

## YOUR TWO-MINUTE ELECTION GUIDE

Let's face it, not everybody is that interested in politics. Or you might not yet have got your head round Colombian politics. If so, we're here to help.

The first round of presidential elections will take place on May 27. It is extremely unlikely that any candidate will win outright (it's been 12 years since that happened), so the top two candidates will then go head to head on June 17.

The presidential elections take place every four years, and this year – as with 2014 – election frenzy is likely to get overtaken by football frenzy as Colombia will play their first World Cup match on June 19.

Of the 30 plus candidates who threw their hats into the ring last year there are now only five contenders for the presidency. They have been campaigning on two levels: first, to win the hearts and minds of individual voters and second, to gain the support of political parties who have not fielded a candidate.

Presidential candidates either need to be endorsed by a party or to collect 355,933 signatures from Colombian citizens. Some of the parties and coalitions held primaries to decide who their candidate would be. Some candidates like Vargas Lleras chose to collect signatures and run independently – even though he had the backing of his party.

With less than a month to go, the big names of the country's various political dynasties have pretty much aligned themselves with one candidate or another. The battle lines have been drawn on all the usual voter concerns of security, health, education, environment and the economy. Everybody has promised to be tough on corruption, though with accusations of cronyism and connections to corruption flying left, right and centre, voters would be forgiven for being cynical about some of those claims.

Peace is obviously a key issue. This is the first presidential election since the FARC demobilised and, as was to be expected, implementation of the peace deal has not been plain sailing. There's only one candidate who is running on a ticket of making changes to the agreement, with the other four promising to honour the government's commitments with varying degrees of passion.

Polls are notoriously unreliable, more so in a country as diverse and tight lipped as Colombia.

If the Cambridge Analytica scandal hasn't scared you off entering your information into online applications, find out which candidate aligns most closely with your views with 'Elecciones Colombia 2018' or 'Colombia Candidater' for young people (sponsored by the German Embassy).

It is worth being aware that there are border restrictions on election weekends, so you may have trouble if you are planning to cross a land border. And if you are staying put, be aware that Ley Seca prohibits the sale of alcohol from the night before to the morning after an election, so best stock up in advance if you are having a vote-watching party.



## THE POLITICAL PARTIES EXPLAINED

Various parties have played an important role throughout Colombia's political history. While Gustavo Petro and Germán Vargas Lleras have followed the global trend of candidates stepping away from traditional parties, these groups still hold an important place in the elections. We take a look at some of the big names on the political landscape:

**CENTRO DEMOCRÁTICO**



Founded in 2013 by ex-president Álvaro Uribe, who remains a central figure in the party, the Centro Democrático was formed ostensibly in opposition to current president Juan Manuel Santos' policy of negotiation with the FARC. Fundamentally a right-wing party, its slogan reads: "Strong hand, big heart." It advocates economic liberalisation and foreign investment, as well as emphasising the importance of family and tradition.

**PARTIDO SOCIAL DE UNIDAD NACIONAL (PARTIDO DE LA U)**



Formed in 2005 by supporters of Uribe who had defected from the Liberal Party, the party is perhaps best known for its leading role in the peace agreement with the FARC under the rule of Juan Manuel Santos. Its ideology could be defined as the 'third way' – attempting to integrate a combination of right- and left-wing politics. Perhaps because it has been Colombia's dominant party since 2006, the party has been involved in a number of corruption scandals, such as the bribery scandal associated with the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht. It isn't fielding a presidential candidate, but leaders have agreed to support Vargas Lleras.

**CAMBIO RADICAL**



Achieving the second-highest number of seats in Congress in March, Cambio Radical's influence has grown swiftly in Colombian politics after its creation in 1998 by a dissatisfied sect of the Liberal Party. Like the Centro Democrático, the party also supports pro-business economic policies, whilst calling for a more efficient health system. However, whilst it might preach radical change, the party has been embroiled in a series of corruption charges for which investigations are ongoing. Endorsing former vice president (and grandson of previous president) Vargas Lleras as their candidate is another non-radical non-change move.



