he straight away granted a Columbian station his first interview instead of a Venezuelan or Cuban radio station. In the same interview, Correa committed himself to Ecuadorian-Columbian relations, which, "despite all of the ideological differences" between his government and that of Columbian president Santos, would find itself in an "extraordinary momentum" (*El Comercio*, 19 Feb 2013). It is possible that this interview also represents a further indication that it is not in Correa's main interest to adopt the >

Guillermo Lasso presented himself as the polling day's second winner and wants to take over the opposition leadership. However, Mauricio Rodas also sees himself in this role.

The other important news item had already come on the evening of election from the runner-up, Guillermo Lasso, who gave his press conference from the country's biggest

city, Guayaquil. "We started at zero and rose to the second-strongest political power in Ecuador", said Lasso, who presented himself as the polling day's second winner. He said he wants to take over the opposition leadership himself. However, the second candidate from the middle-class opposition, the young lawyer Mauricio Rodas, also sees himself in this role. He regards the nearly four per cent of the votes he was able to pull in as a great success, and an incentive to continue his political project, SUMA, and to strengthen it nationally.

A SECURE TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT

The future composition of the Asamblea Nacional is not only a consequence of the clear victory of the Alianza PAÍS presidential movement, which in total received about 52 per cent of the vote,² but is also the result of a combination of the new voting system according to national and provincial tickets and the newly implemented counting procedures in accordance with the D'Hondt method for the allocation of the most parliamentary seats, which normally favours larger parties. Because of these electoral regulations, 100 of the 137 parliamentary seats (72 per cent) will fall to the Alianza PAÍS. As such, it has a two-thirds majority and could also approve constitutional changes without a coalition partner. The electoral council, CNE, took a lot of time to make the count. They wanted to avoid at all

leading role of the Latin American new left and ALBA in the future. He has not only made several public statements against such requests, but also the term "socialism" virtually never appears in his political discourse, which is shaped by nationalism.

2 | Because of electoral law, which allows for a different counting formula for the 15 representatives elected through national tickets (Webster) than for the 103 elected through provincial tickets (D'Hondt), the CNE also has no overall result for the parliamentary elections in percentages. For the elections of the 15 representatives on the national level, Alianza PAÍS was allotted 53.17 per cent, CREO 11.56 per cent, PSC 9.35 per cent, PRE 4.98, PSP 4.97 per cent, Unity of the Lefts 4.71 per cent, SUMA 3.34 per cent, Avanza 2.88 per cent, PRIAN 2.73 per cent, Ruptura 2.51 per cent, and the Socialist Party 0.73 per cent.

costs the fatal errors that crept in during the registration process for the political parties and movements, a requirement for participation in the elections, which aroused harsh and cynical criticism.³ The official final result and the list of all of the parliamentarians entering the Asamblea Nacional were first made public together on 27 March, 38 days after the election on 17 February. However, the projection produced by the non-governmental organisation Participación Ciudadana (citizens' participation), a partner of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, anticipated the the final result (at least in its amount and impact) just 30 hours after the polling stations closed.

The new middle-class movement, CREO (Lasso), accordingly won eleven seats, followed by the Partido Social Cristiano (PSC, which already agreed to a coalition with CREO before the elections, but will not proceed with it in parliament) with six seats, and former President Gutiérrez's populist party, PSP, with five seats. Likewise, both the indigenous population's socialist-oriented political representation, called Pachakutik (as part of the Unity of the Lefts), as well as the new left-leaning movement supported by Rafael Correa, Avanza, won five seats. Former President Bucaram's traditional PRE and presidential candidate Mauricio Rodas' new centre movement, SUMA, each earned one seat. The remaining three seats are divided among regional movements.

POLITICAL FRAMEWORK BEFORE THE ELECTIONS

Ecuador's presidential democracy developed into a presidential autocracy under the aegis of Rafael Correa. What became apparent with the dissolution of parliament and the composition of a new constitution in 2007 has since intensified to a greater extent: the concentration of state power with the person in the presidency. On the one hand, this can be attributed to the structure of his personality, on the other hand to his political action. Correa's self-definition is not

The concentration of state power with the person in the presidency has become ever more apparent since 2007.

3 | The head of the CNE, Domingo Peres, had already announced on the day after the elections that the national electoral council would issue no provisional results or even projections concerning the parliamentary elections until 100 per cent of all the votes were counted and all the elected representatives were confirmed, which would take up several days.

