

**Globalized Election  
Weekly Report  
February 18, 2010 to February 23, 2010**

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**Week # 107**

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This report is about the presidential elections held in Presidential elections held in Costa Rica.

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**Costa Rica**

| <b>Contents-----</b>                       | <b>Page#</b> |
|--|--------------|
| <b>1. Introduction-----</b>                | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>2. Politics-----</b>                    | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>3. Elections in Costa Rica-----</b>     | <b>8</b>     |
| <b>4. Presidential elections 2010-----</b> | <b>10</b>    |
| <b>5. Results-----</b>                     | <b>12</b>    |
| <b>6. Analysis-----</b>                    | <b>13</b>    |

## Costa Rica

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Capital</b><br>(and largest city) | San José<br>9°55'N 84°4'W   |
| <b>Official language(s)</b>          | Spanish   |
| Recognized regional languages        | Mekatelyu   |
| <b>Ethnic groups</b>                 | 80% Caucasian<br>15% Mestizo<br>3% Black<br>1% Amerindian<br>1% Chinese |
| <b>Demonym</b>                       | Costa Rican; Tico   |
| <b>Government</b>                    | Constitutional democracy<br>(Presidential republic)                     |
| - President                          | Óscar Arias   |
| - <i>President-Elect</i>             | <i>Laura Chinchilla</i>   |
| <b>Independence</b>                  | from Spain (via Guatemala)  |
| - Declared                           | September 15, 1821  |
| - Recognized by Spain                | May 10, 1850  |
| - from the UPCA                      | 1838  |
| <b>Area</b>                          |   |
| - Total                              | 51,100 km <sup>2</sup><br>19,652 sq mi                                  |
| - Water (%)                          | 0.7   |
| <b>Population</b>                    |   |
| - May 2009 estimate                  | 4,509,290   |
| - Density                            | 85/km <sup>2</sup><br>220/sq mi   |
| <b>GDP (PPP)</b>                     | 2008 estimate   |
| - Total                              | \$48.663 billion  |
| - Per capita                         | \$10,735  |
| <b>GDP (nominal)</b>                 | 2008 estimate   |
| - Total                              | \$29.664 billion  |
| - Per capita                         | \$6,543   |

## **1. Introduction**

**Costa Rica**, officially the **Republic of Costa Rica** is a country in Central America, bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the east and south, the Pacific Ocean to the west and south and the Caribbean Sea to the east.

Costa Rica, which translates literally as "Rich Coast", constitutionally abolished its army permanently in 1949. It is the only Latin American country included in the list of the world's 22 older democracies. Costa Rica has consistently been among the top Latin American countries in terms of the Human Development Index, and ranked 54th in the world in 2007. The country is ranked 3rd in the world, and 1st among the Americas, in terms of the 2010 Environmental Performance Index.

In 2007 the Costa Rican government announced plans for Costa Rica to become the first carbon neutral country by 2021. According to the New Economics Foundation, Costa Rica ranks first in the Happy Planet Index and is the "greenest" country in the world.

## **History**

In pre-Columbian times the indigenous people were part of the international Intermediate Area located between the Mesoamerican and Andean cultural regions. This has recently been updated to include the influence of the Isthmo-Colombian area. It was the point where the Mesoamerican and South American native cultures met.

The northwest of the country, the Nicoya Peninsula, was the southernmost point of Nahuatl cultural influence when the Spanish conquerors (conquistadores) came in the sixteenth century. The central and southern portions of the country had Chibcha influences. However, the indigenous people have influenced modern Costa Rican culture to a relatively small degree, as most of these died from diseases such as smallpox and mistreatment by the Spaniards.

The first European to reach what is now Costa Rica was Christopher Columbus in 1502. During Spanish Colonial times, the largest city in Central America was Guatemala City.

Costa Rica's distance from this hub led to difficulty in establishing trade routes and was one of the reasons that Costa Ricans developed in relative isolation and with little oversight from the Spanish Monarchy ("The Crown"). While this isolation allowed the colony to develop free of intervention by The Crown, it also contributed to its failure to share in the prosperity of the Colonies. Costa Rica was described as "the poorest and most miserable Spanish colony in all Americas" by a Spanish governor in 1719.

A factor to this poverty was the lack of indigenous people used as forced labor. While many Spaniards in the other colonies had tribal members working on their land, most of the Costa Rican settlers had to work on their own land themselves. For all these reasons Costa Rica was by and large unappreciated and overlooked by the Crown and left to develop on its own. It is believed that the circumstances during this period led to the formation of many of the idiosyncrasies that Costa Rica has become known for, while at the same time setting the stage for Costa Rica's development as a more egalitarian society than the rest of its neighbors. Costa Rica became a "rural democracy" with no oppressed mestizo or indigenous class. It was not long before Spanish settlers turned to the hills, where they found rich volcanic soil and a climate that was milder than that of the lowlands.