## Social media storm

*There have been plenty of memes and social media antics – true and false – this election. We picked a couple to make you smile.*

### VARGAS LLERAS IN BIKINIGATE SCANDAL

Germán Vargas Lleras was caught in an online storm last week after a batch of buxom broads were photographed promoting the presidential candidate in Santa Marta, leaving little to the imagination. With the candidate's name blazoned across their bikini bottoms, these fair maidens strolled down the promenade handing out flyers to onlookers, some of whom were enthusiastic, others less so. Such blatant objectification of women for propaganda purposes has led to much outrage and condemnation, an example of which is the trending twitter hashtag #MujeresMejorSinVargasLleras. Vargas Lleras categorically denies the stunt was his doing. He denounced the scandal as smear campaign concocted by his political rivals and vowed to investigate the contentious episode. If true, whomever the culprit of this PR fiasco may be, it must certainly rank as one of the more ingenious ways of besmirching a political rival.



### DUQUE MOCKED FOR AWKWARD EMBRACE

As he was hugged by a supporter in Tumaco last weekend, Iván Duque appeared to lose the use of his limbs. Instead of reciprocating the embrace as most humans would, Duque panicked: his arms remained by his side and his face contorted into a combination of shock and horror. Second time was the charm, however, as the hug was staged again and this time he delivered a flawless performance, involving two arms, passion and warmth. Unfortunately for the Centro Democrático candidate, this was not the version most people saw. Rather, it was the botched first attempt that went viral, leading many, including Gustavo Petro, to accuse him of racism (the man who initiated the hug was Afro-Colombian). This lapse in reason gave substantial ammunition to the twitter army, who echoed Petro's assertions. Duque could complete all of his future hugs with 100% accuracy for the rest of his life, but this would still be the one people remember. And that's the game.



### PETRO'S SHOES BACK IN THE LIMELIGHT

As the influence of social media grows exponentially, all of us must be wary of what goes online. Pictures, comments and much more have all led to the demise of many. One's choice of footwear, however, would not often be atop the list of material that could be damaging. Yet this was the fate of Gustavo Petro, as a picture of him wearing expensive shoes from two years ago has resurfaced. And with a vengeance. Can't we let bygones be bygones? In the words of Margaret Thatcher, 'No, no, no,' say the tireless twitter warriors. They ask how someone who advocates socialism and claims to fight equality can afford to spend so much on a superfluous materialistic item? But whilst these shoes (Salvatore Ferragamo, for those interested) are indeed a pricey purchase, to ridicule them seems a curious thing. They could have been replicas, after all.

- By Bertie Previte

## Complications of voting

*The spectres of abstention and vote buying have haunted many an election for many a year, and this year looks no different.*

BERTIE PREVITE

Voting is the quintessential element of democracy, the tool with which citizens choose their representatives in government. In Colombia, however, the issue of voting is often thorny. We look at two particular problems in detail below.

### ABSTENTION

The percentage of people voting in Colombian elections is not high, especially in recent years. From 1978 to 2014 the participation rate in presidential elections fluctuated between 40-60%, and has not passed 50% since the turn of the century. For the 2014 presidential elections, voter turnout was 40% and 48% in the first and second rounds respectively.

Such statistics tend to indicate a large degree of political apathy and disaffection in Colombia. Numerous studies indicate that there is an obvious correlation between high turnout and voter satisfaction in democracy, whilst populations dissatisfied with their public institutions are more likely to avoid casting their ballot. A survey carried out by the Latin American Strategic Centre of Geopolitics (CELAG) earlier this year revealed that 77% of the population felt dissatisfied with Colombian politics. This trend shows no sign of changing, as, according to Barómetro de las Américas, six out of 10 young Latinos do not trust their country's democratic institutions.