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shaped by his own political profile, but rather by combating any form of criticism of his administration as an attack on his personal honour and his proclaimed *revolución ciudadana* (people's revolution), his political programme's motto. His form of policymaking has meanwhile led to the political neutralisation of the unicameral parliament, to consolidation of the institutional judiciary powers, and is therefore accompanied by exercising constitutional provisions *al gusto*, leading additionally to the exclusion of organised civil society as a critical mass, and to extensive limitations on freedoms of opinion and press. There can be no further question of a separation of the five powers – in addition to the executive, legislative, and judicial powers, the 2008 Ecuadorian constitution introduced two additional state powers: the National Electoral Council ('electoral' power), and various institutions for transparency and social control (from which civil society has derived its constitutional character). Today the executive *and* legislative powers in Ecuador are concentrated in one person, Rafael Correa, and judicial independence must also be called into question.

The national parliament – referred to as the Asamblea Nacional for the first time in the 2008 constitution – is de facto politically irrelevant for three reasons: first, the president rules by legislative decree, which has always been effected by the previous government's coalition majority (Correa's movement Alianza PAÍS, as well as two other left-wing parties), and through declarations of states of emergency. In fact, the Ecuadorian constitution only accepts conventional reasons for declaring a state of emergency, such as in the event of war or a natural catastrophe, but the president fully avails himself of these instruments in all political spheres, from sport to parliament itself. There are currently more than 180 state of emergency declarations in force, although the constitutional logic only provides for *one* national emergency. Even the budgeting authority, as well as financial control have devolved from parliament to the president through states of emergency. The parliament is therefore currently excluded from any political or budgetary participation in more than 180 policy areas. The parliamentary governing majority has blocked every attempt by the opposition to call this procedure into question. This

leads us to the second reason for the parliament's powerlessness: with the governing coalition operating free from criticism, and because of the complete discord between the opposition groups, especially due to the prioritisation of individual representatives' personal interests, the representatives, their factions, and ultimately the entire Asamblea have been disavowed in the eyes of the public.

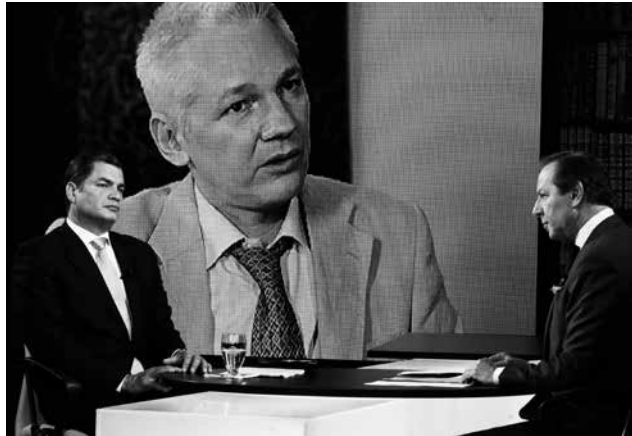
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The incidents surrounding the verdict reached in the case of the citizen, Rafael Correa, versus the owners and editor of the *El Universo* daily newspaper in September 2011 further clearly demonstrated the state of affairs regarding freedom of the press, as well as due process and legal stability in Ecuador.⁴

Freedom of the press in the sense of what is understood by European and North American democratic thought no longer exists in Ecuador today. In the 7th year of *correismo*, critical commentary free from government intervention has become very difficult. Journalists who speak critically of the president's policies are officially labelled as hostiles and threats to the president himself or to his administration. The *Universo* case is the most blatant and most internationally well-known example of this development, but is certainly not the only case. Critical TV and radio stations or newspapers have been closed or confiscated by the government; critical editors-in-chief have been

4 | Because the editor of the largest Ecuadorian daily newspaper, *Universo*, had labelled the president as a dictator multiple times in an opinion piece, he brought these legal proceedings against him and the newspaper's three owners and claimed 80 million U.S. dollars in damages for pain and suffering. After the investigation was closed by the public prosecutor's office in July 2011, the judge in charge astonishingly needed only two days to read through the 6,000 pages of the investigation files and to sentence the *Universo* defendants three years' imprisonment and to pay a penalty of 40 million U.S. dollars. The facts of this case became even juicier when *Universo*'s lawyer found out that the document of the verdict was not stored on the judge's hard drive, but had instead been externally transferred via USB, and in fact was in a software format (Chucky Seven) that was not used by the court, but was used by Correa's lawyers. Regardless of this, the conviction was upheld two months later by a judicial committee by a two-to-one vote.

