Social movements and leftist governments in Latin America

confrontation or co-optation?

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5 | Social movements and the government of Rafael Correa: confrontation or cooperation?

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On 10 August 2009, the bicentennial of Ecuador's first declaration of independence from Spain, Rafael Correa was inaugurated for a second term as the country's president. Correa had gained broad popular support through a combination of nationalist rhetoric and increased social spending on education and healthcare. His meteoric rise to power and consolidation of political control over this systemically unstable country has been truly remarkable. He is the first president in Ecuador to win a sequential term in office.[1] His rise to power came in the context of the complete collapse of the old political establishment. Correa championed his victory as the second liberation of Ecuador.

While many international observers and solidarity activists either bemoaned or cheered Correa's triumph as part of Latin America's move to the left, many social movement activists in Ecuador were much less convinced that the actions of his government would benefit them. Despite Correa's claims that under his administration the long dark night of neoliberalism was finally over, Indigenous peoples[2] condemned him for continuing these same policies through large-scale mineral extractive enterprises, particularly of petroleum in the ecologically delicate eastern Amazonian basin. His populist posturing appeared to be part of a long Latin American tradition of appealing to the left to win election, only to implement policies once in office that favored the traditional oligarchy in order to retain control over the government.

Equally surprising as Correa's rapid rise to power has been the rapid collapse of social movements. Since a 1990 Indigenous uprising that challenged elite exclusionary power structures, Ecuador had been positioned as a leading model for how to organize a grassroots social movement. The largest and best-known Indigenous organization was the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), founded in 1986 as an umbrella group of regional Indigenous organizations intended to represent all Indigenous peoples in Ecuador. CONAIE emerged on the national scene through a 1990 uprising for land and Indigenous

rights that shook the country's white elite to its core. In addition to CONAIE, two competing Indigenous organizations were the Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras (FENOCIN, National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Negro Organizations) and the Consejo de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas Evangélicas del Ecuador (FEINE, Council of Evangelical Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Ecuador). FENOCIN has its roots in the Catholic Church's attempts in the 1960s to draw support away from the communist-affiliated Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (FEI, Ecuadorian Federation of Indians). FENOCIN broke with the Church and became much more radical in the 1970s, assuming a socialist position. It allied with Correa in the 2009 elections, and some of its principal leaders, including President Pedro de la Cruz, served as Acuerdo País (AP) deputies. FEINE tended to be much more conservative, and allied with former president Lucio Gutiérrez. From this perspective, FEINE also criticized Correa for his failure to incorporate broader participation in his government.[3] In the past, the three organizations (CONAIE, FENOCIN, and FEINE) sometimes collaborated to advance Indigenous interests and at other times they have bitterly competed with each other for allegiance to their Indigenous base. After Correa's rise to power, they remained as fractured as they ever had been.

Complicated relationships between social movements and elected governments, along with the disruptions they create for Indigenous organizing strategies, are not new. Lucio Gutiérrez allied with Indigenous activists to claim the presidency in 2003, but then managed to cripple the movement that was largely responsible for bringing him to power. Correa moved much more quickly than his predecessor to usurp the leadership of social movements, removing a force that could challenge his hold on power. Notably, Ecuador had failed to produce national-level social movement leaders who were capable of realizing cross-class and cross-ethnic appeal similar to what Evo Morales achieved in Bolivia. Indigenous movements declined from being a leading actor in defining the direction of Ecuadorean politics to a marginal and bit player. Correa, with his eager desire to monopolize control in his own hands, appeared to be negating a strong opportunity for social movements to open up political spaces that would allow for a fundamental restructuring of Ecuador's historically exclusionary political system. Negotiating relationships with a seemingly sympathetic government points to the compromises and contradictions that a social movement faces in attempting to implement an agenda of improving the lives of marginalized peoples.

Rafael Correa

Correa was a young economist and university professor who wrote his dissertation at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, attacking the neoliberal economic policies known as the 'Washington Consensus.'[4] He did not emerge out of social movement organizing, but rather out of a Catholic left motivated by concerns for social justice. Correa first came onto the public scene in 2005 as the minister of finance in Alfredo Palacio's government after Gutiérrez fell from power when his neoliberal policies alienated a large segment of the population. Correa leveraged his popularity in that position to a win in the 2006 presidential elections. In power, Correa appeared to follow Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez's strategy of consolidating power through rewriting the Constitution. He could then call for new elections that would reaffirm him in office and provide for a more sympathetic legislature. Like Chávez, Correa had run as an independent without the support of a traditional political party. The existing 'party-ocracy' was severely discredited in both countries.[5]

On 15 April 2007, three months after Correa took office, 80 percent of the Ecuadorean electorate approved a referendum to convoke a Constituent Assembly. Correa created a new political movement called Acuerdo País (AP), which on 30 September 2007 won a majority of seats in the Assembly. A year later, on 28 September 2008, almost two-thirds of the voters approved the new Constitution, which had been drafted largely under Correa's control. As was the case with Venezuela's 1999 Constitution, Ecuador's new Magna Carta so fundamentally remapped Ecuador's political structures that it required new local, congressional, and presidential elections.

