

ALLIANCES FOR 2018 COLOMBIA'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS CAN YOU TRUST THE CANDIDATES?

Authors: Juan Luis Suárez | Petro and Vargas Lleras polarize the campaign. In the meantime, Yadira Lizama Mué | Fajardo remains quiet.

SUMMARY

Semana's most recent poll puts Gustavo Petro clearly in the lead for voting intentions (23.4%), followed closely by Fajardo (21.6%) and with Vargas Lleras (14.8%) a distant third. De la Calle (10.6%) is fourth, and Marta Lucía Ramírez (7.8%), fifth. Many commentators try to figure out how these results will facilitate alliances after the March vote to Congress, and in the second round of the Presidential election.

CONVERSATIONS & ALLIANCES ►

Fajardo and De la Calle only talk to their closest allies.

To test possible scenarios, we have analyzed Twitter conversations from January through the lens of relationships between candidates. That is, we are interested in who talks to whom, not only because elections are supposed to foster dialogue about issues of importance to citizens, but because these interactions might affect candidates' future prospects. For instance, De la Calle has already said he will never get into an alliance with Vargas Lleras. Many voters would consider him untrustworthy – a sin with which a politician cannot live – if he changes his mind. Today's interactions are all about building trust with followers and showing others' followers they might not be such a bad option if their favorite candidate does not make it to the final.

TELL ME WHO YOU TALK TO...

The first element for trusting a candidate is predictability: voters want to know where they stand on issues and their relationships with other candidates.

DATA FACTS ►

2,538,339 tweets
225,161 users
12,308 hashtags

Tweets from January 2018

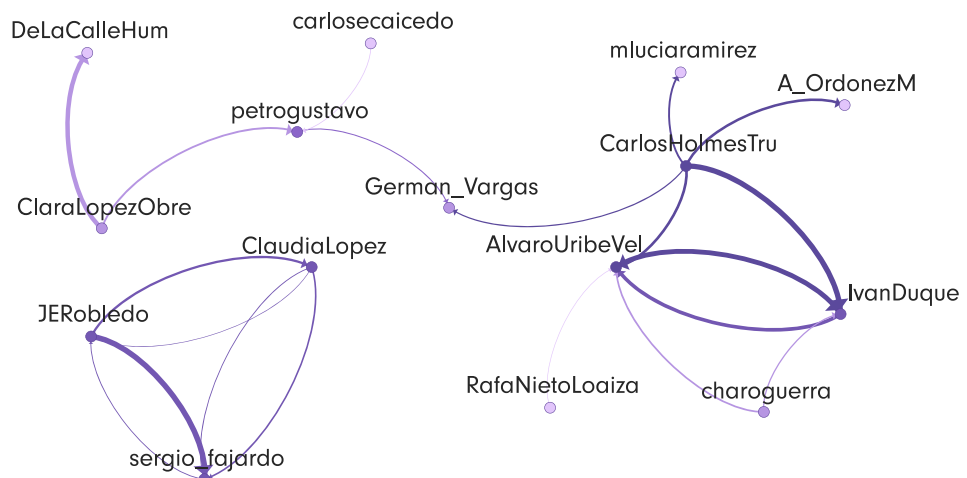


Figure 1. Candidates with more than 20 reactions (retweets, quotes, and replies) between them.

In Figure 1, we see early alliances shown in support they receive from their closest allies (number of times their tweets are retweeted by their partners). Existing alliances make these candidates more predictable for the simple reason they have already committed to their partners. Duque –who makes it just to the fifth position in Semana’s pool when he replaces Ramírez– Fajardo and De la Calle rank the highest in our index of predictability because they have already harvested the first round of support: Uribe’s group, Clara López, and Robledo and Claudia López, respectively. Petro and Vargas Lleras stand by themselves, as though they are not willing to collaborate or engage with other candidates. For the moment, they just fight each other.

Twitter users seem to perceive something similar. When we pull out the number of times that two candidates are mentioned together in the same tweet, here it is what users have to say (Table 1).

CANDIDATES CO-MENTIONS	COUNT
IvanDuque, mluciamirez	38539
A_OrdonezM, mluciamirez	36433
IvanDuque, A_OrdonezM	30436
petrogustavo, sergio_fajardo	30058
German_Vargas, petrogustavo	24967
JERobledo, sergio_fajardo	19666
ClaudiaLopez, sergio_fajardo	18149
petrogustavo, DeLaCalleHum	14754
ClaraLopezObre, DeLaCalleHum	14564
ClaraLopezObre, petrogustavo	14359

Table 1. How many times users mention the candidates together.