confronted with death threats. The government's media apparatus, which was limited to one single radio station (*Radio Nacional de Ecuador*) at the start of Correa's term in office, today comprises five TV stations, four radio stations, three daily newspapers, four magazines, and one press association at the national level. In addition, all broadcast media are regularly obligated to broadcast the president's official statements simultaneously on all channels. Between January 2007 and May 2011, a total of 1,025 of these *cadena*s were broadcast, with a total air time of more than 150 hours. The *cadena*s, which originally served the purpose of circulating important announcements during emergency situations, are used today as means of propaganda and confrontation. This was all the more transparent and evident during the publicity hype surrounding the scurrilous political romance between Rafael Correa and Julian Assange in the summer of 2012. The WikiLeaks founder had taken refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in order to evade extradition to Sweden, where he had to face charges due to sexual allegations. To this day he remains in this self-imposed exile. An Ecuadorian journalist summed up this farce quite simply: if Assange were Ecuadorian, he would already have been jailed long ago.



Rafael Correa in an interview about Julian Assange: The WikiLeaks founder had taken refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in order to evade extradition to Sweden. | Source: © Santiago Armas, Presidencia Ecuador, dpa.

Freedom of the press is not the only thing in danger; even the preservation of freedom of expression is in jeopardy. For currently nearly 200 people of indigenous origin – most of them federation officials – are on trial on terrorist charges because they spoke critically of government policy. A public expression of opinion which is critical of the government may by all means be sanctioned with imprisonment in today's Ecuador. Civil protest is criminalised, and protest by organised civil society against these developments has failed to appear. In fact, non-governmental organisations are found at all public levels (at the municipal, provincial, and national level), but have no influence on policy formation in daily practice. The reasons for this are complex: for one, in Ecuador there has so far never been a functional, efficient system of involving organised civil society in the political decision-making process in the sense of a pluralistic democracy, because so far the legislature, and the special interest groups themselves, have lacked awareness of this problem, as well as the skills to organise pluralistic opinion-making processes. At the same time, organisations share the same fate of *caudillismo* with the traditional parties: Frequently enough, NGOs rise and fall with the character of their set-up, and/or their decades-long leaders and their individual interests. Internally-structured democracy does not exist, and the selection, aggregation, and articulation of particular interests do not occur. The flourishing and strengthening of the indigenous movement in the 1990s and early 2000s could only temporarily belie these structural deficits. The president's polarising effect also deeply impacts organisations, and has contributed considerably to the current political marginalisation of many active special interest groups, especially on the national level, due to internal disputes. The indigenous organisations are one example of this. Many sceptical Ecuadorians already believe that the breakdown of civil society was a political calculation by the president from the start, and that it began when he divided organised civil society into five public authorities in the 2008 constitution, and, in doing so, even robbed them of their essential characteristic of being "non-governmental".

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Ecuador's traditional party system has been fundamentally altered by the decline and withdrawal of the Christian Democratic Party from political life in Ecuador (around 2002 to 2007), by the assembly and comprehensive presence of former President Lucio Gutiérrez's (2003-2005) populist Partido Sociedad Patriótica (PSP), by the sudden emergence of the left-leaning movement, Alianza PAÍS, as the political power behind President Correa (since 2007), and the accompanying weakening of the traditional leftist parties. This has only reached a tentative conclusion with the controversial registration procedure for all existing and newly formed parties and movements for the presidential and parliamentary elections.

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The last decade has been marked by an appreciable increase in prosperity for practically every social class, which is noticeable in everyday life. Here the Correa government has taken important measures on the one hand, and revolutionary ones in light of Ecuador's history on the other, for example in the area of labour protection, tax collection, the social system, or within the framework of infrastructure activities. Having said that, to this day the government profits from the stabilising effects from the introduction of the U.S. dollar as the national currency in 2000, and from high crude oil prices over the past few years. Practically all Ecuadorians are able to benefit from social innovations, extensive infrastructure schemes, and positive macroeconomic development. The downside appears to be a substantial increase in foreign indebtedness and the pre-selling of oil production (especially to China) over a number of years in order to finance this so-called *revolución ciudadana* policy, as well as the immensely expanded public administration. Furthermore, consumers and parts of the economy are disturbed by the ever-higher import tariffs, even for goods that are not produced in Ecuador.