Lengthy and contentious debates in the Constituent Assembly resulted in a constitution that provided a basis for a more inclusionary and participatory political system. The new document rejected neoliberalism, and embraced increased resource allocation to education, social services, and healthcare. Like Venezuela's, it employed gender-inclusive language. It also expanded democratic participation, including extending the vote to those between sixteen and eighteen years of age, foreigners living in the country for more than five years, and Ecuadorean immigrants living outside the country. The Constitution also defended the rights of nature, Indigenous languages, and in a highly symbolic gesture, plurinationalism designed to incorporate Indigenous cosmologies into the governing of the country. The Constitution also borrowed from Bolivia's foreign minister David Choquehuanca the Quechua concept of *sumak kawsay*, of living well, not

just better. *Sumak kawsay* includes an explicit critique of traditional development strategies that increase the use of resources rather than seeking to live in harmony with others and with nature.

Following Venezuela's lead, Ecuador also created five branches of government. In addition to the executive, legislative, and judicial, the Constitution added an electoral branch, the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE, National Electoral Council), and a 'Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social' or Council of Citizenship Participation and Social Control. The last branch was in charge of nominating officials, including the attorney general and comptroller general. Its purpose was to increase citizen participation and improve political transparency, although the opposition complained that it would concentrate more power in Correa's hands. Advocates argued that a stronger executive was necessary to bring stability to this chronically politically unstable country. Since 1996, not a single president in Ecuador had been able to complete a four-year term in office. Three presidents (Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, Jamil Mahuad in 2000, and Lucio Gutiérrez in 2005) were removed through massive street protests. Social movements, on the other hand, feared that a stronger executive would come at a cost to their ability to influence policy decisions.

2009 elections

Correa won the 26 April 2009 presidential elections with 52 percent of the vote.[6] With this victory, he promised to accelerate the pace of his 'citizens' revolution.' He 'dreamed of a scenario in which there is no misery, there is no inequality, there is no injustice.' To achieve these goals, he would pursue reforms that would expand the popular economy, including supporting informal businesses, micro-enterprises, artisans, and cooperatives.[7]

The significance of Correa's victory cannot be overstated. Most Latin American presidential campaigns are multi-party races that require either a run-off election between the top two vote-getters or a congressional decision to select the victor. Salvador Allende, for example, won the 1970 presidential race in Chile with only 36 percent of the vote. Evo Morales' 2005 victory in Bolivia with 54 percent of the vote was the first time in that country's history that a candidate had won the election with a majority of the vote. Correa's victory was the first time since Ecuador's return to civilian rule in 1979 that a candidate had won a high enough percentage of the vote to avoid a run-off election. Under the current Constitution, in order to avoid a second round a candidate must either win more than 50 percent of the vote,

or gain at least 40 percent of the vote and outpace the nearest rival by at least 10 percentage points. In Ecuador's fragmented and contentious political landscape, it is unusual for any candidate to poll more than 25 percent of the vote in the initial multi-candidate round. For someone to win in the first round, particularly in the crowded field of eight candidates that Correa faced, is almost unheard of in Ecuador or anywhere in Latin America.

A variety of factors contributed to Correa's first-round victory. Unquestionably, he counted on broad public support for his political project. Correa also faced a weakened and discredited opposition, with many of the traditional political parties in complete collapse. The Ecuadorean electorate also suffered from fatigue from frequent and extra-constitutional changes in power, and many people welcomed the political stability Correa's first term (although truncated, owing to the calling of elections under the new Constitution) brought to the country. With Ecuador having run through ten chief executives in ten years prior to Correa's election, Correa appears positioned to remain in power for ten years if he can maintain his current coalition to win reelection in 2013.

Correa's closest competitor was the former president Lucio Gutiérrez of the relatively new centrist Partido Sociedad Patriótica (PSP, Patriotic Society Party), which won 28 percent of the vote. In 2003, in a seeming repeat of Hugo Chávez's rise to power in Venezuela, Gutiérrez was elected president after a failed 2001 military–Indigenous coup. He quickly moved in a significantly neoliberal direction, alienated his social movement base and finally fell in an April 2005 popular uprising known as the 'rebellion of the *forajidos*' or outlaws. In the 2009 election, Gutiérrez continued to draw a significant amount of support from his native Amazonian region, winning those provinces by a wide margin. He also polled well in evangelical Indigenous communities in the central highland provinces of Bolívar, Chimborazo, and Tungurahua. Even though Gutiérrez continued to identify himself as with the left, most of those on the left now denounced him as a center-right populist. Many people from the conservative opposition voted for him, including the most traditional sectors of the Catholic Church grouped into Opus Dei, who recognized him as the best opportunity to defeat Correa. Their opportunistic positioning led Correa to condemn 'the amorality of our powerful sectors, of the Ecuadorian right, because they put their interests before their principles.' No one, Correa claimed, 'can vote for a person with such serious moral and intellectual limitations as Lucio Gutiérrez.' Following this strategy, the old elite 'shot themselves in the

foot, thank God.'[8] For social movements, even if they had misgivings about Correa's policies and his monopolizing their political spaces, their old ally Lucio Gutiérrez was a much worse option.

The third-place candidate was billionaire banana magnate Alvaro Noboa of the right-wing Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional (PRIAN, National Action Party of Institutional Renewal). Noboa almost defeated Correa in the 2006 elections. In 2009, however, with the right completely discredited but still running on the same neoliberal agenda of privatization, opening up the country to foreign capital, and lowering taxes for the most wealthy, he only polled 11 percent. This was his worst showing in four attempts to win the presidency.