It is interesting that a peculiar relationship emerges in both users’ mentions and in the map of relationships between Petro and Vargas Lleras. Why? Because they talk directly to each other a lot (especially Petro to Vargas Lleras) to produce enough polarization that will make them the centre of attention for the left and right. This polarization will eliminate some competitors from their own ideological spectrums.



MOST CO-MENTIONED CANDIDATES ▶

Duque and Ramírez are the two conservative candidates most mentioned together.

PETRO & VARGAS
LLERAS ►

Petro does not let pass the chance to engage with Vargas Lleras.



Figure 2. Some of the messages exchanged by @petrogustavo and @German_Vargas during January 2018.

2. LONESOME STARS HAVE IT EASIER TO CHANGE LATER

The second component of trust is reliability –the extent to which candidates will remain true to images they are projecting now. This is a tricky proposition, because candidates will somehow need to move to attract other groups in the second round, which will make them vulnerable to criticism. So far the lone candidates in the index of predictability –Petro, Vargas Lleras, and Ramírez– have the most flexibility to seek alliances with near-positioned groups in the future. Maybe they are not totally reliable now (they will need to change), but this is an advantage in the first stage of the election provided they can gain a sufficient base of devoted followers.

To understand the constraints of possible shifts in candidates' image and positions, we have calculated the ranking of lexical similarity among candidates. The darker colours in this index show those candidates whose tweets are more similar to one another (Figure 3).

3. ARE THEY FAIR?

The last element for a candidate to be trusted is to be perceived as fair, impartial and honest, especially when they deal with difficult issues.

DISCOURSE SIMILARITY ►

Fajardo, Robledo y Claudia López are reading from the same script.