WHAT PREVIOUSLY TRANSPIRED: ELECTION PREPARATION DRAMATURGY

Nearly the entire 2012 political year revolved directly or indirectly around the presidential and parliamentary elections planned for 17 February 2013. In doing so, the process of shaping old and new political forces and alliances,

which began in April and continued until the beginning of November, stood at the centre of the political discussion and public interests.

The scandal over the legalisation of political actors

On 6 February 2012, the law concerning elections and political organisations in Ecuador (Ley orgánica electoral y de organizaciones políticas del Ecuador), known as the Código de la Democracia (Democracy Code), came into effect. This law, which was passed by the governmental majority in parliament and then modified once more by the president himself, governed the period of time and the implementation of the election process (adoption of the D'Hondt method for the allocation of provincial tickets in the parliamentary elections), and (increased) responsibilities of the electoral council, CNE; it contained marked reductions in freedom of the press for the period leading up to the election, and defined the requirements and the procedure for the registration of political parties and movements: political organisations at the national, regional, or local level had until 18 July 2012 to submit the valid signatures to the CNE of at least 1.5 per cent of all eligible voters (from the 2009 election year) who were members at the appropriate state level (in the case of parties) or were sympathisers (in the case of political movements) in order to register, and therefore to be able to participate with presidential and parliamentary candidates as legal entities (at the national level, this meant submission of 157,984 valid signatures). According to the CNE's first official publication on 19 July, 43 parties and movements delivered 3,036,808 signatures (this corresponds to just under 30 per cent of the entire electorate). As expected, the government movement Alianza PAÍS, as well as four other movements and six parties, were able to meet the registration requirements.

The Democracy Code contained reductions in freedom of the press for the period leading up to the election, and defined the requirements for the registration of political parties.

The scandal over the registration first began the moment the CNE published a weblink on 27 July that gave every citizen the ability to see all of the signatures submitted by the political parties and movements. On the first day alone, 293 citizens reported that they found their signatures on lists that they had never signed. Furthermore, the bulk of

this first group consisted of employees from all working levels at CNE and its various provincial representations, and who, according to the Democracy Code, were not eligible to participate in the registrations, and therefore had great self-interest in going public with this to absolve themselves of any suspicion. The first wave of fake or even forged signatures triggered a boom of questions on the CNE website.⁵ Within a few days, 43,533 suits were filed with the Public Attorney's Office for forgery of signatures.⁶ Some cases, especially those of the highest government officials and national representatives, right up to the Speaker, whose signatures were found on their political opponents' lists, were in fact so scurrilous and unlikely that it could not have merely been a matter of signature forgery.

One of the first to pipe up was President Correa, who denounced these events as one of the *partidocracia's* ("partocracy's") greatest frauds. In a statement on 28 July, he spoke of corporations that stole signatures and sold them to unscrupulous politicians.⁷ At the same time, he declared that his movement, Alianza PAÍS, had no need to forge signatures, and that they would never do this.⁸ In the same communiqué, he also cleared the CNE of any wrongdoing. The opposition party representatives disclaimed all guilt, and in turn accused the CNE of deception and manipulation of the results. In fact, according to article 320 of the Democracy Code, the electoral council, CNE, is responsible for reviewing the signatures, and it is also accu-

The practice of several parties and movements of hiring signature gatherers and paying them 40 cents for each signature practically invited forgery.

rate that all five CNE councillors appointed in November 2011 come from the Correa government's milieu. Yet the entire signatures scandal had several causes: for one, trade in data, in which the CNE employees were alleged to be enmeshed, was booming. Furthermore, the practice of several parties and movements of hiring signature gatherers and paying them 40 cents for each signature practically invited forgery – and apart from that, the registration of

5 | Consejo Nacional Electoral, official website, <http://cne.gob.ec> (accessed 30 Apr 2013).

6 | In the beginning of November, the number of lawsuits was over 73,000. "La Fiscalía dice que tiene indicios de responsables de firmas falsas", *El Comercio*, 15 Aug 2012.

7 | "Rafael advierte que falsificación dejaría afuera a grupos inscritos", *El Universo*, 29 Jul 2012.

8 | Ibid.

political organisations through the collection of thousands of signatures itself invites fraud, as has been shown in many countries.