Costa Rica joined other Central American provinces in 1821 in a joint declaration of independence from Spain. After a brief time in the Mexican Empire of Agustín de Iturbide Costa Rica became a state in the Federal Republic of Central America from 1823 to 1839. In 1824 the capital was moved to San José, but violence briefly ensued through an intense rivalry with Cartago. Although the newly independent provinces formed a Federation, border disputes broke out among them, adding to the region's turbulent history and conditions.

Costa Rica's membership in the newly formed Federal Republic of Central America, free of Spanish rule, was short lived; in 1838, long after the Central American Federation ceased to function in practice, Costa Rica formally withdrew and proclaimed itself sovereign. The distance from Guatemala City to the Central Valley of Costa Rica, where most of the population lived and still lives, was great. The local population had little

allegiance to the government in Guatemala City, in part because of the history of isolation during Colonial times. Costa Rica's disinterest in participating as a province in a greater Central American government was one of the deciding factors in the break-up of the fledgling federation into independent states, which still exist today. However, all of the Central American nations still celebrate September 15 as their independence day, which pertains to the independence of Central America from Spain.

Most Afro-Costa Ricans, who constitute about 3% of the country's population, descend from Jamaican immigrants who arrived during the 1880s to work in the construction of railways connecting the urban populations of the Central Plateau to the port of Limón on the Caribbean coast. United States convicts and Chinese immigrants also participated in the construction project, conducted by U.S. businessman Minor C. Keith. In exchange for completing the railroad, the Costa Rican government granted Keith large tracts of land and a lease on the train route, which he used to produce bananas and export them to the United States. As a result, bananas came to rival coffee as the principal Costa Rican export, while foreign-owned corporations (including the United Fruit Company) began to hold a major role in the national economy.

## **20th century**

Historically, Costa Rica has generally enjoyed greater peace and more consistent political stability compared with many of its fellow Latin American nations. Since the late nineteenth century, however, Costa Rica has experienced two significant periods of violence. In 1917–19, Federico Tinoco Granados ruled as a dictator until he was overthrown and forced into exile. Again in 1948, José Figueres Ferrer led an armed uprising in the wake of a disputed presidential election. With more than 2,000 dead, the resulting 44-day Costa Rican Civil War was the bloodiest event in Costa Rica during the twentieth-century.

Afterwards, the new, victorious government junta, led by the opposition, abolished the military and oversaw the drafting of a new constitution by a democratically elected assembly. Having enacted these reforms, the regime finally relinquished its power on

November 8, 1949, to the new democratic government. After the coup d'état, Figueres became a national hero, winning the country's first democratic election under the new constitution in 1953. Since then, Costa Rica has held 13 presidential elections, the latest being in 2010. All of them have been widely regarded by the international community as peaceful, transparent, and relatively smooth transitions.

## **Government**

Costa Rica is a democratic republic with a strong constitution. The country has had at least 59 years of uninterrupted democracy, making it one of the most stable countries in the region, and the only Latin American country included in the list of the world's 22 older democracies since at least 1950. Costa Rica has been able to avoid the widespread violence that has plagued most of Latin America.

Costa Rica is a republic with three powers: executive responsibilities are vested in a president, legislative power is vested on the Legislative Assembly, and Judicial power is vested on the Supreme Court. There are two vice presidents as well as a cabinet designated by the president. The president, vice presidents, and 57 Legislative Assembly delegates are elected for four-year terms. A constitutional amendment approved in 1969 limited presidents and delegates to one term, although delegates were allowed to run again for an Assembly seat after sitting out a term.

The Supreme Electoral Body, the Office of the Comptroller General, the Office of the Procurator General of the Republic and the Office of the Ombudsman also enjoy a lot of independence.

The Supreme Court is divided into four chambers, one dealing with Constitutional Law, one dealing with Criminal Law and two dealing with Civil Law, Merchant Law and the like.

In April 2003, the constitutional amendment ban on presidential re-election was reversed, allowing Óscar Arias (Nobel Peace Prize laureate, 1987) to run for president for a second term. In 2006, Óscar Arias was elected in a tight and highly contested election, running

on a platform of promoting free trade. He took office on May 8, 2006. He will be succeeded by Laura Chinchilla who won the February 7 2010 election. She is also from the National Liberation Party and is the first woman to be elected president of the country.