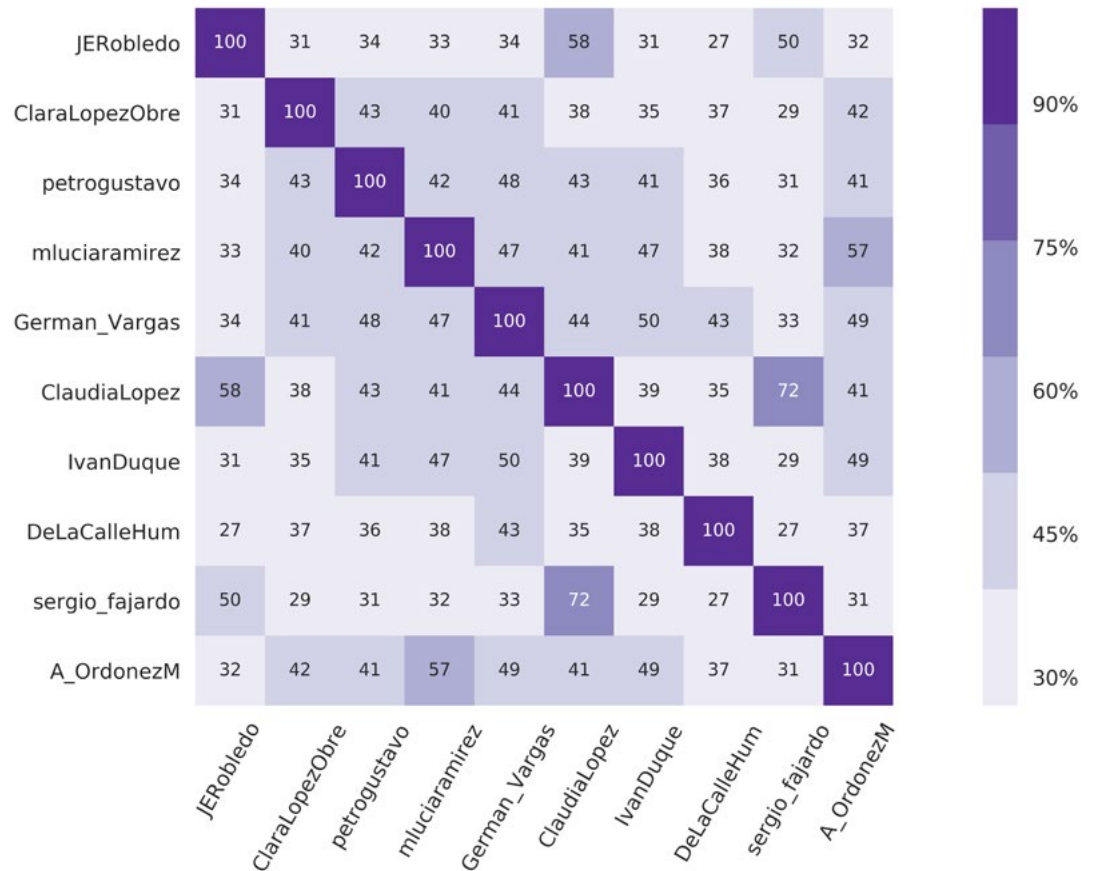


Figure 3. Text similarity of the potential alliances. The darker the color, the more similar the discourse among two candidates.

MOST FREQUENTLY USED UNIGRAMS ►

- Colombia (208,047)
- president (135,102)
- peace (91,430)
- FARC (86,834)
- Venezuela (59,966)

There have been three big controversies in January: Venezuela, peace, and the FARC (as per the most used unigrams), and this is what Petro, Fajardo, Vargas Lleras, De la Calle, Ramírez, and Duque have said about them:



GUSTAVO PETRO

TWEET	DATE	REACTIONS
La condición de Oscar Pérez era la de un rebelde alzado en armas contra el gobierno de Maduro, su asesinato cuando se había rendido, es un crimen de guerra; hecho vivido por centenares de veces en Colombia.	Sat Jan 20 2018	3509
A pesar de todas las diferencias invito de nuevo a @sergio_fajardo, a @JERobledo y a @ClaudiaLopez a por encima de racionamientos de corto plazo, aceptar la conformación de la gran coalición progresista que pueda sentar las bases de la paz de Colombia https://t.co/QdYmqazL7G	Sun Jan 07 2018	1118
Esta es una acusación profundamente irresponsable viniendo de un periodista. Si alguien enfrentó a las Farc con éxito y sin armas en el Cauca fue la guardia indígena. A los indígenas hay que respetarlos y permitir su cultura y su autonomía, son nuestra raíz antigua https://t.co/mH4ea1WnEb	Sat Jan 06 2018	129



SERGIO FAJARDO

TWEET	DATE	REACTIONS
Never mentions Venezuela.		
Con sus actos, el ELN le dio una bofetada a la sociedad y rompió los diálogos de paz. Está en sus manos reparar el daño, veremos si es capaz. Mientras tanto hay que enfrentarlos con toda la capacidad de la fuerza pública.	Mon Jan 29 2018	213
Never mentions the FARC.		



GERMÁN VARGAS LLERAS

TWEET	DATE	REACTIONS
Que no siga pensando la extrema izquierda que quiere llevar al país por el camino que llevó a Venezuela a su actual situación, que en Colombia no hay quien se les ponga. Por que aquí estamos nosotros para evitarlo.	Sat Jan 06 2018	1089
NO puede pretender el ELN que Colombia siga sometida a su accionar delictivo. Es hora que este grupo armado sea claro con el país, ¿Están negociando la paz o están extorsionando al gobierno y a los colombianos? https://t.co/v5YWdWmi0w https://t.co/OQjv59h2OO	Fri Jan 12 2018	86
Que las FARC hoy sean un partido político NO implica que los colombianos hayamos olvidado su actuar criminal, sus vínculos con el narcotráfico, todas las muertes y el dolor que causaron por años. El país aún está esperando que ellos reparen a las víctimas que dejaron a su paso.	Tue Jan 09 2018	1652

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED CANDIDATES

Petro is the candidate most mentioned during January with **310,479** references followed by Duque (**233,051**), and Vargas Lleras (**149,871**). Ramirez (**126,851**) is fifth followed by Fajardo (**119,260**). De la Calle (**54,338**) makes it to ninth.



HUMBERTO DE LA CALLE

TWEET	DATE	REACTIONS
No llegaremos a Venezuela. En mi Gobierno jamás recorreremos el camino del socialismo. #LaPazEnMarcha https://t.co/nzPiB1AKHE	Thu Jan 25 2018	44
Necesitamos una coalición enorme de fuerzas políticas y también de movimientos sociales y ciudadanos que compartan la idea de que no se nos puede quemar el pan de la paz en la puerta del horno del odio.	Tue Jan 09 2018	64
Never mentions the FARC. When referring to candidates, he mentions @TimoFARC twice.		