But the software programme used by the CNE, which had been used since 2009 and had meanwhile already become completely out-dated, seems to be primarily

responsible for the signatures scandal, as its defective security filter seems to have opened the floodgates to manipulation. Otherwise, the extent of the exposed forgeries, at a total of 34 per cent of all signatures sub-

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mitted, is (to this day)⁹ hardly explicable: Alianza PAÍS, which had already been absolved of any blame in advance by its leader, Correa, submitted a total of 1,047,808 signatures, of which, following initial review of ten per cent of all lists submitted, it has been projected that over 356,000 were invalid. So Alianza PAÍS came up with nearly 700,000 valid signatures at the first go and without issue, but unfortunately was the only political organisation to complete the registration. All other parties and movements that had originally been declared to be registered by the CNE because they had submitted between 157,984 and 185,958 signatures, now fell short by between 35,215 and 53,678 signatures.¹⁰ As a result, the CNE had no choice but to reach the following decisions on 6 August: all political forces received the opportunity to submit their signatures later, by 24 September; all signatures already submitted should be manually verified; and all political organisations should be granted access to this process.

The delay in starting the manual verification until the beginning of September, which then had to be pushed back six times, was attributed by CNE head, Domingo Paredes, to technical problems, which was only borne out by the faulty software theory. At least the verification process progressed efficiently thanks to 2,400 short-term workers hired, so that nearly all the parties and movements that had already received acceptance of their registration in

9 | "Alianza País, sola en la papeleta electoral?", *El Comercio*, 8 Aug 2012.

10 | *Ibid.*

July could be verified by 10 October.¹¹ Only the new movement in the centre of the political spectrum, Concertación, missed the target by some 3,000 signatures. In total, 73 of the 166 political organisations (of those, eleven were national parties and movements) were able to register as legal entities; 93 did not qualify. On 18 October, the CNE officially called for elections for the Ecuadorian presidency, for the Asamblea Nacional, and for the Andean Parliament to be held on 17 February.¹² 11,558,237 Ecuadorians were called to vote in the elections for president and vice-president, as well as for 137 national and five Andean representatives.¹³ On 15 November, the registration period for all candidates (and tickets) for the three upcoming elections closed. The public election campaigns were limited to a fixed period from 4 January to 14 February. Additionally, no further media reports were permitted to be made from 48 hours before the election, and no more alcohol was permitted to be sold or served.

After the conclusion of the registration process on 10 October, all of the political forces lapsed into a hectic flurry of activity. On the one hand, alliances had to be forged (not least with the 37 registered regional groupings as well), and on the other hand, candidates had to be nominated to constituency tickets for the elections to the national parliament. The awareness that a joint candidate was necessary had already developed among the many opposition actors in the run-up. Yet by July 2012, the Unity of the Lefts (Izquierda Unida), comprised of six parties, had already categorically rejected a great opposition resolution modelled on Venezuela's, and nominated Alberto Acosta as its joint candidate by the beginning of

The Unity of the Lefts, comprised of six parties, had rejected a great opposition resolution modelled on Venezuela's, and nominated Alberto Acosta as its joint candidate by the beginning of September.

11 | In the end, it turned out that Alianza PAÍS, for example, had even submitted a total of 1,534,264 signatures, of which 302,134 were invalidated by the movement itself, so that a total of 826,812 signatures, or 53.88 per cent, were recognised as valid, which represents a rate of 46.12 per cent invalid signatures in reverse. Cf. "A. País, inscrito con la mitad de sus firmas", *El Comercio*, 5 Sep 2012.

12 | The Andean Parliament, located in Bogotá, is the parliamentary advisory and regulatory body for the member states of the Andean Community (Bolivia, Ecuador, Columbia, Peru), although it has no legislative powers. Every member country provides five representatives.

13 | The right to vote in Ecuador begins at the age of 16 and includes members of the military and police.

September. So the following questions for the middle-class opposition were paramount: should the opposition come to an agreement on a joint presidential candidate? If yes, should this candidate be determined through *primarias* (primaries)? Who should then be permitted to participate? Only party members or the entire electorate? And would the defeated candidates subordinate themselves to this vote? Given the irreconcilable difficulties and especially the actors' individual interests, it was apparent at an early stage that the middle-class opposition would not succeed in coming to an agreement.

The following alliances presented candidates for the presidential election:

Unity of the Left: The alliance, which consists of six different socialist groups, including Pachakutik, the political wing of the indigenous organisation, CONAIE, as well as the communist teachers' movement, MPD (both were able to register), agreed on a joint candidate, Alberto Acosta, at the beginning of September 2012 through an elaborate nationwide process. He is considered to be Alianza PAÍS' actual founder and a former close companion of Correa. However, the two had already fallen out during the Montecristi constituent assembly in 2007/2008, which Acosta presided over as president because it did not wish to accept Correa's interference in the term of office. His vice-presidential candidate was Marcia Caicedo, a former CNE advisor and, together with Dennis Cevallos (PRE), she represented the Afro-Ecuadorian population among the presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

Alberto Acosta was nominated as a joint candidate for the movement at the beginning of September 2012 through an elaborate nationwide process.

