

Ecuador's New Socialist Party Set to Win Elections Despite U.S. Intervention and Deceptive Identity Politics

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Ever since the former President Rafael Correa-backed presidential candidate, Andrés Arauz, won first place with 32.7% of the national election vote on February 7 (first round), the U.S.-backed Pachakutik candidate, indigenous eco-activist Yaku Pérez has been trying to defame Arauz and prevent him from participating in the April 11th runoff election.

The National Electoral Council (CNE) initial conclusion for second place was 20.1% for Pérez and 19.5% for banker Guillermo Lasso, former head of Coca Cola in Ecuador. This changed after four days of meticulous counting: Lasso ended in second place with 19.74% and Pérez in third place with 19.38%.

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), founded in 1986 to represent indigenous land rights, their culture and language, is the largest indigenous organization in the country. Its political wing, Pachakutik Plurinational Unity Movement – New Country (MUPP or Pachakutik), backed Pérez.

Yaku Sacha Pérez Guartambel is the son of *campesino* parents from the Andean region. He changed his name, Carlos, to Yaku Sacha, “mountain water” in his native language of Kichwa. He is not the left-wing, eco-socialist that he sometimes claims to be.

“Pachakutik is closely linked to NGOs funded by Washington and EU member states. The party’s leaders have been trained by the U.S. government-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI), [a CIA cutout that operates under the auspices of the National Endowment for Democracy \(NED\)](#),” wrote investigative reporter Ben Norton.

“The [NED publicly lists](#) more than \$5 million in grants for NGOs in Ecuador just in the years from 2016 to 2019. Much of this money has bankrolled anti-Correa opposition groups like Pachakutik and its allies.”

Guillermo Lasso leads the capitalist Creating Opportunities (CREO-PSC) party. Lasso is the key founder of the center-right CREO, and stood for its presidency in 2013. In this election, CREO merged with the Social Christian Party (PSC). Founded in 1951, PSC has associated

center-right parties throughout Latin America and Europe.

[Eighty-one percent of 13 million registered voters cast their votes](#). Ecuador has a population of 17.3 million people, 1.1 million of whom are indigenous.

During two months of second round campaigning, Pérez maneuvered to accomplish his objective of demonizing Arauz. He had the aid of the sitting president, Lenin Moreno, the United States government, the leadership of the Organization of American States (OAS), Colombia's right-wing drug-dealing government, and confused U.S./European intellectuals sympathizing with indigenous people yet misinterpreting identity politics with justice and equality for all.

Despite all these elite powers, as of April 3, it looked like Arauz, the first presidential candidate of the new socialist party, Union of Hope (UNES), has the best chance of winning the majority of Ecuadorian voters over second place candidate Guillermo Lasso. After internal debate, CONAIE called for support of Pérez at a rally where its president, Jaime Vargas, and Arauz embraced.

Vargas said that the major indigenous organization ["officially supports Andrés Arauz." He has "absolute support of the indigenous movement," reported the major Ecuadorian daily, E/ Universo.](#)

This vote of confidence should be what it takes for UNES' candidate to win the upcoming second round. However, CONAIE sub-coordinator, Cecilia Velasque, a leader of Pachakutik, called this decision "treason." Velasque called for voters to turn in blank ballots. In May, the divided CONAIE will hold internal elections.

A Confusing Election Campaign

During this election, there were 16 candidates for president/vice president, and the entire 137-seat legislature was contested. At first round figures, Arauz's party would have 49 seats.

Taking fourth place was an alleged social democratic party, Left Democrats. Its candidate, Xavier Hervas, won 15.69% of the vote. In his youth, he was a baker; he then went on to study agricultural engineering and supported capitalist policies. He publicly proposed forming an alliance with Lasso and Pérez. Lasso agreed.

Alianza PAIS candidate Ximena Peña, the only woman running, garnered only 1.5% of the votes. In the first round of the 2017 elections, PAIS candidate Lenin Moreno, then backed by President Rafael Correa, received 39% of the votes. After Moreno turned sharply right, the party split up. Peña went with Moreno, and Correa forces later formed UNES.

In August 2020, the 35-year-old economist Arauz was selected for the presidency. He had been Correa's Minister of Knowledge and Human Talent (2015-17). He planned for Correa to be his vice president, but a court denied Correa the right to run for political office.

In April 2020, an Ecuadorian court [found Correa guilty of corruption and sentenced him to eight years prison, in absentia](#). Correa was living in Belgium following Moreno's betrayal. From there, he denied any wrongdoing.

The court found Correa and 19 other defendants guilty of accepting \$7.5 million from private

firms in exchange for state contracts. Those convicted were banned from any political role for 25 years.