Yet to attribute Colombia's absent electorate solely to political apathy is a myopic view. Discontent, after all, is not synonymous with indifference. Abstention can carry a significant degree of political weight, as it can be a symbolic rejection of the country's supposed democratic process. One's political principles remain intact and, perhaps most importantly, it ensures that a citizen's democratic decision does not legitimise corruption.

A glance back at abstention rates over the years, however, suggests politicians remain impervious, despite the Electoral Observation Mission's (EOM) latest report, which states: "The commitment to reducing the rates of those who abstain from voting requires constant work on multiple fronts on the part of all political actors involved in the electoral process."

While dissatisfaction is important, it is not the only reason for a high abstention rate. In rural areas, many are simply unable to get to polling stations and exercise their vote. As the 2017 UN report for human rights in Colombia states: "Lack of infrastructure in these areas requires from several hours to days of travel in order to vote, which implies costs to the voter." That certain individuals are excluded from their democratic right by nature of geographical location is a damning indictment of the country's electoral system, and the same report identifies how, capitalising on this deficiency, various parties and candidates offer transport to stations, influencing votes. This, conveniently, brings us to the other complication: vote buying.

### VOTE BUYING

Vote buying is, as one would expect, the exchange of a vote for a service on a *quid pro quo* basis. Research has attempted to identify the extent of vote buying in Colombia, and indeed Latin America, but has been hampered by difficulty of obtaining truthful responses in surveys and investigations. However, there are concrete examples of this practice occurring. Recently, the office of elected congresswoman Aída Merlano in the department of Atlántico was found to contain unlicensed firearms and over COP\$260 million.

A further case is that of Laura Ardila, editor of *La Silla Vacía*, who travelled to Soledad, also in Atlántico, in 2014 to witness vote buying first-hand. She was approached on three separate occasions by brokers offering to buy her vote. There are other instances, too. In assessing the legislative elections earlier this year, the EOM received 1,290 reports of irregularities, many of which were related to vote buying (others included accusations of illegal propaganda in polling stations).

Alongside votes being exchanged for money, they have also reportedly been sold for jobs, food and building materials. The nature of these gifts, bribes or whatever else they may be called is significant in itself, as the moral question that arises out of selling one's vote may pale into insignificance for financially struggling individuals. Additionally, many cases of the cases of vote buying have been in rural communities, particularly on the Caribbean coast.

This brings a bigger issue into play. These areas are usually economically disadvantaged with poor access to education, which makes it easier for politicians to benefit from vote buying. By maintaining their constituencies in such situations and leaving individuals dependent on their handouts, there is little incentive to improve public services and general living conditions.

A likely low turnout and inevitable allegations of electoral irregularities, means that the result of this election will be affected by a democratic process sown with obscurity and confusion.



This 1916 poster from Argentina shows that vote buying is nothing new.

## WHAT IS VOTO EN BLANCO?

*If none of the candidates merits your vote, Colombia's constitution allows you to actively vote for none of them.*

ÁNGELA FORERO-APONTE

Okay, so no candidate has managed to convince you; that's a respectable position and that's your right. In Colombia, those who don't want to support any candidate but still want to vote can do something known as *voto en blanco*. It differs from simply spoiling your vote, as it has some established consequences. But what are they?

We went to the *registraduría*, the source of all wisdom voting- and election- "wise" (if you'll pardon the pun), to understand blank voting.

What is it? It's a political expression of dissent, abstention or disapproval, with political effects. *Voto en blanco* is an expression of that disapproval which in turn promotes the protection of the freedom of voters.

How do you vote *en blanco*? Simply mark the grid or marking area of the *voto en blanco* in the voting card.

What about the promoters of *voto en blanco*? Not only is there a space on the voting card for *voto en blanco*, you can also vote separately for the people behind the *voto en blanco*. Colombian political reform established the possibility for the groups to be registered as another option of *voto en blanco*, though it's unclear what purpose this serves. But you can't mark both spaces - that will count as a spoiled ballot.