Alianza PAÍS and Avanza: President Rafael Correa and his left-leaning movement received support from the new movement Avanza, established by the head of the national institute of social security (IESS), Ramiro González, who had severed ties with the social democratic group Izquierda Democrática (ID). Along with him, the previous Minister for the Strategic Sectors, Jorge Glas, entered the race.

Ruptura 25: The moderate-left youth movement that arose in 2004 succeeded in registering, and ran its own candidates for the first time, who happened to be the youngest

duo: Norman Wray, former parliamentary representative and municipal councillor for Quito, and Angela Mendoza (VP) campaigned for the presidency. Paco Moncayo, former Mayor of Quito and considered to be the R25 team's presidential candidate for a long time, also joined the campaign as the top candidate for parliament.

PRE: The traditional, but rather centre-left oriented party, Partido Roldoista Ecuatoriano, once again succeeded in registering without any big problems, whereas the presidential candidacy of their populist leader Abdala Bucaram and his co-candidate, Dennis Cevallos, was plagued with serious issues. A valid arrest warrant was issued for Bucaram, who was removed from office on 6 February 1997 after just under seven months as president because of mental instability through an unconstitutional deposition based on corruption charges, and he fled into exile to Panama, where he remains to this day. Because of this, PRE relied on evangelical Pastor Nelson Zavala, a newcomer to politics, who called for revision of the constitution to include God in his first ever statement.

SUMA: Young Mauricio Rodas' new movement, SUMA, succeeded in registering straightaway, and ran their leader for the presidency with environmental activist Inés Moreno as his running mate. SUMA was supported by parts of the centre movement Concertación, which only just missed out on registering.



"For a different Ecuador with progress, justice and respect": The middle-class candidate Guillermo Lasso followed as the runner-up and gained 22.68 per cent. | Source: CREO via Facebook, screenshot by the eds.

CREO and PSC: The new movement CREO ran Guillermo Lasso as its presidential candidate, a former banker with close ties to the Catholic church and who had already temporarily served as 'superminister' under the last Christian-democratic president, Jamil Mahuad, and had then also promoted dollarisation. CREO formed a coalition with the Christian-social party PSC and their split-off group, Madera de Guerrero, under their charismatic leader, Jaime Nebot, mayor of the country's largest city, Guayaquil. Additionally, the rest of the social democratic Izquierda Democrática (ID), parts of Concertación, and several registered local and regional political organisations joined this alliance. This alliance had a thoroughly good chance of success as the significant alternative to the entire centre/centre-left spectrum compared to the deeply fragmented Lefts. Lasso's vice-presidential candidate, Juan Carlos Solines, had his roots in Ecuadorian Christian-democracy and was the leader of Concertación.

PSP: Former president Lucio Gutiérrez's (2003-2005) nationwide populist and agenda-free party tried to arrange an alliance with similarly populist and agenda-free PRIAN, the banana baron Álvaro Noboa's political party, for a long time. This plan failed, in large part because there is only one available spot for the presidency. Presidential candidate Gutiérrez named the former beauty queen from the coastal province of Manabí, Perla Boyes, as his candidate for the vice presidency.

PRIAN: Banana producer Álvaro Noboa, Ecuador's wealthiest man, consequently ran for the presidency in 1998, and again in 2002, 2006, and 2009. To keep everything within the family, he placed his wife, Anabella Azín, by his side as his vice-presidential candidate.

This scenario demonstrates how cavalierly and egocentrically the oppositional powers and their protagonists have behaved, even given their common goal, stated many times, to end the Correa era. Altogether, three can-

Three candidates from the centre to the left of the political spectrum stood for election as presidential candidates (Acosta, Wray, and Bucaram) against President Correa.

didates from the centre to the left of the political spectrum stood for election as presidential candidates (Acosta, Wray, and Bucaram) against President Correa, who was already propagandising 21st century socialism. The number

of centre-right candidates was limited to two (Lasso and Rodas), solely due to Concertación's failed registration. And added to this were populists Gutiérrez and Noboa, who had incidentally run together in the second ballot in the 2002 presidential elections.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTION PROCESS

The high representative and leader of the Union of South American Nations' (UNASUR) electoral monitoring team, María Emma Mejía, announced to the chairman of the CNE that, in the team's opinion, no appreciable problems occurred on election day. The team's report clearly conveyed that no electoral fraud was detected, and that seven of the eight presidential candidates' results were accepted. Only Álvaro Noboa could not come to terms with his political ousting, referring to abnormal polling results by an international institute.