“Well, this was what they were looking for: manipulating justice to get what they could never get via the ballot box,” Correa quipped. He has since decided to stay in Belgium and leave the political world, preferring to write.

As president, Lenin Moreno sacked the CNE of Correa supporters. Some current CNE members are followers of either Lasso or Pérez. Its president, Diana Atamaint, is a member of Pérez’s party.

On February 12th, subsequent to the revision of who came in second place, it was announced that CNE planned to conduct a [partial recount](#) of votes cast after Pérez made unsupported allegations of vote-counting fraud.

CNE president Atamaint apparently had not listened to all of its members. She had met privately with Pérez and Lasso and decided to concur with Pérez’s request for a recount of about 40% of all votes in 17 of 24 national provinces, singling out areas where Pérez had done poorly, which raised suspicions of a potential swindle.

The next day, CNE announced that only two of the five members had voted for a recount. So, with egg on her face, Atamaint declared that there would, “unfortunately,” not be a recount.

Besides being an “eco-activist” concentrating on preventing mining for minerals on indigenous land, Pérez is also an attorney. He used his skills to find other means to prevent a fair electoral second round.

Lasso wanted to unite with Pérez to defeat Arauz in the second round. At first, Pérez seemed to agree, but then he changed his mind. On February 17th, Pérez tweeted a confusing message. After four years of Pérez supporting the political agenda, close to his own, of Lasso’s party, he blasted the banker, saying that his indigenous supporters will [“never support his corruption.” He claimed that Lasso and even the CNE committed fraud.](#)

This laid the basis for government intervention. After speaking with the U.S. ambassador in Ecuador, President Moreno sent in his Comptroller General Pablo Celi to inspect CNE’s computer system. Arauz and Lasso, as well as the Network of Electoral Observers, rejected this tactic, and criticized the attempt to affect the electoral calendar with technological excuses.

“Taking copies of the count and recount files is something normal, but taking the computer equipment and impeding the ballot is an attack on democracy,” said Arauz. UNES will send its citizen-overseers to scrutinize the process, and the party warned that democracy is under real threat.

[“The country needs us united on the same front to make Ecuador a land of opportunities,”](#) Lasso added, rejecting the interference of the Moreno administration in electoral matters.

The CNE stopped its activities after receiving the audit demand from Comptroller Celi. He

stated the process should be completed in less than three weeks and should not affect the April 11 ballot.

Ben Norton reported, "[The leftist's overwhelming victory prompted the U.S. State Department, the right-wing government of neighboring Colombia, and the Organization of American States \(OAS\) to mobilize to prevent \[Arauz\] from entering office.](#)"

The recount would be "[overseen by the OAS, which inspired a military coup, November 2019, targeting Bolivia's elected government.](#)"

"The head of the OAS electoral mission in Ecuador, Isabel de Saint Malo ["Saint Bad" in English] the staunchly conservative former vice-president of Panama, was [intimately involved in the U.S.-led coup attempt against Venezuela, working closely with Juan Guaidó and the pro-Washington Lima Group.](#)" Guaidó had declared himself president at a news conference without being elected.

"The OAS disseminated lies about Bolivia's October 2019 election, falsely accusing the government of fraud. Now, the Colombian government is spreading a remarkably similar series of lies about Ecuador's election and its first-place candidate, Arauz," Norton wrote.

The Biden administration's acting assistant secretary for the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Julie Chung, tweeted,

"U.S. government applauds the February 12 announcement by [CNE] to verify votes in 17 provinces in Ecuador's February 7 presidential election. This allows the electoral process to advance with enhanced guarantees to the candidates and citizens alike."

At the same time, Colombia's right-wing Iván Duque government intervened. It sent its justice department head, Francisco Barbosa, to Ecuador claiming that Arauz had been funded by "Uriel," a guerrilla leader of the National Liberation Army (ELN). The lie was revealed by linguistic and forensic experts' evaluation of a falsified viral video.

Even Colombia's ex-president, Ernesto Samper (1994-98), warned that his country's government was in a plot with the OAS to steal Arauz's electoral victory. On February 13th, the liberal wrote:

"I can confirm that these claims are slander and form part of a dirty game that radical right-wing sectors from both countries are organizing, from inside Colombia, to interfere in the second round of the Ecuadorian presidential elections."

Despite the lie being uncovered, Ecuador's right wing and Pérez persist in spreading the fake news. They apparently hope that if UNES wins the election, it will be stamped as fraudulent by a conspiracy of Pérez and the U.S./OAS/Colombia axis and make it difficult for UNES to rule. The consequences would be "regime change" as usual.