Traditional parties such as the Partido Social Cristiano (PSC, Social Christian Party) continued to lose support. In fact, all of the parties that largely defined the return to civilian rule in 1979 and had actively contested power over the last thirty years – the PSC, the Izquierda Democrática (ID, Democratic Left), the Democracia Popular-Democracia Cristiana (DP, Popular Democracy), the Partido Roldosista Ecuatoriano (PRE, Ecuadorean Roldosist Party) – had now largely disappeared. The PSC did not run a presidential candidate, instead focusing its energies on congressional and municipal elections. In the coastal commercial port city of Guayaquil, which has long been a bastion of opposition to Correa's left-populist government, the conservative PSC mayor Jaime Nebot easily won reelection. Despite its declining fortunes, the PSC still won eleven seats in the National Assembly, making it the third-most powerful party in Congress. Noboa's right-wing PRIAN won six seats. The right, however, was far from unified, with much of its program extending little beyond a stated opposition to Correa. Even in Guayaquil, however, political allegiances were constituted along class lines, with poor people strongly supporting Correa, including many of those who voted for Nebot as mayor.

The left did not fare any better than the right. Martha Roldós, the strongest left-wing competitor, won less than 5 percent of the vote. The daughter of the progressive president Jaime Roldós, who returned Ecuador to civilian rule in 1979 but was killed two years later in a mysterious plane crash, ran as a candidate of the Red Ética y Democracia (RED, Ethics and Democracy Network), which grouped labor leaders and other leftist militants. Her campaign was based largely on attacking Correa, without successfully presenting an alternative to his 'citizens' revolution' project. Longtime radical socialist leader Diego Delgado strongly questioned Correa's commitment to socialism, but his candidacy failed to gain 1 percent of the vote. Similarly to how

conservatives had grouped much of their vote behind Gutiérrez to keep Correa out of power, many on the left preferred to opt for Correa instead of risking a conservative victory. Three other conservative candidates together won about 4 percent of the vote.

Many on the left had urged Alberto Acosta, the popular former president of the 2008 Constituent Assembly, to run. When it appeared unlikely that he could rally the left against Correa in the face of the president's overwhelming popularity, he declined to enter the race. The Indigenous party Pachakutik did not run a presidential candidate and refused to endorse any of the candidates. In the 2006 elections, when a possible alliance with Correa fell apart, Pachakutik ran their standard-bearer Luis Macas but polled only 2 percent of the vote. After that disappointing experience, Indigenous activists remained leery of venturing another bid for the country's highest office, preferring instead to focus their efforts on local races. Correa repeatedly used Macas's dismal showing in 2006 to argue that radical Indigenous movements represented an insignificant percentage of the population.

While Correa enjoyed majority support from the voters, the same is not true of his AP, which lost its control over Congress. The party won 59 of the 124 assembly seats, just short of the 63-vote majority needed to pass legislation. Even that figure was higher than the 55 that some observers had initially estimated. After campaigning in 2006 without the support of a political party or alliances with congressional delegates, Correa still had difficulty drawing his new party together three years later. The 25 January 2009 primaries for legislative and local races were fraught with difficulties and disorganization. The AP was by no means an ideologically homogeneous or coherent party, which may have been its greatest strength as well as its largest weakness. While it incorporated a broad range of people, that diversity also threatened to pull the party apart into left and right wings. In an attempt to strengthen the electoral fortunes of his congressional allies in the run-up to the April vote, Correa implemented several populist economic measures, such as restructuring the foreign debt. Even these efforts failed to extend his shirttails to congressional contests.

A string of high-profile dissidents left the party, complaining that Correa's authoritarian nature left no space to discuss or question the decisions that he made. In addition to Alberto Acosta, Mónica Chuji broke with the president over what she saw as his inadequate challenges to extractive neoliberal policies and a failure to provide strong support for Indigenous issues. In Correa's first government, Chuji had served as his communication secretary. In the 2008 Constituent

Assembly, Chuji won election as an AP delegate and effectively provided an Indigenous face for Correa's policies. In the April 2009 elections, Chuji joined Martha Roldós as the lead congressional candidate for the leftist RED coalition.

Adding an additional layer of complication to Correa's plans to consolidate power was the strong showing of Gutiérrez's party. The PSP won nineteen seats, making it the second largest and a very antagonistic presence in Congress. Correa's complications in controlling the Congress were further indicated by the delay in reporting the results of the congressional vote. It was not until 1 July, more than two months after the 26 April elections, that electoral officials released the results. This delay in reporting the vote, together with Correa's weaker than expected showing, took much of the shine off his victory. Gutiérrez claimed he had evidence of a monstrous fraud that denied him victory, although the electoral council rejected the charge. The electoral council contended that the delay in reporting the vote was due to Gutiérrez's politically motivated challenges to the electoral outcome. AP congressional leader Fernando Cordero, in turn, charged the opposition with fraud, including claims that they had moved votes from the AP to other small left-wing parties, in particular the RED.[9] International observers, meanwhile, criticized Correa's overwhelmingly dominant media presence as compromising the fairness of the poll.