The Organization of the Americas criticised the tight scheduling of the election process based on the mistake that occurred with the CNE's registration and permitting process.

The majority of international electoral monitors further attested to the CNE's transparent election process. But the Organization of the Americas (OAS) criticised the extremely tight

scheduling of the election process based on the grave mistake that occurred in late summer and autumn 2012 with the CNE's registration and permitting process for political parties and movements. In general, the ruling party's election preparation and campaign leadership featured much more prevalently at the centre of the criticism than the actual election procedure.

AN UTTERLY UN-AMERICANLY QUIET ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The regulations regarding the election process restricted the time period for the most fervent phase of the campaigning to 42 days, beginning on 4 January and ending on 14 February 2013. Following this, even the media were no longer permitted to report on matters relevant to the elections. During the proper election phase, candidates were not permitted to benefit from public offices, or to make use of public institutions or facilities.¹⁴

14 | This was also the reason President Correa took a leave of absence from his office.

Should one have moved through the two metropolises of Quito and Guayaquil in January, one had to virtually forage for election adverts. Such an election campaign, which was completely atypically silent for a Latin American affair, had two causes: on the one hand, the president issued an executive order (*ordenanza*) that forbade placing election adverts on public property in the larger cities, which prevented the painting and posting of nearly every piece of inner-city masonry that is popular throughout Latin America. On the other hand, the election formalities stipulated a great reduction in the presidential candidates' financial resources, as well as those of their running mates. Whereas in 2006 each pair of candidates could still have access to 2.74 million U.S. dollars, this amount was now decreased to 1.74 million U.S. dollars. Both of these government measures, which were meant to serve as a muzzle for the challengers, and to prevent an excessively heated election campaign, were flanked by the drastic limitations on media that only report on election campaign activities, but were in no way permitted to assess them.

A violation of the Democracy Code involved dramatic threats of punishment, which led to a high level of uncertainty for many journalists and to the abandonment of election news coverage.

A violation of the Democracy Code involved dramatic threats of punishment, which led to a high level of uncertainty for many journalists and to the abandonment of election news coverage. And this was exactly what was intended, because then Rafael Correa could remain the only star candidate of the media world. According to a report by the NGO Participación Ciudadana (PC) from 9 February, he held by far the largest media presence of all the candidates.

The national electoral council, CNE, as the institution that really should have been the one to take action against this inequality criticised by the OAS' monitoring team, did not perform this duty by any means. This should come as no surprise since all five CNE board members are considered to be close to the government in one way or another. Though this may explain the office's inaction, it in no way justifies it. Complaints filed on behalf of the other candidates were generally dismissed by the CNE with flimsy explanations in favour of President Correa.

QUO VADIS, ECUADOR?

Although Correa's electoral victory was broadly expected, the unquestioned extensive and conspicuous results of both Rafael Correa and his movement, Alianza PAÍS came as somewhat of a surprise to most Ecuadorians and international observers. Ahead of the elections, it was still generally assumed that Correa would have to cope with further losses compared to his 45.2 per cent result in 2009, and that it was possible for him to be constrained by having to govern with an opposition majority in parliament. So where did this well-defined voter base come from? The explanation seems to lie less in the fact that the fragmented opposition could not agree on one or two candidates in the run-up to the election (parallels to the 2012 Venezuelan election outcome should not be dismissed). It is rather more a case of Ecuadorian voters having to decide between the undeniably successful social advances over the past few years, positively valued economic development, and assured political stability on the one hand, and the extensive democratic deficits on the other, especially in terms of civil freedoms and the separation of powers.

The electorate knew what it would receive with a vote for Correa. The other candidates, as by all means dark horses, ran the risk of reverting to the caudillismo.

The decision was clear. Furthermore, the electorate knew what it would receive with a vote for Correa, and this advantage seems to have outweighed the disadvantage in the eyes of the voters. However, the other candidates, as by all means dark horses, ran the risk of reverting to the *caudillismo* and style of politics of the past century. This uncertainty seems to have been mirrored in all social classes. The explanatory models, according to which the poor and lower classes in particular would have voted for Correa, and the middle and upper classes would have turned towards the opposition, may nevertheless be right in their tendency to oversimplify; one needs only consider the bulk of thoroughly contented entrepreneurs who have come to appreciate the lack of international competition due to high import tariffs and the lack of any investment incentives for foreign businesses.

