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Strategy Flash – Ecuador

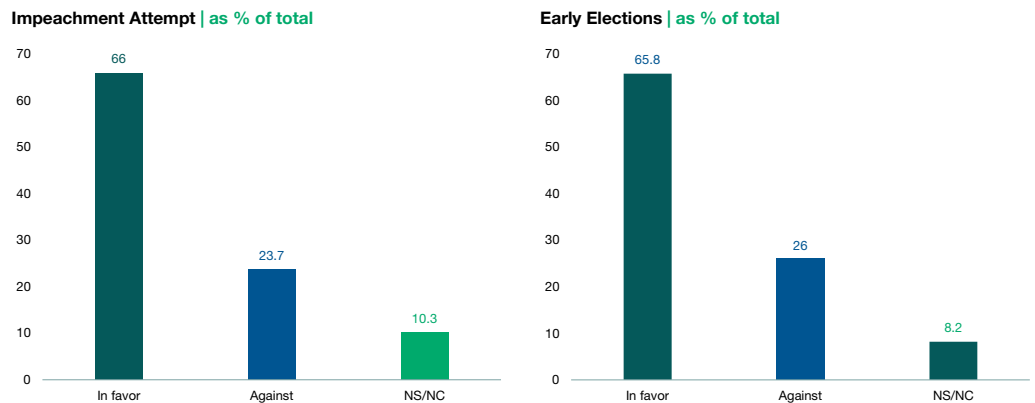
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Ecuador Strategy Flash

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A recent poll by Clima Social conveys that popular support for Mr. Lasso’s impeachment is substantial, hovering around the 65% mark. The poll, conducted in the province of Pichincha (including the country’s capital, Quito), showcases strong support in favor of the impeachment of the current president, tied to the administration’s poor performance. When asked if the National Assembly had to greenlight the impeachment of Mr. Lasso, 66% of the polled answered affirmatively, 23.7% negatively, and the other 10.3% were uncertain. In addition, in a scenario where Mr. Lasso is ousted, 65.8% agree with calling for early elections to choose a new president, while 26% would not support the initiative. The high acceptance levels for the impeachment come on the back of the low approval ratings of the government. 45.3% of the polled deem the Lasso administration as Very Bad, with another 37.4% who view it as Bad, totaling a negative image of nearly 83%. In this context, only 14.2% consider the Lasso Administration Good, with a minor fraction of those polled (0.9%) considering it Very Good. Dissecting the ratings, the poll conveys that the administration enjoys more support from higher socioeconomic strata. The polled who have low incomes present stronger approval ratings for the impeachment (83% Yes vs. 17% No). Those from medium-low and medium economic contexts also amply favor the impeachment (76% vs. 24% and 67% to 33%, respectively). Finally, the difference is tighter in the sub-strata of those with a medium-high income (58% to 41%). However, in the higher percentiles of wealth, the option to end Mr. Lasso’s tenure prematurely prevails over the alternative.