Even though the AP fell far short of the two-thirds majority it enjoyed in the Constituent Assembly, it still remained the largest party in the Assembly. To gain a controlling majority would require building alliances with smaller leftist parties. Such alliances were sure to be fragile. Correa claimed that he should be able to secure a total of seventy votes in Congress, but he almost immediately lost the support of the Maoist Movimiento Popular Democrático (MPD, Democratic People's Movement), the strongest of the various left-wing parties, which had won five seats in Congress. The MPD moved into a position of determined opposition when Correa cracked down on its primary ally, the powerful teachers' union, the Unión Nacional de Educadores (UNE, National Union of Educators). Correa proposed a new evaluation system for teachers, designed to improve the quality of public education. The UNE, which represented about two-thirds of the country's teachers, strongly opposed the attack on its hegemonic power. They charged Correa with seeking to fire teachers in order to replace them with his supporters. The UNE responded with marches in both Quito and Guayaquil. Not being able to count on the aid of the MPD put additional pressure on Correa to build alliances with the remaining

small left-wing parties that together controlled a total of thirty-one seats.[10] Nevertheless, the new Constitution significantly strengthened executive power at a cost to the Assembly, so losing congressional control did not prove a significant liability to Correa, who could still rule through decrees and referendums. It was a strong and increasingly antagonistic executive that so unnerved social movements.

Indigenous critiques

Many Indigenous militants on the left viewed Correa's government as highly contradictory. On one hand, he had promulgated a new constitution that codified plurinationalism and the *sumak kawsay*, two of their key and highly symbolic demands. Correa also spoke in favor of sovereignty and against payment of the foreign debt, which he saw as illegitimate. These were positions that Indigenous movements had long pressed. On the other hand, Correa repeatedly approved laws that went against the interests of Indigenous communities, including laws that expanded mining concessions, privatized water resources, and ended Indigenous control over bilingual education programs.[11]

Correa pursued an aggressive and combative policy against his opponents, but this attitude was not limited to those on the conservative right; he also relentlessly attacked progressive forces that were opposed to his policies. Correa dismissed groups that opposed him as part of an 'infantile left' comprised of 'fundamentalists' who should not be allowed to derail his programs.[12] Indigenous activist and CONAIE vice-president Miguel Guatemal retorted that 'this is a racist and rude government, and in the coming elections we will withdraw our support and void our ballots.'[13] Correa's attempts to restrict the actions of social movements led to charges that he was attempting to criminalize political protest. Under Correa's governance Indigenous movements had become increasingly fragmented, with militants accusing the president of attempting to destroy their organizational capacity.

A series of events contributed to the growing tensions between Correa and leftist Indigenous movements. To the consternation of many rural dwellers who might otherwise be strong government supporters, Correa sought to expand and develop mining industries and other extractive enterprises. He refused to grant communities prior and informed consent before mining activities could proceed on their lands. Correa argued that these types of economic development would grow the economy, provide more employment, contribute to spending for social programs, and that all of this could be accomplished without a serious environmental impact. Opponents were not so convinced

of the positive advantages and, given the dirty legacy of petroleum extraction in the Amazon, recognized that often those who bore the brunt of ecological impacts of extractive enterprises rarely realized any of its economic benefits. Despite Correa's seemingly leftist credentials, Ecuador's militant Indigenous movement moved deeply into the anti-Correa camp.

CONAIE leader and 2006 Pachakutik presidential candidate Luis Macas criticized Correa for pursuing a 'citizens' revolution' as part of a fundamentally liberal, individualistic model that did not provide a fundamental ideological break with the neoliberal past. In contrast, Indigenous movements pressed in the 2006 electoral campaign for a 'constituent revolution' to rewrite the structures of government to be more inclusive. Correa stole the thunder from Indigenous militants in also pressing for a new constitution, and even going one step farther in granting CONAIE their long-standing demand to have Ecuador declared a plurinational country. It was not without reason that CONAIE resented Correa for taking over issues and occupying spaces that they previously held. At the same time, Correa held those to his left hostage because criticizing him played into the hands of the oligarchy, which was equally anxious to attack him from the right.

On 20 January 2009, thousands of Indigenous activists took to the streets in a 'Day of Mobilization for Life' against Correa's new mining law, which was intended to advance extractive enterprises. Opponents shut down the Panamerican Highway between the highland towns of Latacunga and Ambato, and also led protests in Quito and Cuenca. Although the marches were peaceful, the government responded with force, firing tear gas and bullets that injured dozens of protesters. For social movements committed to sustainable development, Correa's repressive responses to resistance seemed little different from those of previous right-wing neoliberal governments.[14] The president retorted that the protesters did not have any significant support, and that their leaders lacked genuine representation in the population. 'Three or four people are enough to make a lot of noise,' he claimed, 'but, quite sincerely, they don't have the popular backing.' Rather, he claimed that he enjoyed broad popular backing for the mining law, and that this translated into electoral support for his government, even in areas such as Azuay that were strong centers of protest against mining operations. Furthermore, he accused some of the leaders against large-scale mining as having interests in small-scale mining, and contended that small-scale mining had a much more negative impact on the environment.[15]