Is it true that *voto en blanco* results are added to the candidate with the most votes? No. *Voto en blanco* is tallied independently.

The important question: If *voto en blanco* wins, will elections take place again? In several instances, yes. For governors, mayors, or after the first round for presidential elections, the vote will take place again if the blank votes are in the majority. In the case of single-candidate elections, the same candidates will not be able to participate; for general government institutions, the parties which did not reach the minimum threshold for receiving candidates may not stand for election again. The majority needed to repeat the election should be an absolute majority, which is 50% plus 1 of the valid votes, and not a simple majority. Finally, in the extremely unlikely scenario that *voto en blanco* wins a second time, the candidate with the majority of valid votes would win the elections.

One last question: do all countries have this system? No. Many countries do not offer this option; citizens who do not wish to vote for any candidate simply do not mark the card. In Colombia, blank votes are valid votes, unlike non-marked cards and spoiled votes.



**PARTIDO CONSERVADOR COLOMBIANO**



The Colombian Conservative Party has, alongside the Liberal Party, dominated the history of Colombian politics ever since its inception in 1849. Characterised by its staunch support for the Catholic Church and consistent anti-communism and anti-socialism, it once held an unprecedented 44 years in power between 1886-1930. In recent history, the party was involved in Uribe's government and was part of the coalition formed by Santos during his first term. The party have left it up to their members to choose between Duque and Vargas Lleras.

**PARTIDO LIBERAL COLOMBIANO**



The other main force of Colombian politics for well over a century, the Liberal Party has had its fair share of political hegemony, winning five of the seven presidential elections between 1974 and 2002. In recent years the party has attached its ideology to social democracy after becoming a member of the Socialist International in 1999. Although the party has lost a significant portion of its support to recently created parties, it remains an influential force and is part of President Santos' current coalition. The party aims to reduce inequality and address the country's competitiveness gap. They've put up Humberto de la Calle as their man.

**ALIANZA VERDE**



Distinguished by progressive politics, the Alianza Verde supports the peace agreement, advocates social justice, electoral reform and economic sustainability, and has generally managed to stay away from the multitudinous corruption accusations faced by others. The party also supports green politics. The party's number of seats increased in the 2018 congressional elections and it has formed an alliance called Coalition Colombia with the centre-left Compromiso Ciudadano and Polo parties for the upcoming elections. Claudia López is their most high profile member.