In 2009, the state monopoly on insurance and telecommunications were opened to private-sector competition. Certain other state agencies enjoy considerable operational independence and autonomy; they include the electrical power, the nationalized commercial banks (which are open to competition from private banks), and the social security agency, all of which have played an important role in the development of the Costa Rican high-indexed quality of life.

Costa Rica has no military by constitution.

### **Provinces, cantons, and districts**

Provinces of Costa Rica.

Costa Rica is composed of seven provinces, which in turn are divided into 81 cantons ("cantón" in Spanish, plural "cantones"), each of which is directed by a mayor. Mayors are chosen democratically every four years by each canton's people. There are no provincial legislatures. The cantons are further divided into districts (*distritos*). The provinces are:

1. Alajuela
2. Cartago
3. Guanacaste
4. Heredia
5. Limón
6. Puntarenas
7. San José

## 2. Elections in Costa Rica

Costa Rica elects on national level a head of state – the president – and a legislature. The President of Costa Rica is, together with two vice-presidents, elected for a four-year term by the people. The Legislative Assembly (*Asamblea Legislativa*) has 57 members, elected for four-year terms by proportional representation in each of the country's seven province.

Costa Rica had a two-party system, which means that there were two dominant political parties, making it extremely difficult for anybody to achieve electoral success under the banner of any other party. In the most recent elections, more parties have achieved electoral success.

### Latest elections

| <b>Summary of the 5 February 2006 Costa Rica presidential election results</b>             |              |          |
|--|--------------|----------|
| <b>Candidates</b>  | <b>Votes</b> | <b>%</b> |
| Óscar Arias - National Liberation Party ( <i>Partido Liberación Nacional</i> )             | 664,551      | 40.92    |
| Ottón Solís - Citizens' Action Party ( <i>Partido Acción Ciudadana</i> )                   | 646,382      | 39.80    |
| Otto Guevara - Libertarian Movement Party ( <i>Partido Movimiento Libertario</i> )         | 137,710      | 8.48     |
| Ricardo Toledo - Social Christian Unity Party ( <i>Partido de Unidad Socialcristiana</i> ) | 57,655       | 3.55     |

|  |           |       |
|--|-----------|-------|
| Antonio Álvarez Desanti - Union for Change Party ( <i>Partido Unión para el Cambio</i> ) | 39,557    | 2.44  |
| Jose Manuel Echandi Meza - National Union Party ( <i>Partido Unión Nacional</i> )        | 26,593    | 1.64  |
| Juan Jose Vargas Fallas - Homeland First Party ( <i>Partido Patria Primero</i> )         | 17,594    | 1.08  |
| Other parties  | 33,950    | 2.09  |
| <b>Total</b> (Turnout 65.4 %)  | 1,623,992 | 100.0 |
| Final results according to TSE   |           |       |

### Summary of the 5 February 2006 Costa Rica parliamentary election results

| Candidates   | Votes   | %     | Seats |
|--|---------|-------|-------|
| National Liberation Party ( <i>Partido Liberación Nacional</i> ) | 589,731 | 36.54 | 25    |
| Citizens' Action Party ( <i>Partido Acción Ciudadana</i> )       | 409,030 | 25.34 | 17    |

|   |                  |              |           |
|---|------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Libertarian Movement Party ( <i>Partido Movimiento Libertario</i> )       | 147,934          | 9.17         | 6         |
| Social Christian Unity Party ( <i>Partido de Unidad Socialcristiana</i> ) | 126,284          | 7.82         | 5         |
| Costa Rican Renovation Party ( <i>Partido Renovación Costaricense</i> )   | 55,798           | 3.46         | 0         |
| National Union Party ( <i>Partido Unión Nacional</i> )                    | 40,280           | 2.5          | 1         |
| Union for Change Party ( <i>Partido Unión para el Cambio</i> )            | 37,994           | 2.35         | 0         |
| Homeland First Party ( <i>Partido Patria Primero</i> )                    | 26,438           | 1.64         | 0         |
| National Rescue Party ( <i>Partido Rescate Nacional</i> )                 | 32,909           | 2.04         | 1         |
| Access without Exclusion ( <i>Accesibilidad sin Exclusión</i> )           | 25,690           | 1.59         | 1         |
| Broad Front ( <i>Frente Amplio</i> )                                      | 17,751           | 1.10         | 1         |
| Other parties   | 104,122          | 6.45         | 0         |
| <b>Total</b> (Turnout 65.2 %)   | <b>1,613,961</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>57</b> |

Final results according to TSE

### 3. Costa Rican general election, 2010

Costa Rica held **parliamentary and presidential elections** on February 7, 2010. The ruling party before the election, the center-left National Liberation Party, put forward former Vice-President Laura Chinchilla as its presidential candidate, while the libertarian, Movimiento Libertario nominated former legislator Otto Guevara. Opinion polls before voting started consistently put Chinchilla as the front-runner, a trend confirmed in the election-night count, which showed her garnering 46.76% of the vote.