Yet another ploy of Pérez is to [smear the veracity of the excellent journalist Ben Norton by](#)

[making damaging accusations without any evidence.](#)

“A collection of coup-supporting academics are lobbying to censor The Grayzone’s [factual journalism exposing Ecuador’s presidential candidate Yaku Pérez](#). Pérez is a self-declared environmentalist from a U.S. government-backed party who has supported numerous right-wing coups in Latin America, advanced xenophobic conspiracies, and demonized poor people in his country,” Norton said.

“The academics have published a deceptive and distortion-laden [open letter](#) that egregiously misrepresents my factual reporting and absurdly smears me as ‘racist and misogynist,’ based on absurd insinuations and outright falsehoods.

“Besides deploying a litany of baseless ad hominem smears, the academics resorted to a wild array of demonstrably false claims that were contradicted by the very same article they are seeking to censor.

“The academics’ open letter called on the left-wing website [Monthly Review](#) to retract a report that it posted on February 10. The story was a reprint of an article initially published at The Grayzone a few days before, titled “[How Ecuador’s US-backed, coup-supporting ‘ecosocialist’ candidate Yaku Pérez aids the right-wing.](#)”

“Monthly Review promptly succumbed to the censorship campaign, removing the article from its website. [1]

“In addition to targeting my reporting, the open letter attacks The Grayzone contributor [Denis Rogatyuk](#), calling on Jacobin Magazine to censor an article that he published documenting Pérez’s reactionary views and political record.

“The academics’ diatribe represents a desperate defense of Yaku Pérez, flagrantly whitewashing the candidate and leaving out all of the inconvenient facts that my reporting revealed—such as Pérez’s support for the 2019 military coup in Bolivia; his endorsement of the soft coup against Brazil’s Workers’ Party government; his cheering for violent U.S.-backed coup attempts against leftist governments in Venezuela and Nicaragua; his [classist deprecation of poor people](#) in his country; his [racist incitement against Venezuelan immigrants](#), and his repeated echoing of a [debunked right-wing conspiracy theory](#) targeting Ecuador’s leading socialist candidate.”

“Yaku Pérez’s wife and campaign advisor, Manuela Picq, is a prominent French-Brazilian academic with close links to some of the very same scholars who signed the letter. In fact, Picq’s own mother, Lena Lavinas, is a signatory, and was involved in a [similar denunciatory open letter](#) a week before that featured high-profile supporters of the 2016 soft coup that toppled Brazil’s democratically elected left-wing government.”

False Prophet Yaku Pérez Backs Counter-Revolutions

Pérez’s activism is based on limiting mining and fossil fuels. He decided to become a lawyer to fight international mining companies from drilling by court order, especially in indigenous territories. To do so, he has also helped mobilize many people in legitimate protests. At the same time, he befriends and supports businessmen, and takes handouts from the U.S. government.

Pérez “supported coups in Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. . . . Pachakutik and its supposedly ‘left-wing’ environmentalist campaign is being promoted by right-wing corporate lobbyists,” [wrote Norton](#).

In November 2016, Pérez praised the U.S.-backed “soft coup,” which removed Brazil’s left-wing Workers’ Party government from power, while also endorsing a right-wing legal warfare campaign targeting Argentina’s progressive President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

“Corruption ended the governments of Dilma [Rousseff] and Cristina,” Pérez tweeted approvingly. “Now all that’s missing is for Rafael Correa and [Venezuelan President] Maduro to fall. It is just a matter of time.” In another tweet, he wrote that, “Arauz is the Maduro of Ecuador.”

“Pérez’s ostensibly progressive ideology is filled with contradictions. While the Correista candidate Arauz has proposed giving \$1000 checks to one million working-class Ecuadorian families, Pérez has attacked the plan on the grounds that poor citizens would ‘[spend all the money on beer in one day](#),’” Norton wrote.

Leonidas Iza Salazar, a Kichwa-Panzaleo and president of MICC (Indigenous and Peasant Movement of Cotopaxi), warned that, “[right-wing activists and members of the banker Guillermo Lasso’s conservative CREO party](#) are in [Pérez’s inner circle](#) and are advising him.”

Pérez’s “eco-socialism” policies include seeking money from the IMF; promoting commercial relations with the U.S. and big business; reducing the role of government in social welfare; and even reducing the role of grassroots assemblies.

Some Western ecological organizations, however, which do not take on imperialism or support socialism, such as Extinction Rebellion, oppose the socialist and anti-imperialist UNES and support Pérez.