- By Bertie Previte



HUMBERTO DE LA CALLE



IVÁN DUQUE



SERGIO FAJARDO



GUSTAVO PETRO



GERMÁN VARGAS LLERAS

Nomination	Partido Liberal	Centro Democrático	Coalition of Alianza Verde and Polo Democrático	Decentes, Independent	Cambio Radical, Independent
Slogan	<i>Un país donde quepamos todos</i>	<i>El futuro es de todos</i>	<i>La fuerza de la esperanza / Se puede</i>	<i>Por una Colombia humana</i>	<i>Mejor Vargas Lleras</i>
In one word	Peace	No	Education	Change	Establishment
Who are they?	At 72, the Liberal candidate with 30 years of political experience under his belt is the oldest player in the race. As the government's chief negotiator, the key role he played in reaching a peace agreement with the FARC makes him very much the 'peace' candidate, which – like the peace agreement itself – has elicited a mixed reaction from voters. For various reasons he will not be entering into an alliance with Fajardo.	The 41-year-old has had a comparatively short career in politics, only being appointed to the senate in 2014. He is supported by former president Álvaro Uribe, and rose to fame as one of the leaders of the 'No' campaign for the 2016 plebiscite to ratify the peace accord. The populist right-wing candidate has been leading the polls, but as polls have been wrong in many countries recently this does not mean his victory is a done deal.	The mathematician and newspaper columnist entered politics relatively late in life, but is still widely respected for his work as mayor of Medellín and governor of Antioquia. 61-year-old Fajardo has positioned himself as a centrist politician between the extremes of Duque and Petro. One of the leaders in the opinion polls back in January, he has steadily lost momentum. Pressure from various sides to form an alliance with De la Calle has not borne fruit.	Bogotá's former mayor has been the wildcard so far in this campaign. In a country where the left-wing has often been stigmatised, Petro's firebrand, anti-establishment politics have tapped into popular frustrations. Unlike his last presidential campaign in 2010, this time his populist stance has pushed him forward in the polls. At 58 years old, the former M19 combatant describes himself as a 'progressive leftist'. The challenge is that he has not managed to gain much support outside of his base, which would make it difficult to win if he reaches the second round.	Having stepped down from his position as vice president in the Santos administration in order to run for the presidency, Vargas Lleras was at one point seen as the frontrunner, although he has now fallen behind in the polls. However, the conservative politician is no stranger to this game and has some strong political machinery behind him. Regarded as 'Santos' candidate', he will be counting on strong support from his allies, especially on the coast, to push him to the second round.
What they stand for:	His commitment to peace is evident throughout his proposals, with plans for post-conflict job creation and investment in areas most affected by the conflict. Unsurprisingly, he opposes any attempts to unpick the peace agreement that took four years to negotiate. In stark contrast to some of his opponents, he advocates greater control over mining licences as well as stronger environmental protection and further ecotourism. When it comes to illegal drugs, he leans towards crop substitution rather than forced eradication and has a 'follow the money' type approach to handling drug trafficking. The former ambassador believes there needs to be a complete culture shift in order to address corruption, and his tax policies centre around the idea of "a country where we can all contribute." De la Calle is proposing a Ministry for Women to address the high rates of gender violence and labour inequality. He would also like to transform the Ministry of Education into a new 'Ministry of Intelligence', changing both the funding and structure of the education system.	Following his patron Uribe's hard line against the FARC, Duque will do everything in his power to put the former guerrilla members in prison and keep them out of politics. He taps into high levels of dissatisfaction with the peace agreement and will try to push through constitutional reforms to undo key aspects of the deal. Duque promises to take a hard line on coca cultivation, saying that compulsory eradication is the only option. He has made a number of economic proposals such as simplifying the tax code, which he should have little difficulty pushing through congress due to his party's strong showing in the congressional and senatorial elections. He is promising firm action against the ELN (the country's remaining rebel group) as well as FARC dissidents. Duque says he will stimulate international investments and intensify relations with the United States in the war on drugs. He takes a zero tolerance stance on drugs.	Fajardo is the man in the middle, who seeks to build a less polarised society. In some ways Fajardo is the candidate of change, but not revolution. His campaign is focussed on the two main pillars of education and the environment. He sees education as the foundation needed for a new country, and accordingly claims lack of education as a primary factor in continued poverty and deep inequality. He wants to increase the education budget by 10% per year and double the number of children attending school each day. He believes that agrarian policy – including crop replacement rather than forced substitution – is key for a long term peace. Transparency is another buzzword for this candidate and his running mate Claudia López. Fajardo has been outspoken against vote-buying and proposes to make both the judicial and electoral system more transparent. He is committed to the peace process and has said he will honour the agreement made with the FARC.	