The election was supervised by observers from several countries, as well as from the Organization of American States. The incumbent President, Óscar Arias, was ineligible to run for a second consecutive term.

#### **Presidential candidates**

Candidates included:

- Laura Chinchilla Miranda (ruling National Liberation Party, vice-president 2006-08)
- Ottón Solís (oppositional Citizens' Action Party, candidate in 2006)
- Otto Guevara (Movimiento Libertario, candidate in 2006)
- Luis Fishman (conservative Social Christian Unity Party, vice-president under Abel Pacheco)

## Opinion polling

*CID-Gallup* 24 January 2010: **Chinchilla** 43 %; Guevara 30 %; Solís 15 %; Fishman 8 %

*Borge & Asociados for Diario Extra opinion poll* January 2010: **Chinchilla** 38.7 %; Guevara 18.3 %; Solís 9.6 %; Fishman 3.7 %

*Demoscopía for Al Día* January 2010: **Chinchilla** 45.1 %; Guevara 30.1 %; Solís 9.5 %; Fishman 3.8 %.

December 2009: **Chinchilla** 36.7 %; Guevara 16.2 %; Solís 8.5 %; Fishman 2.2 %

December 2009: **Chinchilla** 46.6 %; Guevara 19.5 %; Solís 8.3 %; Fishman 4.1 %

October 2009: **Chinchilla** 53.0 %; Guevara 15.7 %; Solís 12.3 %; Fishman 1.5 %

## 4. President election results

At 9:08 p.m. local time on election day, February 7, second-placed candidate Otton Solís conceded defeat to Laura Chinchilla, who will become Costa Rica's first female president. With approximately 40% of the vote counted, Chinchilla was consistently surpassing the 40% threshold for victory in the first round, leading Solís by 47% to 24%, with third-placed candidate Otto Guevara trailing at 21.5%.

*Note: Partial results with 94.182% of precincts processed (6,232 out of 6,617).*

| Ticket  | Party                              | Votes  | %     | Result |
|---|------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Óscar López<br>Agnes Lilliana<br>Gutiérrez<br>Miguel Calderón | Accessibility without<br>Exclusion | 34,824 | 1.909 |        |

|  |                            |                |               |  |
|--|----------------------------|----------------|---------------|--|
| Ottón Solís<br>Mónica Segnini<br>Julio Humphreys         | Citizens' Action           | 459,258        | 25.169        |  |
| Rolando Araya<br>Rocío Barahona<br>Dionisio Cabal        | Patriotic Alliance         | 3,748          | 0.205         |  |
| Eugenio Trejos<br>Carmen Chacón<br>Wilmar Matarrita      | Broad Front                | 6,736          | 0.369         |  |
| Walter Muñoz<br>Álvaro Montero<br>Vivian González        | National Integration       | 2,995          | 0.164         |  |
| <b>Laura Chinchilla<br/>Alfio Piva<br/>Luis Liberman</b> | <b>National Liberation</b> | <b>853,263</b> | <b>46.762</b> | <b>President<br/>1st Vice-<br/>President<br/>2nd Vice-<br/>President</b> |
| Otto Guevara<br>Mario Quiroz<br>Lorena San Román         | Libertarian Movement       | 380,103        | 20.831        |  |
| Mayra González   | Costa Rican Renovation     | 13,203         | 0.724         |  |

|  |                        |                  |                     |  |
|--|------------------------|------------------|---------------------|--|
| Carlos Viquez<br>José Herrera                  |                        |                  |                     |  |
| Luis Fishman<br>Humberto Vargas<br>Iris Zamora | Social Christian Unity | 70,546           | 3.866               |  |
| <b>Total valid votes</b>                       |                        | <b>1,824,676</b> | <b>100.00</b>       |  |
| Null votes                                     |                        | 29,825           | 1.603               |  |
| Blank votes                                    |                        | 6,530            | 0.351               |  |
| <b>Total votes</b>                             |                        | <b>1,861,031</b> | <b>100.00</b>       |  |
| <b>Total voters enrolled</b>                   |                        | <b>2,690,550</b> | <b>N/A% turnout</b> |  |

^ Candidacy withdrawn on January 15, 2010 in favor of Solís.