Beth Pitts is such a voice. She wrote that the current election pits “[the indigenous defender against the former president who jailed him, \[providing\] a battleground for two opposing ideologies. On one side, an expansion of extractivism and authoritarianism. On the other, a ground breaking move towards a more democratic and ecological future for Ecuador.](#)”

No doubt the most pertinent conclusion about such contradictions, and within Ecuadorian “Identity Politics” today, is how Ben Norton concluded his piece:

“The United States is desperate to prevent the socialist wave that washed across Latin America during the first decade of the 21st century from coming back. And in Washington’s bid to stop the tide, ‘eco-socialist’ figures like Yaku Pérez are perfect tools.”



Yaku Pérez Guartambel ✓

June 26, 2019 · 🌐

...

Esta mañana recibimos la grata visita del embajador de los [#EstadosUnidos](#) en [#Ecuador](#), Mike Fitzpatrick y su comitiva, con quienes compartimos algunas experiencias.

El embajador expresó que es un gran honor permanecer en [#Cuenca](#) y tener la oportunidad de visitar el corazón de los andes, en donde puedo conocer al pueblo de verdad, la realidad de la mayoría de las personas...



Yaku Pérez with U.S. Ambassador Michael Fitzpatrick. [Source: thegrayzone.com]

Lenin Moreno Campaigns for Pérez

Lenin Moreno came from a left-wing middle class mestizo family. His father, who became a senator, admired Vladimir Lenin and named his son after him. This Lenin studied public administration and psychology. In 1998, he was shot in a robbery attempt and lost the ability to walk. He has since used a wheelchair.



Lenin Moreno with Trump, Pence and Pompeo as Ecuador election campaign unfolds. [Source: commons.wikimedia.org]

Within months of winning the 2017 election, Moreno started moving away from his election platform, thus igniting a feud with ex-President Correa. Moreno reversed several key pieces of legislation passed by the Correa administration that targeted wealthy individuals and banks. He allowed greater profit for national and international corporations by paying less in taxes, and let them mine in areas protected by indigenous people's ecological base culture. [2]

In February 2019, Moreno announced that he [had obtained a loan of more than \\$10 billion from the International Monetary Fund \(IMF\) and the World Bank](#).

U.S. Special Counsel [Robert Mueller](#)'s team investigated a meeting between former Trump campaign chairman [Paul Manafort](#) and President Moreno in Quito shortly after he became president.

Moreno talked with Manafort about removing WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, in a plot to get him extradited to the United States. Correa had granted Assange citizenship and political asylum in 2012.

In June 2018, Moreno met with Vice President Mike Pence to consolidate "security" measures with the U.S., including buying weapons, radar sets, six helicopters, as well as sharing military training and intelligence. They also spoke about the mutual threat of Julian Assange.

In August 2018, Moreno withdrew Ecuador from Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA).

In January 2019, Moreno supported Venezuelan opposition leader and self-declared

president Juan Guaidó. Soon thereafter, the IMF approved a \$4.2 billion loan for Ecuador. Then the World Bank approved the Social Safety Net Project for Ecuador, a \$350 million loan designed to assist poor households that was to be repaid over 30 years.

On April 11, 2019, Moreno revoked Assange's citizenship and asylum, allowing British police to drag him out of the embassy. Judges threw him in a maximum lock-down prison where he remains. The police left all his possessions at the embassy; WikiLeaks documents and his legal documents were then turned over to U.S. intelligence.

By mid-2019, Moreno moved Ecuador's diplomatic position even closer to U.S. dominance by allowing it to use a military airstrip on the Galápagos Islands, allegedly to monitor drug trafficking and illegal fishing. Charles Darwin had studied the Galápagos ecosystem, which became an essential part of his Theory of Evolution. Correa accused the government of capitulating to U.S. pressure. Moreno's government faced protests from environmentalists at the airbase on Galápagos Islands.

In September 2019, pro-choice demonstrators protested proposed legislation, which would have relaxed the nation's strict abortion laws to allow for abortion in the case of rape. The legislation failed to pass.

On October 2, 2019, Moreno abolished fuel subsidies, sparking the greatest and longest protests in his term. The government lost control of the capital and moved its headquarters from Quito to Guayaquil. Accounts vary, but between seven and 11 people were killed, up to 1500 wounded, and 2,100 arrested during the resistance, which forced Moreno to restore the subsidies.

Moreno enjoyed a popularity rating as high as 77% shortly after his election in 2017. His approval dropped to 69% by the start of 2018. After the October [2019 Ecuadorian protests](#), Moreno reached an all-time low approval rating of 7%. He decided not to run again.