The main thrust of Petro's policies are broad reforms that aim to strengthen democracy, tackle inequality and address climate change. Workers rights are important to him and he proposes improving minimum working conditions in both rural and urban zones. He wants to create a popular bank which would give loans to the poorest in society. He aims to institute land reforms that will bring rural communities out of poverty, alongside tax reforms that focus on aggressively combating high-end evasion and reducing IVA (sales tax). He seeks to make free healthcare available to all. He will liquidate the unpopular private EPS and ARL schemes and replace them with state-funded systems. When it comes to peace, he will respect the agreement but is more focussed on building a lasting peace through an equitable and peaceful society. He wants to base the economy on agriculture and protect nature by stepping away as much as possible from fossil resources. Added to that, he unambiguously rejects fracking and mining expansion.	Positioning himself as the experienced candidate, Vargas Lleras says he will build on what has already been put in place, with many of his proposals around topics like health and justice based on improving the current system. For example, he is committed to finishing the 4G road network, infrastructure development that he and the current administration claim is essential for economic development, and with which he had been closely involved with as vice president. He does, however, disagree with the current government on several economic topics. He is proposing to introduce a new tax reform with lower taxes and also promises to stimulate foreign investment and create a positive climate for entrepreneurs by lowering taxes. He has taken a strong pro-mining stance, arguing that the current systems for consultation are overly onerous. He wants to increase the education resources from 4.5% to 6% of GDP. He has been lukewarm on the peace process with the FARC, distancing himself from Santos' campaign.
Their supporters:	De la Calle won the support of the Partido Liberal back in the party's primaries in November. His supporters praise his long experience in Colombian politics and strong diplomatic skills. The biggest factor is that he was the man who brought peace, making him well positioned to implement the peace deal. He will keep working to ensure lasting peace with the FARC, without giving up on free market principles. His core support base comes from those who are committed to peace and want to see it implemented. He proposes changing Icetex, the widely-disliked student loan system, as well as scrapping obligatory military service – dovetailing neatly with his commitment to peace. Both those policies are popular among the young voters most likely to be affected by both policies.	Duque is backed by the same swathes of Uribe supporters that gave the former president the most senatorial seats in the recent elections. He can also count on the support of the Conservative party thanks to his vice-presidential candidate Marta Lucía Ramírez. He will be counting on the votes of those who opted 'No' in the plebiscite and now applaud his proposals to undo parts of the peace agreement. Most notable is his stance against impunity for certain crimes, as well as commitments to strengthen state forces in order to combat the ELN and former FARC dissidents. His supporters are in favour of his strategy of forced coca eradication and believe that he will bring stability to the country.	Fajardo has the backing of both parties in his coalition – Alianza Verde and Polo Democrático – which also gives him some powerful allies. Antanas Mockus – the popular and at times unorthodox senator and former mayor of Bogotá has been out on the streets with his vice-presidential candidate, straight-talking senator Claudia López. In terms of the electorate, he wants to appeal to people who are pro-peace but tired of corruption. Fajardo may be falling behind in the polls, but he's still the candidate voters like the most – with a 61% favourable image in the latest Gallup poll. He is widely praised for the work he did as both mayor of Medellín and governor of Antioquia in making education more accessible and creating more recreation spaces, as well as his work in helping demobilised paramilitaries to reintegrate.	Supported by the Decentes coalition, which is made up of five parties, Petro has tapped into a vein of anti-establishment, anti-political sentiment. Unsurprisingly, he fares well in lower-income barrios, and the bulk of his support comes from economically disadvantaged people who see him as the best hope for changing Colombia and moving away from the traditional power bases that still dominate the country. He's drawn huge crowds on the campaign trail, most noticeably on the coast, where he challenges Vargas Lleras, and in rural zones in Boyacá. As a <i>costeño</i> who grew up in Zipaquirá, he speaks to both demographics. His controversial term as Bogotá mayor is seen as a positive point for his backers, who argue that he achieved a lot in his leadership of the capital. They also claim that he was the victim of political persecution.	His supporters have been less vocal than those of Duque or Petro, which is why a number of commentators see him as the dark horse in the race. His popularity on the coast should not be underestimated. His supporters praise his experience; his clear manner; his promises to complete the infrastructure developments and his economic policies. Plans to create a Family Ministry have also gone down well. After much speculation, the Partido de la U announced in April that they would support Vargas Lleras. The deal came after they'd elicited promises from Vargas Lleras to guarantee compliance with the peace deal and its implementation, as well as other matters. He will also count on support from parts of the business community.