Seemingly in retaliation for Indigenous opposition to his economic

development plans, Correa stopped funds for the Consejo de Desarrollo de los Pueblos y Nacionalidades del Ecuador (CODENPE, Development Council of the Indigenous Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador) under allegations that its director and long-time Indigenous leader Lourdes Tibán had misused funds. CODENPE was an Indigenous-run government agency designed to give Indigenous peoples a larger role in development programs in their communities. Mónica Chuji retorted that, for Correa, 'like all neoliberal governments, we Indians represent *an obstacle to development.*' Chuji denounced Correa's arrogance, racism, and authoritarianism based on the principle of 'I am the state,' which allowed him to act unilaterally without considering the interests of other Ecuadoreans, or the impact his decisions would have on the country. He would not permit any opposition to his neoliberal policies. 'This is another example of the great lie that the *Citizens' Revolution* has become,' Chuji concluded.[16] Continuing his onslaught against Indigenous dissidents, Correa began to criticize Indigenous justice systems. He also removed control of the Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (DINEIB, National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education) from CONAIE, placing it instead under the control of the Ministry of Education.

Correa's attacks on Indigenous movements led CONAIE president Marlon Santi to state that, despite constitutional codification of plurinationalism, 'the government does not really want to recognize' those gains. Rather, Correa advanced a process of 'disaccreditation,' in which 'the movement loses representation and participation in whatever agenda or economic process [is] taking place through the state.' Economist Pablo Dávalos, who had long worked closely with Indigenous movements and briefly joined Correa in the Finance Ministry under the Palacio government, added that Correa's goal was 'to neutralize the ability of the indigenous movement to mobilize and to destroy it as a historic social actor.' Despite the apparent advances in the 2008 Constitution, 'the new political system is more vertical, more hierarchical, and more dependent on the president than before.' Dávalos argued that Correa's 'government is far from a leftist government and corresponds more closely to the interests of powerful groups that are emerging with the new mining and agro-fuels sectors.' In fact, Dávalos suggests that Correa's approach is closer to 'intervention strategies developed by the World Bank toward social movements in the 1990s through projects geared at specific groups including women, peasant farmers, youth and indigenous.'[17] Rather than addressing structural issues of oppression and exploitation, social movements suggested,

Correa was engaging in clientelistic strategies that played the interests of one group against another's with the goal of advancing the interests of a political leader.

At a 2 April assembly, CONAIE made its position crystal clear in a resolution that stated that 'Correa's government was born from the right, governs with the right, and will continue to do so until the end of his time in office.' They condemned the government for creating organizations parallel to CONAIE, and stated that they would evict anyone from their ranks who took positions in his government or worked with Correa's electoral campaign. The sanction would be due to 'their lack of respect for our organizational process.' In particular, CONAIE targeted Correa's extractive policies and especially large-scale mining and petroleum exploration efforts: 'because they go against nature and Indigenous peoples, they violate the constitution, and they threaten the governance of the *sumak kawsay*.' They charged Indigenous communities to no longer welcome government officials with their traditional symbols because of their lack of respect for 'our cultures and ancestral knowledge.'[18]

CONAIE stated that as an organization they would not support any presidential candidate in the 2009 elections, including the leftist Martha Roldós, despite earlier conversations with her. Humberto Cholango, president of CONAIE's highland regional affiliation Ecuarunari, said, 'We are not going to support any presidential candidate, because none represents a real alternative for the country.'[19] The refusal to endorse a presidential candidate was an explicit reversal of a policy in previous elections to support a candidate, because otherwise campaigns would prey on rural communities to gain the Indigenous vote.[20] In 1995, CONAIE helped found Pachakutik as a political movement for Indigenous peoples and their allies to contest electoral office. A short-lived alliance with Gutiérrez in 2003, however, was such a horrific experience that CONAIE and Pachakutik remained very wary of entering into another such similar alliance.[21] Nevertheless, CONAIE did urge support for local and congressional candidates running under the Pachakutik banner. In the 2009 election, Pachakutik suffered significant losses to the AP, and barely survived with a minimal presence of only four seats in the National Assembly. Timo Schaefer argues that Correa defeated Pachakutik by appropriating the Indigenous anti-neoliberal discourse that was least connected to their ethnic or cultural demands.[22] Even in their weakened state, Indigenous movements still influenced the outcome of the elections. Correa's withholding of support from CONAIE probably cost his party a majority in the Congressional Assembly.

Historically, Pachakutik has fared much better in local races than it has on a national level, and the same thing was true in the 2009 elections. Its most significant victory was that of Salvador Quishpe to the prefecture of the province of Zamora Chinchipe in the southeastern Amazon. Quishpe, who is of Saraguro descent, won in alliance with the leftist MPD party. Quishpe had a long trajectory in the Indigenous movement, previously serving as the leader of Ecuarunari and as a deputy for Pachakutik in the National Assembly. Despite Correa's claims that he had a strong base of support in areas of the most intense protests against mining, Quishpe won in such an area and precisely because of his long history of struggle against neoliberalism and extractive enterprises. Pointing to the significance of his victory, Quishpe noted that he defeated not a single candidate, but a coalition comprised of the Correa government, right-wing parties, and foreign mineral interests. 'It does not matter to the government or mineral interests who wins,' Quishpe said, 'as long as Salvador Quishpe does not win,' because they knew that 'with a Prefect such as myself it will not be easy to deliver our wealth to the hands of a group of Canadian mining companies.' He called for support of his candidacy, defending collective rights to water, nature, and food sovereignty, and the *sumak kawsay*. 'We know that large-scale mining will not guarantee these rights,' he said.[23] Quishpe's triumph heralded the possibility of advancing Indigenous political agendas through the avenue of electoral participation.