In [yet another Norton investigative article](#), he wrote:

"While [Moreno's] government was busy clamping down on the left in Ecuador, Lenin Moreno himself was in the United States. Just two weeks before the election, he visited DC for several days."

Moreno had a series of meetings with powerful figures, including:

- the director for the Western Hemisphere of the U.S. National Security Council, [Juan Sebastian Gonzalez](#), a special assistant to President Joe Biden;
- the secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS), [Luis Almagro](#), who helped oversee a [coup against Bolivia's democratically elected socialist government](#) in 2019;
- the [director of the IMF](#), Kristalina Georgieva;
- hawkish U.S. Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Ben Cardin (D-MD);
- and the president of the Inter-American Development Bank, Mauricio Claver-Carone.



Lenin Moreno and Robert Menendez (D-NJ), the new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 28, 2021. [Source: foreign.senate.gov]

Encouraged by the Empire, Perez Persists in Trying to Steal the Election

Even though the ploy for a recount and confiscating CNE computers failed, Pérez persisted in his anti-democratic campaign.

On March 9th, he called upon the state's Contentious Electoral Tribunal (TCE) to intervene. Again, he approached an electoral authority privately.

[“The U.S.-backed candidate seeks a recount of votes ... \[TCE\] agreed to process an appeal filed by candidate Yaku Pérez to recount over 20,000 tally sheets from the first round ...”](#)

“The appeal occurred amid the controversy unleashed by an alleged meeting between the Indigenous candidate and TCE judge Ángel Torres in a private building in Quito. According to the Tribunal regulations, no candidate can meet with electoral judges.”

The same day that TCE judge Torres said the Tribunal would look into the matter, “Ecuador’s third-place presidential candidate, Yaku Pérez Guartambel, has called for direct military intervention in his country’s political system, requesting a purge of electoral authorities and a [nullification of the results of the February 7 election that he lost](#),” Ben Norton reported.

“Pérez has also demanded that [Ecuador’s corrupt and undemocratic Lenín Moreno government](#) immediately issue a legal judgment against the socialist-oriented candidate Andrés Arauz, who won the first round of the presidential election in a landslide, in an effort to disqualify him based on a [debunked conspiracy alleging he received money from Colombian socialist guerrillas in the ELN](#).”

“In a [post on his official Facebook page](#) on March 9th, Pérez endorsed an

extremely controversial article that demands that the Ecuadorian military take-over, that Arauz be tried, that all of the members of the National Electoral Council be replaced, and that the first round of the election be nullified.”

The next day, March 10th, TCE judge Torres apologized for meeting with Pérez privately.

On March 14th, the TCE voted unanimously (four judges) to [deny Pérez’s request for a recount, which they considered “subjective,” and not based on evidence of fraud.](#) This put an end to Pérez’s and his party Pachakutik’s attempts to stop the election date and impose an arduous recount of votes cast.

On March 16th, the majority five-member CNE voted once again not to take a recount. “National Electoral Council vice-president Enrique Pita said that he doubted whether the call to spoil ballots would affect the result of the run-off.”

The desperate loser had called upon supporters to spoil their ballots after he lost the battle for a recount bid.

UNES Program

Since Rafael Correa was disallowed as a political candidate, UNES chose communicator and political analyst Carlo Rabascall Salazar as its vice-presidential candidate. In his campaign launch event, he condemned Moreno’s decision to make an advance \$2 billion payment on the foreign debt during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic. The funds were taken from public health and education systems. Thousands of health workers were fired during this pandemic. This caused the second highest death rate per capita in the world, after Peru.

Shortly after UNES candidates Arauz-Rabascall won the first round, Moreno sent a bill to the National Assembly that aimed to place the Central Bank under the control of private interest groups. Arauz rejected the “defense of dollarization” bill, which would place corporate-sponsored people on the board of directors of the Central Bank of Ecuador.

“If this pro-bankers’ bill is approved, the next government will not have effective instruments to make positive changes on issues such as credit management,” Arauz said.

UNES’ main four-year objectives are:

1. Justice for life and the reproduction of life
2. Participatory and deliberative democratic justice
3. Productive and economic justice
4. Intergenerational justice
5. Global justice, sovereignty and integration
6. De-colonial, pluri-national and inter-cultural justice
7. Ecological justice and energy transition
8. Equal justice for women and excluded groups
9. Digital justice and the new economy
10. Cognitive justice
11. Fair and impartial justice

Once the impact of Pérez's and his associates' scurrilous attacks waned, and manipulations by governmental authorities had largely failed, Arauz and Lasso settled down to discussing and campaigning about real politics.