Figure 1: Recent polls convey the impeachment tractions support



Source: TPCG Research based on Clima Social

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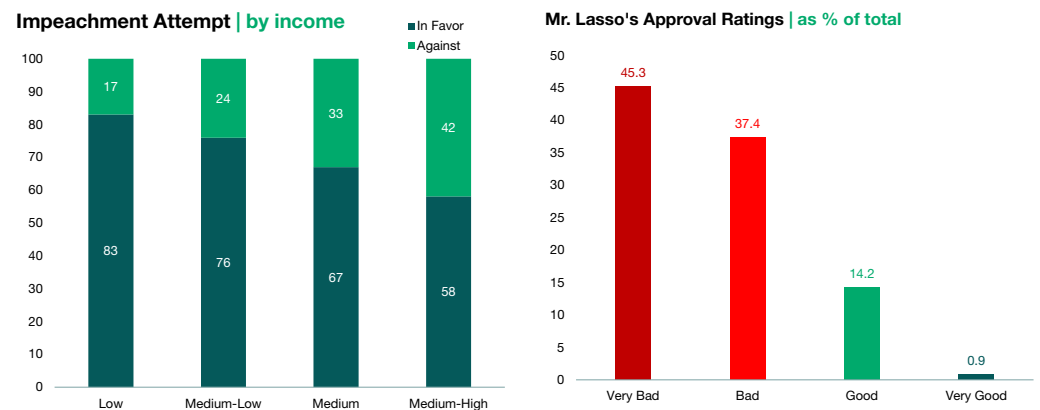
This may embolden the opposition to finally file the impeachment petition, allegedly delayed due to negotiations between the involved political blocs. Last week four parties presented a press release supporting the filing of the impeachment request for Mr. Lasso. The involved caucuses were UNES, the Social Christian party (PSC), Izquierda Democrática (ID), and Pachakutik, which had already voted affirmatively to approve the report on Mr. Lasso’s alleged acts of corruption. The motion was approved by an overwhelming majority, with 104 affirmative votes. The press release also indicated that the plan was to present the impeachment request by mid-March. Previously Mrs. Viviana Veloz, the correist spokeswoman in the impeachment affair,

had stated that the petition was going to be presented sooner. However, the support of the ID and PSC was conditional on the text only mentioning one of the two potential causes to impeach the president. The ID and PSC did not support the cause which accused Mr. Lasso of threatening the security of the state but agreed with the one that charged the president with crimes of bribery, concussion, and embezzlement by omission. This probably delayed the preparation of the petition.

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This compounds with a new scandal filtered by the news outlet La Posta involving Mr. Lasso. The filtered audio logs presented the conversation between high-ranking police officials, who discussed archiving an investigation involving the Albanese mafia, to which Mr. Lasso is allegedly tied. The president immediately responded by firing the officers and stating that he did not possess the authority to order the archiving of any investigation. This skirmish adds to several recent small crises, slowly but surely eroding the minimal political capital of the president. To add insult to injury, on Tuesday, the president of the Assembly stated that the impeachment against Mr. Lasso has to come to fruition, and with it being a completely legal mechanism authorized by the Constitution it is not an attempt to oust the president unlawfully. In addition, Mr. Iza continues to ramp up the pressure against the government, supporting the impeachment and recently declared that the CONAIE’s Assembly will meet on March 17th and mobilize to present the Water Laws by the end of the month.

Figure 2: Mr. Lasso’s approval ratings stand at very low levels



Source: TPCG Research based on Clima Social

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Even with the impeachment attempt in early stages, if Mr. Lasso is ousted the presidency would then fall to Mr. Borrero, the vice president, who will be pressed to call for early elections. Still, for this scenario to materialize, the constitutional court should emit a favorable dictum for the impeachment, and the Assembly still has to vote again to oust the president. With the recent approval of the report securing 104 votes, it does seem likely the opposition will be able to gather the 92 necessary to enforce the impeachment, especially as recent events explicitly showed the four main opposition parties supporting the attempt, including the PSC and ID, who had saved Mr. Lasso in 2022’s impeachment. This leaves the constitutional court as the main barrier that could allow Mr. Lasso to remain in his seat. That and the administration’s capability to dissolve the Assembly with the Muerte Cruzada, which would still trigger elections in 2023. And with the acceptance rates for the impeachment, it is very difficult to see how Mr. Lasso can emerge as a victor of said bout. On the other hand, if Mr. Lasso is ousted, then the presidential baton would fall into Mr. Borrero’s hand. A known medical professional, his political career was kickstarted by the 2021 campaign which saw him run as Mr. Lasso’s vice president. With this in mind, and compounded with the strong popular support for early elections, it is difficult to envisage he could end Mr. Lasso’s tenure, as he will be hard-pressed to call for early elections, especially with little political support and carries eager to exert its recently recovered power in a new presidential election.

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