Twenty-first-century socialism

Correa was very eager to speak of socialism of the twenty-first century, but he was never very clear what precisely he meant by this term. During a January 2009 trip to Cuba, Correa rejected the 'dogmas history has defeated,' including 'the class struggle, dialectical materialism, the nationalization of all property, the refusal to recognize the market.'[24] Discarding key elements traditionally associated with socialism while failing to identify alternative visions raised questions as to what exactly Correa meant by twenty-first-century socialism. Hugo Chávez in Venezuela has faced similar criticisms. At the 2005 World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where Chávez first spoke of the Venezuelan revolution as socialist, he said that new solutions must be more humanistic, more pluralistic, and less dependent on the state. Nevertheless, both Chávez and Correa have relied on strong governmental control in order to advance their political agendas.

In January 2009, Correa joined his fellow leftist Latin American

presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia, and Fernando Lugo of Paraguay in a meeting with representatives of Vía Campesina, an international network of rural movements, at the World Social Forum in the Brazilian Amazonian city of Belém. Of the five, Correa was the president with the weakest links to civil society. Lula and Morales, of course, were labor leaders before becoming president. Lugo was a priest who, influenced by Liberation Theology, worked in rural communities. Chávez rose through the ranks of the military and used that experience to cultivate his popular support. Correa seemed to be the most eager of the five presidents to employ populist discourse in order to identify himself as with 'the people.' Correa spoke favorably of Indigenous movements and the history of exclusion that Afro-Ecuadoreans have faced.

In contrast to the other leaders, who rose through the ranks of social movements, Correa came out of the academic world. But of the five presidents at the forum he presented the deepest and most serious analysis of the current economic crisis. He began his talk with a challenge to neoliberalism and the Washington Consensus. 'We're living a magic moment, one of new leaders and governments,' he said. Correa noted that capitalism is commonly associated with efficiency, whereas socialism emphasizes justice. Nevertheless, Correa argued, socialism is both more just and efficient than capitalism. Latin American countries need national development plans in order to advance, and Ecuador's new Constitution was part of that process. He appealed for support for Indigenous cultural projects, the Pachamama (mother earth), and repeated the now common call for the *sumak kawsay*, to live well, not better. We need to be responsible for the environment, Correa said, and conserve resources for the next generation. Capitalism is in crisis, Correa argued, and Latin America is in search of new models, ones that would bring dignity to Latin American peoples. 'We are in times of change,' Correa concluded. 'An alternative model already exists, and it is the socialism of the twenty-first century.' Much of his rhetoric echoed the dominant leftist discourse at the forum, which had broadly shifted public sentiments away from neoliberal policies.

In a June 2009 interview with Amy Goodman on the news program *Democracy Now*, Correa strongly condemned capitalism as leading to greater inequality and more poverty. He denounced it 'as a vulgar instrument for capital accumulation' that destroyed nation-states through outsourcing, labor intermediation and other mechanisms of exploitation. Latin America was a victim of a crisis that it had not provoked, he said. Furthermore, the crisis of global capitalism had

been created by factors that were 'the very essence of the system: exacerbated individualism, deregulation, competition and so on.'[25] As an economist, Correa provided a clear, compelling, and damning critique of capitalism.

Many leftist observers responded well to Correa's rhetoric and economic policies. In June 2009, Mark Weisbrot and Luis Sandoval of the liberal Washington, DC-based think tank Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) released a report that was largely laudatory of Correa's economic performance during his first two and a half years in government. They pointed to economic growth, reductions in unemployment and poverty, increased government spending on healthcare and other social programs as a positive direction in Correa's policies. Furthermore, they applauded Correa on his expansionary fiscal policy, which led to a decrease in inflation and a significant reduction in the country's debt load. His most significant economic problems were due to factors beyond his control, most significantly the drop in oil prices, the global economic downturn, and the imposed limitations on his monetary policy owing to the dollarization of the Ecuadorean economy. Nevertheless, they concluded that even with limited monetary policy tools, Correa was implementing beneficiary trade and investment policies that were leading to economic growth.[26]

Even in the context of this positive economic news, Weisbrot and Sandoval acknowledged that Correa's policies were having a more beneficial impact in cities than on rural areas, where poverty rates remained high. Much of Correa's support came from urban professionals. While urban poverty rates were falling significantly, few of these gains made their way into rural areas, and even less so among Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorean peoples, where poverty rates historically have been disproportionately higher.[27] It would appear that Indigenous movement bases received little of the benefit of Correa's government, therefore lowering their level of support. On the other hand, the experiences of poor urban dwellers, including those in the slums of the coastal city of Guayaquil, who began to move into the middle class, helped explain his strong performance among those populations.