They have been debating how best to end the coronavirus pandemic, whether an unfettered "free market" economy is superior to state-supported programs (similar to New Deal social democracy), free or paid education and health care, what to do with Ecuador's U.S. dollar value, relations with all the Americas, and other practical matters.

The presidency of Rafael Correa has not taken a central place in the campaign, but his legacy is very much on the minds of most Ecuadorians—a good portion of whom remember him and the progress he brought to the working class and poor with nostalgia.

Rafael Correa Presidency

Governments preceding Rafael Correa instituted neoliberal austerity and privatization programs, prompting inequality, poverty and unemployment to soar. Ecuador deteriorated into one of the poorest and least developed nations in the region. Poverty reached 56% of the population. Two million people fled the country between 1998 and 2003.

Ecuador's *Citizens' Revolution* arose from popular repudiations of neoliberalism and neocolonialism, similar to Chavista Venezuela and Morales's Bolivia. It did not reject capitalism entirely but redirected government budgets away from the wealthy and toward social programs and infrastructure investments to benefit the majority.



Correa speaks in Guayaquil in January 2016 to commemorate the 9th anniversary of Ecuador's Citizens' Revolution. [Source: greenleft.org]

Rafael Correa's rule (2007-17) was characterized by a [new constitution](#), which advanced rights of the indigenous peoples; nationalization of oil/gas companies, which would not share profits with the state; large-scale social welfare spending and infrastructure projects, as well as defaulting on foreign loans; and tensions with the U.S. government, military and corporations.

William Blum wrote in [Killing Hope](#) that the CIA in Ecuador had “infiltrated, often at the highest levels, almost all political organizations of significance, from the far left to the far right. In virtually every department of the Ecuadorian government could be found men occupying positions high and low who collaborated with the CIA for money.”

Ecuador was saddled with the U.S.’s largest air base in the region at Manta, which was instrumental in the [murderous Plan Colombia](#), and in enforcing international banking and corporate rule over Ecuador. The new constitution of 2009, based upon a referendum, banned all foreign military bases on Ecuadorian soil.

“We can negotiate with the U.S. about a base in Manta, if they let us put a military base in Miami,” Correa quipped. These bases are used to assure U.S. control of other nations’ natural resources, and kicking a base out of the country is often met by Washington’s retaliation. ([In 2014, U.S. “defense” department staff was expelled](#)).



Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, President Rafael Correa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ricardo Patiño. [Source: commons.wikimedia.org]

A year later, groups of police held violent demonstrations against a law that they claimed cut their benefits. Correa tried to speak to officers at a police barracks, but was physically attacked. After being overcome by tear gas, he was taken to a police hospital where he was basically [held captive by police](#). The Correa government had actually doubled police wages over the past four years. The law would not cut benefits but rather restructure them. This “misunderstanding” was used to rationalize the police protest.

The most extreme attempt at destabilizing Correa’s government came with a [violent U.S.-backed coup attempt on September 30, 2010](#). Defectors from the Ecuadorian police and military occupied the parliament, blocked major streets, took over state institutions, and effectively kidnapped Correa.



Military officers involved in attempted coup against Correa in 2010. [Source: telesurenglish.net]

Five people were killed in the attempted putsch, and hundreds were wounded. Ecuador's opposition nearly succeeded in removing the elected president from power.

[Pachakutik published an open call](#) for Correa to be removed from power, expressing public support for the police and soldiers who had defected. Nevertheless, thousands of ordinary Ecuadorians mobilized to defend him, surrounding the hospital. Tires were burned in front of every police station, causing smoke to cloud the sky. Citizens and soldiers freed their president.

Many indigenous people and alliances were outraged at MUPP and Pérez, and then again when he supported the U.S.-backed military coup in Bolivia in November 2019. When Luis Arce won the October 2020 election in Bolivia, numerous Ecuadorian indigenous leaders were invited to the inauguration but Pérez was not. "When asked why, it was made clear that [Pérez was shunned](#) because [he had supported the coup.](#)"

Quite similar circumstances to the Ecuadorian coup attempt occurred in Venezuela, April 11, 2002. Right-wing groups kidnapped President Hugo Chávez, declared a new government, which the U.S. immediately backed. Within 48 hours, thousands of citizens and loyal soldiers freed their president.

The year before the coup attempt against Correa, [another U.S.-backed coup succeeded in the original "Banana Republic," Honduras](#) (November 2009).

Nobel Peace Prize recipient President Barack Obama recognized the military coup as another "change of government" when U.S. Army School of the Americas-trained generals overthrew capitalist rancher President Manuel Zelaya.