Their critics:	<i>La Silla Vacía</i> summed it up nicely with the words, "A good candidate, a terrible campaign." And it's true that De la Calle's campaign never quite got off the ground. Backed by the Partido Liberal, De la Calle has certainly not been helped by the factions and divisions in his party – indeed the head of the party and former president César Gaviria has already told <i>El Tiempo</i> that they would support Duque in the second round, seemingly already writing off De la Calle's chances of getting there before the vote has even taken place. But the bigger – indeed the biggest – issue is peace. Peace is simply a divisive and controversial issue, which makes it a complicated topic to nail your presidential campaign onto. The people who oppose the peace agreement feel that De la Calle gave the country away to the FARC and didn't negotiate a good deal. In addition, while his long political career is seen by some as a strength, it also means that some people see him as part of the problem, part of the same elite that has ruled the country for the last 200 years. He's also been criticised for his lack of experience on the economic front.	The biggest criticisms of Duque are his lack of experience and accusations that he would be a puppet for Uribe. He answers that it is time for the younger generation, and says that while he and Uribe are close, he is his own man. But it is his proposals to modify – or even dismantle – the peace agreement with the FARC, especially the transitional justice accords, that his critics fear. Another concern is his plan to merge all of the high courts into one and to reduce the congress – which would be massive changes to the country's justice and governance. Opposition like Senator Iván Cepeda Castro accuse him of trying to gain impunity for his supporter Uribe and said, "It's a proposal suited to a dictatorship." He's also – along with Vargas Lleras – drawn fire for failing to close the door on fracking, a position he has since backtracked on slightly. Duque has also been accused by various sectors of connections with far-right leaning companies that themselves have connections to paramilitary activity.	He has been criticised as overly professorial and unable to connect with a public who are more moved by feelings than ideas. Others say that by trying to take the middle ground, he's ended up only appealing to a few with an unspecified grey position that is neither black nor white. Fajardo's work as the governor of Antioquia has won him both supporters and detractors. Those who oppose him say that he was behind a number of projects – such as the educational parks and the Biblioteca España – which have turned into expensive white elephants because of high running costs. His claims that he is the fiscally responsible candidate have been met with arguments that during his time as governor of Antioquia, the debt doubled as well as some of the investment decisions taken during that time. Fajardo sparked uproar when he suggested that the pensionable age would have to be increased. None of the other candidates agreed and he reversed his position.	Aside from a reluctance from parts of the electorate to trust a former M-19 guerrilla, the most common fear is that Petro is somehow going to 'turn the country into Venezuela'. His critics say that he used to be an open supporter of Hugo Chavez, and people's unease about what is happening across the border makes them nervous about his socialist economic proposals. Described as 'Wall Street's least favourite candidate', some say that a Petro presidency would scare off foreign investors and be an economic disaster for the country. Economists argue that his plans to move away from the hydrocarbons that currently represent 2-4% of the country's GDP are unfeasible, and additionally that there isn't enough money available to finance his proposals. Another big factor will be his ability to get things done. Not only does he lack a strong constituent in the senate or the congress, but by challenging the country's elite, Petro has almost guaranteed that his policies will be blocked at every stage. When he was mayor of Bogotá, he was criticised for an inability to work in teams, a lack of leadership and a lack of planning. He didn't achieve as much as he wanted to, or promised to.	His detractors scorn his stance on anti-corruption, claiming that his party (the Cambio Radical) have been the most tainted by both corruption and paramilitary connections. The financial newspaper Bloomberg have raised questions about the sustainability of his tax reform, suggesting that it would damage the country's credit rating. Others say that that the reforms will only exacerbate the rich-poor divide. His position in the Santos coalition could be seen as a mixed blessing, given the incumbent president's low popularity right now. It opens him up to blame for any criticisms of the <i>status quo</i> . It also gives him a difficult circle to square. He was part of the government that reached the peace agreement with the FARC (one that he has now agreed to honour), but he himself was not openly in favour of the deal. He has also taken flack for his 'difficult' temperament – exemplified when he hit his own bodyguard on camera a few years ago, angry because people were getting too close.