After long holding off Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez's urging for Ecuador to join ALBA, Correa finally agreed to join on 24 June 2009. It was never entirely clear why he had long resisted pressure to come into the international alliance, nor was it necessarily apparent why he consented to sign up at this point. Some intimated that after winning reelection he felt he had sufficient domestic support to radicalize his 'citizens' revolution.' Alternatively, he perhaps made this

move in order to solidify his support from the left, particularly from those who questioned his opposition to neoliberal economic policies. An alternative interpretation suggested that without majority control in Congress he was reaching out to regional allies in case he needed their support to push forward a more radical agenda.[28] Upon welcoming Ecuador and several Caribbean countries to the alliance, Chávez announced that the acronym ALBA would now stand for the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas rather than Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas. With the Washington Consensus in complete collapse and nine countries now in ALBA, Chávez was leading what was no longer so much an alternative as the dominant discourse. Correa declared that 'ALBA is a political project based on solidarity, integration, and being the owners of our own destiny.'[29] He pointed to the significance of new mechanisms such as the Bank of the South in order to 'keep our money here in the region instead of sending it to the First World to finance the developed countries.'[30] Increasingly, ALBA was positioned to replace international organizations such as the United Nations or the Organization of American States, which had long been accused of serving imperial interests. When justifying his decision to join ALBA, Correa pointed to a need for a counterweight to provide alternative points of view in these international bodies.[31]

Indigenous intellectuals and their close allies, such as economist Pablo Dávalos, argue that once one looks beyond the rhetoric of socialism of the twenty-first century, regional integration, and the Bolivarian dream of a united Latin America, the reality on the ground often looks quite different. Yes, there has been state intervention in the economy, most notably in important areas such as health and education. But the basic economic model remains capitalist in its orientation. Not only did Correa continue to rely on extractive enterprises to advance Ecuador, but he used the repressive power of the state to attack anyone who dared to challenge his policies, including attempting to charge dissidents as terrorists. In one of the most high-profile cases, Correa sent the military into Dayuma in the eastern Amazon in search of these 'terrorists' who had opposed his extractive policies.[32] The environmental organization Acción Ecológica (Ecological Action) also faced a threat of removal of legal status, seemingly because of their opposition to Correa's petroleum policies. When faced with a massive outcry, Correa quickly backpedaled, claiming that the government was simply moving its registration to a different ministry, where it more logically belonged.

Although AP managed to liquidate the previous political system

and emerged with a leftist discourse, Dávalos argued that 'in reality it represented a continuation of neoliberalism under other forms.' This is clear in its themes of 'decentralization, autonomy, competition, and privatization.' Correa continued to follow traditional clientalistic and populist policies far removed from what could be reasonably seen as radical or as a socialist reconstruction of society. Dávalos concludes that in no sense was Correa a leftist, nor could his government be identified as progressive. Rather, he 'represents a reinvention of the right allied with extractive and transnational enterprises.'[33] Dissidents also criticized Correa for proceeding with a free trade agreement with the European Union. Correa justified his discussions with the EU as being based on political dialogue, cooperation, and trade, emphasizing that Ecuador was pushing the idea of fair rather than free trade, designed to build economic development. 'We're not negotiating a free trade agreement with the European Union,' he claimed.[34]

After Correa's victory in the 2009 election, Luis Fernando Sarango, rector of the Amawtay Wasi Indigenous University, criticized the president's talk of radicalizing his programs. 'What socialism of the twenty-first century?' Sarango asked. 'What about a true socialism, because we have seen almost nothing of this of the twenty-first century.' Instead, Sarango proposed 'a profound change in structures that permits the construction of a plurinational state with equality, whether it is called socialism or not.'[35] Other Indigenous activists presented similar critiques. 'From the point of view of the social movements and the Indigenous movement in particular,' CONAIE president Marlon Santi declared, 'Correa's socialism is not socialism at all ... He waves the flag of socialism, but he does other things.'[36] For these Indigenous activists, Correa was not sufficiently radical.

All of this created the context of increasingly tense relations between Correa and social movements. Correa's failure to respond well to criticism and condemning what he termed as 'infantile' Indigenous activists and environmentalists further strained relations. CONAIE sent a letter to the 2009 WSF in Belém asking organizers to exclude Correa as a *persona non grata*, as someone foreign to social movement struggles. At the closing of the Indigenous tent three days after the presidential presentations, long-time leader Blanca Chancoso denounced the 'nightmare' that they were living with Correa, who was undertaking resource extraction 'at all costs.' Perhaps the only current Latin American president broadly identified with the left who would have received more vigorous denunciations at the forum was Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega, who in particular has engaged in pitched battles with

women's movements. While Correa positioned himself as part of the new Latin American left, he had alienated many social movement leaders whose decades of activism had made a twenty-first-century socialism possible.

Many lefts

Is Correa justifiably included as part of a leftward tilt in Latin America, or is his inclusion in this pantheon just a result of hopeful thinking? On one hand, analysts now talk of Latin America's 'many lefts,' ranging through Chile's neoliberal socialist president Michelle Bachelet, Bolivia's Indigenous socialist Evo Morales, and the state-centered socialism of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. Following Chávez's lead, Correa sought to build his popularity on the basis of 'petro populism' in which he used income from oil exports to fund social programs. But the fall of the price of oil threatened to put those programs at risk. At the same time, a growing inflation rate jeopardized some of his government's accomplishments. Although Correa talked openly of embracing socialism for the twenty-first century, he made no move to nationalize industries. Building his government on economic development without proper concern for the environment and people's rights cost him support, while gaining him the label of 'pragmatic' from the business class.