He had taken measures to improve social conditions and joined ALBA—a great sin by U.S. standards.

The coup-makers subsequently withdrew from the progressive alliance.

Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro founded ALBA, in 2004, hoping to consolidate regional economic integration based on a vision of social welfare, bartering and mutual economic

aid. Correa brought Ecuador into ALBA in 2009. The alliance has stood firm against U.S. subversion in Latin America, and cultivated relations with Russia, China and Iran.

Between winning independence from Spain in the 1830s, to the First World War, Honduras underwent [200 armed conflicts, most of them due to U.S. intervention in the “Banana Wars” for United Fruit Company profits.](#)

A major weapon in the world policeman’s arsenal is the hideous use of torturing humans who the United States armed forces/CIA view as non-compliant to its rule.

“U.S. Army intelligence manuals used to train Latin American military officers at an Army school from 1982 to 1991 [advocated executions, torture, blackmail and other forms of coercion against insurgents, Pentagon documents released yesterday show,](#)” reported Dana Priest, in The Washington Post on September 21, 1996.

In 2000, the [U.S. Congress](#) renamed the “School of the Americas” the [Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation](#) (WHINSEC), rather than closing it down.

We resisters still call it the “School of Assassins.” I flew from Denmark to be with a friend at a large demonstration in front of the base on November 13, 2013. We made crosses and drew or painted victims’ names on them.

As we marched outside the torture chamber military base surrounded by three layers of barbed wire, each of us carried a cross with the name of a person tortured/killed by an SOA graduate. We stopped before the fence and shouted his or her name. My spiritually connected brother was Felix Rolando Murillo López, murdered on September 17, 2001, in Honduras. *Presente camarada Murillo!*

Liberation theology priest Roy Bourgeois spoke for us: *“It has always been about solidarity—to accompany and to make another’s struggle for justice and equality your struggle.”*

Progress Under President Correa

“Correa rejected IMF and World Bank policies, which had made Ecuador numerous loans to entrap the country in debt, a game plan for Western countries to dominate the global economy. Ecuador’s debt was \$14 billion in 1980, the country paid back \$7 billion, and it still owed \$14 billion because of interest. [The IMF demanded cuts in wages and state budgets, that 80% of the oil revenues go to debt payment, or it would use international courts to seize their fleet and their contents,](#)” wrote Stansfield Smith, a COHA scholar.

Correa renounced one-third of the then-existing debt as illegitimate interest. He imposed significant taxes on the rich, including on capital flight. These measures generated \$1 billion in revenues in three years.

He compelled the Central Bank to repatriate billions in assets held abroad and renegotiated more favorable oil contracts with multinationals, which he used to triple investments in infrastructure and public services. Correa diversified the economy so that non-oil exports accounted for two-thirds of export income. These measures enabled Ecuador to earn a 4.2%

annual growth rate from 2007 to 2015, even during the international financial crisis brought on by Wall Street corruption.

Correa's government invested \$20 billion in education, making all education free for everyone. Financing came largely from royalties for mining projects and state oil revenues. Low-income students were provided with free school supplies, books, uniforms, and meals. More than 300,000 children who used to have to work went back to school.



Correa visits a new school built through state oil revenues in Azuay in October 2015. [Source: telesurenglish.net]

To preserve Original Peoples' identity, the government provided new schools in native languages, and fostered public TV and radio stations promoting programs in Quechua and other languages. The 2013 Media Law gave the indigenous communities greater access to community media. By December 2014, 14 radio frequencies, combined with funding and training, were assigned to each of the country's indigenous groups.

Ecuador's minimum wage was doubled, from \$170 a month to \$375, one of the highest in Latin America. Companies could not pay dividends until all employees earned a living wage. The labor of homemakers, contributing to 15% of the GDP, was legally recognized. Consequently, 1.5 million homemakers received social security benefits, including disability compensation and a pension.

Correa [invested \\$16 billion](#) in quality free health care over his entire administration. In the 40 years prior to the *Citizens' Revolution*, not one new public hospital was built in any of the main cities. During Correa's time, 13 [new hospitals](#) were constructed and 18 more were under way. The health system added 34,000 medical professionals. Thanks to free health care (still a dream in the U.S.) and greater access to services, visits to the doctor have almost tripled in ten years.

The United Nations recognizes only eight countries as meeting the two minimum criteria for [sustainable development](#). In the Americas, there are only three, Ecuador, Cuba and Colombia. Ecuador made major advances in converting to renewable energy, one of the highest percentages of renewable energy in the world (85-95%). By 2015, Ecuador had cut the rate of deforestation in half.