## Costa Rica. Presidential Election 2010

|          |        |            |         |
|----------|--------|------------|---------|
| Regions  | Solís  | Chinchilla | Guevara |
| Total    | 25.12% | 46.78%     | 20.83%  |
| SAN JOSE | 29.04% | 49.52%     | 17.51%  |

|            |        |        |        |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|
| ALAJUELA   | 26.49% | 45.20% | 21.92% |
| CARTAGO    | 23.44% | 49.68% | 19.31% |
| HEREDIA    | 27.67% | 46.53% | 19.44% |
| GUANACASTE | 16.09% | 50.99% | 23.23% |
| PUNTARENAS | 17.12% | 49.03% | 26.68% |
| LIMON      | 17.41% | 41.36% | 31.41% |

## 5. Costa Rica 2010 election analysis

General elections were held in the Central American nation of Costa Rica on February 7. Incumbent President and Nobel Prize Laureate Óscar Arias, elected to a second non-consecutive term following a very narrow election in 2006, was not allowed to seek re-election. The 57 members of Costa Rica's 57-member Legislative Assembly were also up for re-election.

In the largely middle-class and racially homogeneous, consensus-based peaceful, moderate politics have prevailed in Costa Rica since a period of brief turbulence in 1948. Between 1948 and 2006, Costa Rican politics were very bipartisan with two major power blocs: on the left, the National Liberation Party (PLN) and on the right, the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC). Ideological distinctions were often blurry between both parties, though historically the PUSC advocated more neoliberal economic policies despite being a 'social Christian' and populist party. Still, the PLN under President Óscar Arias has moved to the right and many members of the PLN's left-wing have criticized the party's shift to the right and some members of the PLN, such as Ottón Solís have left the party. The PUSC, whose candidate Abel Pacheco won the 2002 election, was destroyed by a large corruption scandal involving former PUSC Presidents following the 2002 election.

In the 2006 election, Arias, who was first elected in 1986 and left office in 1990 with a Nobel Prize in hand for his efforts at peace negotiations in neighboring countries which had been engulfed in civil wars in the 80s, was allowed to seek re-election in 2006. He

won 40.9% of the vote against 39.8% for Ottón Solís. The PUSC's Ricardo Toledo won 3.55% of the vote.

In an internal PLN primary, Arias' candidate, Laura Chinchilla defeated the candidate of the PLN left – Johnny Araya, Mayor of San José with 55% against 41% for her main opponent. Chinchilla is a member of the so-called Arista wing of the PLN, or the right-wing which supports CAFTA (free trade with the US) and positions itself outside the PLN's historical socialist ideology and more on a Third Way scale.

Her two main opponents were Ottón Solís, running to her left on a left wing platform opposed to neoliberalism and CAFTA; and Otto Guevara of the Libertarian Movement (ML), which supports a free-market economy and is a classical liberal party. The ML is notably pro-American and strongly opposed to the Cuban regime, and has seemingly benefited from the 2006 collapse of the PUSC. Here are the results of the presidential election:

*Italicized candidates dropped out in favour of Ottón Solís.*

|                                |                   |        |              |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------|--------------|
| Laura                          | Chinchilla        | (PLN)  | 46.78%       |
| Ottón                          | Solís             | (PAC)  | 25.15%       |
| Otto                           | Guevara           | (ML)   | 20.83%       |
| Luis                           | Fishman           | (PUSC) | 3.86%        |
| Óscar                          | López             | (PAE)  | 1.91%        |
| Mayra                          | González          | (PRC)  | 0.72%        |
| Eugenio                        | Trejos (FA)       |        | 0.37%        |
| <i>Rolando</i>                 | <i>Araya (AP)</i> |        | <i>0.21%</i> |
| <i>Walter Muñoz (IN) 0.17%</i> |                   |        |              |



In the legislative elections, here are the results for the major parties. Data from the TSE and *La Nacion* newspaper.

|      |        |         |    |       |      |
|------|--------|---------|----|-------|------|
| PLN  | 37.16% | winning | 23 | seats | (-1) |
| PAC  | 17.68% | winning | 12 | seats | (-5) |
| ML   | 14.48% | winning | 9  | seats | (+3) |
| PUSC | 8.05%  | winning | 6  | seats | (+1) |
| PAE  | 9.17%  | winning | 4  | seats | (+3) |
| PRC  | 3.79%  | winning | 1  | seat  | (+1) |
| FA   | 3.66%  | winning | 1  | seat  | (+1) |

RN 1.62% winning 1 seat (+1)

The other parties winning seats include the left-wing ‘Accessibility without Exclusion’, a single-issue (disabled rights) party; the Costa Rican Renovation (PRC) party which is a Christian Protestant evangelical right-wing party; the very left-wing Broad Front and a party ‘National Restoration’ which I can’t find information about.