Despite Correa's attempts to mimic Chávez's strategies, his policies were not nearly as radical as those of his counterpart. Of the many lefts that now rule over Latin America, Correa represented a moderate and ambiguous position closer to that of Lula in Brazil or the *concertación* in Chile than Chávez's radical populism or Morales' Indigenous socialism. The danger for popular movements was a populist threat, with Correa exploiting the language of the left but fundamentally ruling from the right. It was in this context that a historically mobilized and engaged social movement remained important as a check on a personalistic and populist government. If Correa followed through on any of the hopeful promises of his government, it would be due to this pressure from below and to the left.

On the other hand, Correa did follow through with enough of his policy proposals to ensure his continued popular support. He promised not to renew the US Forward Operating Location (FOL) lease on the Manta airbase when it came due in 2009, and the USA complied with his wish that they withdraw. In December 2008, Correa defaulted on more than $3 billion in foreign bonds, calling the foreign debt illegal and illegitimate because it had been contracted by military regimes.

Many people rallied to his defense, saying that he was safeguarding the country's sovereignty. In addition to tripling spending on education and healthcare, Correa increased subsidies for single mothers and small farmers. These steps played very well with Ecuador's impoverished majority.

Correa continues to enjoy an unusually large amount of popular support in a region which recently has greeted its presidents with a high degree of goodwill only to have the populace quickly turn on its leaders, who inevitably ruled against their class interests. Chávez (and, to a certain extent, Evo Morales in Bolivia) bucked this trend by retaining strong popular support through their connections with social movements, despite oligarchical attempts to undermine their governments. Correa is a charismatic leader, but in the Ecuadorean setting charisma does not secure longevity. José María Velasco Ibarra, Ecuador's classic caudillo and populist, was president five times, but was removed four times when he failed to follow through on his promises to the poor. More recently, Abdalá Bucaram was perhaps the most charismatic leader, but he lasted only seven months in power after winning the 1996 elections before his neoliberal policies alienated most of the country. Charisma alone does not assure political stability. Repeatedly throughout Ecuador's long twentieth century, the country seemed to be on the verge of deep political change, only for social movements to see the country slip back into oligarchical control under the guidance of a charismatic populist leader.

Correa has said that it will take eighty years for his 'citizens' revolution' to change the country. Leftist leaders need the support of social movements in order to make lasting changes. In sacrificing these alliances in order to solidify his control on power, Correa appears to be playing a dangerous game of consolidating short-term gains at the potential risk of the long-term prospects of his socialist policies. In quickly moving Ecuador from being one of Latin America's most unstable countries to maintaining a strong hold over executive power, Correa appears to have been able to mimic Chávez's governing style. Whose interests this power serves, and particularly whether it will be used to improve the lives of historically marginalized subalterns, is an open question that remains to be answered.

Notes

1 Other presidents have served multiple terms in office, most notably José María Velasco Ibarra, who served five terms between 1934 and 1972, although he was able to complete only one of those (his third, 1952–56). The closest to being reelected was Juan José Flores, who served two terms from 1839 to 1843 and again from 1843 to 1845, although these were separated by two and a half months as interim president, for which he had not been duly elected. See Mark J. Van Aken, *King of the Night: Juan José Flores and Ecuador, 1824–1864* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

2 The use of a capital 'I' in reference to Indigenous peoples is intentional and based on (and in respect for) the stated preference of the board of directors of the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC) as a strong affirmation of their ethnic identities.

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6 | Venezuela: movements for rent?

DANIEL HELLINGER

Venezuela's Bolivarian Constitution of 1999 seeks to institutionalize *democracia participativa*, including a 'protagonistic' role for social movements and organizations in determining governmental policy. That Venezuela's oil export economy gives rise to a state with extraordinary economic resources relative to those of civil society complicates this task. By definition, petrostates are rent-seeking in their outward face, rent-dispensing inwardly.[1] Accomplishing this latter goal requires that popular power be formally articulated with the apparatus of the state but at the same time avoiding its subordination to the economic, bureaucratic, and technocratic power of the state.

The goal of building *democracia participativa* grows out of frustration with the failure of a modernizing project based on appropriation and 'sowing' of international oil rents. The collapse of this project in the 1980s gave rise to social movements whose original intention was to contest the power of a hyper-autonomous state but now find themselves in a new relationship with the state. The mass urban rebellion, known as the Caracazo, followed by the failed coups of 1992, the first led by current president Hugo Chávez Frías (a lieutenant colonel at the time), did give rise to a decade-long surge of social movement activity. The years from 2002 until 2004 saw intense conflict, with massive marches on the part of both pro- and anti-Chávez movements. After defeating a coup in April 2002, surviving an economically devastating work stoppage organized by the management of the state oil company (PDVS), and finally *chavismo*'s landslide victory in the August 2004 attempt to recall the president, Venezuela seemed to enter a period of 'normalcy,' with much less obvious political tension.

However, according to data from the human rights group PROVEA (2008), protests did not abate (see Figure 1). In fact, the number of protests recorded by PROVEA shows a significant increase for the years subsequent to 2004. Note also, however, the small proportion of protests repressed violently by government forces – remarkable given the polarized state of politics.

The seeming contradiction is easily enough explained by the sense