Correa's government made it illegal for employers to discriminate due to sexual orientation and same-sex unions were legalized. A gender identity law allows citizens to state on their ID their gender identity instead of the sex given at birth.

Affirmative action laws require companies to reserve 4% of jobs for people with disabilities, and other quotas for minority ethnic groups, indigenous and Afro-descendants.

Four of the five TV channels were owned by the four largest banks. Correa's government backed a referendum that prohibited banks from owning the media. Airwaves were divided into three groupings: one-third private, one-third state-owned, and one-third for community grassroots outlets. A company cannot own more than one AM station, one FM station and one television station.



Achievements of Ecuador's Citizens' Revolution. [Source: greenleft.org]

During 2016, the nation suffered a recession due to lower oil prices, and a severe earthquake that cost 668 people's lives and \$3.3 billion in damage. Still, when Correa ended his term the annual growth rate was 3.3%. Poverty had been reduced from 37.6% to 22%.

When Correa became president, the richest 10% accounted for 42 times as much wealth as the poorest 10%. At the end of his terms, this gap was cut in half, one of the most dramatic reductions in inequality in Latin America.

Conclusion

If Arauz wins the presidency, he may appoint an important economist and ideologist of the

"Citizens' Revolution" to a government post. Ricardo Patiño was Correa's first minister of economy, then minister of foreign affairs (2010-16), and defense minister at the end. In the early 1980s, he aided the Nicaraguan Sandinista government's socialist economic direction.

The Washington, D.C.-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) conducted an interview with him as Ecuadorians went to the polls on February 7. He [spoke about the "Citizens' Revolution" during the time of Correa's presidency—what went well and what was lacking](#):

"We ran a good government from the top but not enough with the people, and that was a serious mistake, which we must correct," he explained. "Our political process did not sustain the peoples' movements. We did not prepare our people to carry out the historic movement."

"When Moreno took power and immediately turned his back on our advances, our population did not have enough consciousness and did not mobilize to undo that betrayal," not for some time. "Many got confused by Moreno's lies, which the mass media propagated."

"We [leaders] must [focus on] a systematic structural basis to aid in strengthening social movements to consolidate, to advance, to become historic agents for [fundamental] change." [3]

Patiño believes Arauz understands that damage and will seek to repair it. Patiño believes that work to broaden the media base, in order to represent peoples' needs and movements, is one of the first essential tasks of a new government. More cooperative self-production must become incorporated in the infrastructure. Better education of teachers and students should be a priority, as should much less dependence on foreign companies and their technology.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Ron Ridenour is a U.S.-born author and journalist, anti-war and civil rights activist since 1961. After joining the U.S. Air Force at 17, he saw the inner workings of U.S. imperialism first hand and resigned. In the 1980s and 1990's he worked with the Nicaraguan government and on Cuban national media.

Notes

[1] *Monthly Review* has been a solid anti-imperialist, pro-socialist magazine for decades. I certainly hope that the current editors apologize to Ben Norton and replace his articles on its site. The left is becoming even more divided, because so many white leftists refuse to comprehend that some people of color can be wrong in their politics. Another example of this dilemma is that of Oglala Sioux and American Indian Movement (AIM) leader Russell Means. In 1973, Means co-led the occupation of Wounded Knee, in South Dakota, in which I participated and worked with Means. Yet in 1985, he [aligned himself with Miskito natives in northern Nicaragua and southern Honduras in their opposition to the revolutionary Sandinistas. Means even declared that he would take up arms with Miskitos, who became supporters of the CIA/Reagan-backed Contras](#). This reactionary action led to further splits within AIM and its supporters. Means soon became a Hollywood actor in Cowboy-Indian movies.

[2] I have been unable to find any source that explains what made Moreno turn tail so drastically and so quickly.

[3] Given my eight-year long experience as a media worker in Cuba (1988-96), a year in Nicaragua working with the Sandinistas, months in Chávez's Venezuela and with Morales's Bolivia, I view Patiño's judgment to be exactly what has been missing to various degrees with all revolutionary governments. Delivering power from top to bottom, in which the working class and citizen allies can become the key protagonists to provide real leadership, has never occurred. That is a key reason for the dissolution of the Russian Revolution/Soviet Union. Following its dissolution, many people who were revolutionary minded, also in the major capitalist countries, either gave up struggling for such or reduced visions to "liberalizing" the establishment.

Featured image: Jaime Vargas, right, the president of Ecuador's largest indigenous organization CONAIE, supports socialist candidate Andrés Arauz, center, at an April 3 rally. [Source: orinocotrubune.com]

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