MARTA LUCÍA RAMÍREZ

TWEET	DATE	REACTIONS
Hoy llegamos de Venezuela. Colombia debe tomar conciencia, verse en el espejo del país vecino y salir a votar masivamente para evitar que a nuestro país le pase lo mismo que a Venezuela. https://t.co/awFkBzdu1f	Fri Jan 19 2018	3474
Mientras haya un solo secuestrado, un solo niño reclutado por parte del @ELN_Paz o mientras haya un solo acto de hostilidad y terrorismo, no podemos estar hablando de una negociación. Una negociación legítima solo procederá, siempre y cuando haya condiciones humanitarias.	Wed Jan 10 2018	408
Es patético que Juan Man Santos se reúna con más frecuencia con farc, que con líderes empresariales xa analizar riesgos y oportunidades de economía colombiana en 2018.	Thu Jan 04 2018	885

DUQUE & URIBE ►

Duque received 98 direct reactions from Uribe. Their relation is reciprocal and one of the strongest in the network.



IVÁN DUQUE

TWEET	DATE	REACTIONS
El régimen de Maduro debe terminar el apoyo a los terroristas del ELN. Le pido a la comunidad internacional y al Gobierno del Presidente Trump presionar a la dictadura venezolana para que no siga brindando santuarios y patrocinio al ELN #NoMasTerrorismo #NoMasImpunidad #Pasto https://t.co/MoylrqLHkv	Mon Jan 29 2018	403
Que no nos vengán con el cuento de que somos enemigos de la paz. Somos defensores de la paz a partir de la justicia. Aquí en Colombia los únicos enemigos de la paz son los que han asesinado, secuestrado y sembrado de minas antipersonales el territorio #Corozal #Sucre https://t.co/IHrMFpCFkl	Fri Jan 12 2018	240
El proceso de negociación con las FARC culminó en noviembre de 2016. Nada hay que negociar, ni nada que renegociar. ¡Deben someterse al ordenamiento jurídico! #NoMásConejo	Fri Jan 05 2018	2369

VENEZUELA ►

Ramírez and Vargas use the situation to score points with conservative voters. Duque advocates U.S. intervention. De la Calle and Petro defend their respective positions. Fajardo remains quiet.

The most interesting fact is Fajardo does not mention Venezuela or the FARC at all, helping him avoid being defined by the political agenda others set. Will he be able to get away with it much longer? Is this the best way to be fair, honest and impartial?

The January polls have shown an incredible growth for Petro's candidacy, at a moment where De la Calle has locked his future to Clara López. Fajardo has done the same with Robledo and Claudia López, but does not position himself about anything controversial (or is it that he does not talk about issues from the past?). Uribe's candidate has not been decided yet. This leaves the stage for Petro and Vargas Lleras to keep growing; they have

not yet consumed their predictability card (they don't have selected their VP candidates), but instead they are using each other to polarize the campaign and look reliable to their followers. They also have very clear positions about all controversial issues. In the next few weeks, they will need to start moving if they want to attract voters beyond their current constituents. Soon they will be pleading for the trust of other Colombians.

METHODOLOGY

We downloaded tweets using the Twitter's streaming API with the following query:

"A_OrdonezM, IvanDuque, navarrowolff, CarlosAlfonsoVR, J_Clopatofsky, PalomaValenciaL, CarlosHolmesTru, JAIME_ARAUJO_R, petrogustavo, carlosecaicedo, JERobledo, piedad-cordoba, charoguerra, juankpinzon, RafaNietoLoaiza, ClaraLopezObre, juanmanuelgalan, sergio_fajardo, ClaudiaLopez, LizarraldeRuben, TimoFARC, CristoBustos, LuisAlfreRamos, UbeimarDelgadoB, DeLaCalleHum, mluciamirez, velascoluisf, German_Vargas, MoralesViviane, JuanManSantos, AlvaroUribeVel"

* Candidates' pictures and tweets were taken directly from their Twitter accounts.

www.cultureplex.ca

EDITION

Antonio Jiménez-Mavillard
Emilio Calderón

DESIGN

Ana Ruiz Segarra

COORDINATION

Daniel Varona Cordero

 [@cultureplex](https://twitter.com/cultureplex) cultureplex@gmail.com

London, Ontario, Canada



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.