Above all, since election night, the politically interested public has been occupied with the question of what this result will possibly mean for the future of governance in Ecuador, and in particular with the combination of a clear voter base

in the case of the presidency and the government's two-thirds majority in parliament. And here the opinions differ significantly: according to one position, it is quite obvious that Correa will now govern autocratically. The election outcome and the extremely executive constitution would now de facto provide him with complete power, because he has the legislative majority behind him to change the constitution, and because the judiciary has been brought in line after the extensive judicial reforms over the past one and a half years. And in effect: the mandate is clear and gives a lot of leeway for governing free from opposition. Should, for example the economic developments necessitate the slaughter of holy cows or the extraction of crude oil reserves from the one-of-a-kind Yasuni National Park in the Ecuadorian Amazon, Correa's government could do this without risk of any damage domestically.

But there is also the conflicting position that believes governing with such a clear majority will become more difficult, and that Correa would be forced to act more carefully. This particularly relates to the clear losers in these elections, the socialist opposition and their traditional view of policymaking. Specifically, there is reason to fear that parties like the communist MPD, who no longer have any representation in parliament, will instead be represented only indirectly by those of their indigenous coalition partner, Pachakutik, and will shift their protest to the streets. Those who hold to this position reason that autocratic rule by Correa would involve civil unrest and rioting among the general public.

Some believe that by governing with such a clear majority, Correa would be forced to act more carefully because the opposition might shift their protest to the streets .

It is possible that the truth, which probably lies somewhere between these two arguments, is that Correa will indeed govern as he pleases (which, for the most part, he has done up until now) in order to advance his primary political objective, the further implementation of his "people's revolution", but that he will refrain from resorting to measures that could lead to political unrest, because such measures are ultimately unnecessary. During the fervent election campaign phase, he had already announced that he wanted to further "radicalise" the *revolución ciudadana* over the next four years of his administration. The aims, which have been pursued since 2007, of an "economic,

production, and employment revolution" (as it is known in the jargon of Alianza PAÍS), of social revolution, ethical revolution, political and constitutional revolution, and of revolution of sovereignty and integration should be pursued further and in greater depth. In the new legislative session, they would add to this list environmental revolution, urban revolution, revolution of knowledge and skills, revolution of justice, security, and cohabitation, and finally a revolution of culture (to avoid using the term "cultural revolution").

Time will tell what is truly hidden behind all of these concepts in policymaking. But past legislative sessions have explicitly experienced that precisely this form of political ideology is very expensive in reality. In addition to all the new projects, the previous accomplishments in the people's revolution, for example the expanded bureaucracy, the extensive infrastructure activities, and the improved social services, also still need to be financed. At the moment, Ecuador's economic fortune, and the Correa administration's economic policies along with it, are dependent on the relatively stable international price of crude oil. Additionally, aside from its limited sources of low-grade crude oil, Ecuador is endowed with considerable sources of raw materials awaiting extraction. However, herein lies future potential for conflict, because these raw materials are too often found only in regions populated by indigenous peoples, who consider these resources to be the basis of their existence. The to some extent completely unsettled ownership questions may also contribute to a political and social explosion stemming from the potential profitable extraction of raw materials, which has the ability to collapse governments.

The Correa administration's economic policies are dependent on the relatively stable international price of crude oil. Additionally, Ecuador is endowed with considerable sources of raw materials awaiting extraction.

Also interesting will be the question of whether the civil opposition takes the trust bestowed on them by nearly a quarter of the Ecuadorian electorate seriously, and whether they accept the mandate to strengthen their political presence in civil society over the coming four years in parallel with likely imperceptible, and therefore frustrating, opposition politics, and to establish a nationwide political and organisational framework. Only by doing this can they present themselves as an alternative capable of governing in the next elections in 2017. It is already clear that Lasso

and CREO have replaced the previous self-proclaimed opposition leader and figurehead of the agenda-free political centre, ex-President Lucio Gutiérrez and his party, PSP, in the political landscape after he had emerged from the 2009 election with 28 per cent of the vote. For Gutiérrez is the big loser from this election, together with the socialist opposition. The unexpectedly poor performance will confront him and his PSP – as opposed to the ubiquitous and odds-defying Lefts – in the medium-term with the question of political survival.

The article was completed on 28 March 2013.