

Abby Lodge  
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**Chapter 7: Citizens' Revolution, 2006 to 2015: The Rise of the Paradoxical State**

President Correa founded a political party called Alianza PAIS (Country Alliance/Proud and Sovereign Fatherland) and promised to create a new 21<sup>st</sup>-century socialism. Analysts described the shift to the left as Latin America's Pink Tide (it is not quite "Red"). There are at least five elements that describe this arguably new era. The first was the changing of responsibilities. States had taken on a role of responsibility for social welfare that differed from their laissez faire approach during the neoliberal era. These new states have increased social spending, and created and implemented policies that provided the public with free education, health programs, subsidized food, cash transfer programs, and titled lands to indigenous groups.

The second was the gain for the people. Data shows that the increases in funding for social welfare programs made a difference for the poorest in Latin America. In Ecuador, President Correa implemented a number of redistributive policies shortly after taking office, including doubling cash payments to the poor to \$30 per month and subsidizing electricity. Rather than calling this "redistribution," they consider this the non-aggregation of wealth – it distributes wealth to the people who create it rather than aggregating it to the elites at the top unjustly.

The third was a deepening of democracy. There were efforts for broader social inclusion and the deepening of participatory democracy. In one of his first actions, President Correa called for a referendum to elect a constituent assembly that would rewrite the constitution. In Ecuador, all voting age citizens are required to vote.

The fourth element that describes this arguably new era was the primary resource dependency. Economic gains from natural resource have shifted away from private actors toward the state and have been an important source of funding for states' social welfare programs. Clashes in the past that took place between anti-drilling and anti-mining activists and multinational extraction corporations are now taking place between those activists and the state.

The fifth element was the shifting of power. Through the establishment of new regional institutions, nations in the region have consciously attempted to shift the nexus power away from the United States toward Latin America and the Caribbean. "Strategic de-linking" from international trade and finance systems – the creation of this and other regional structures minimized the power of US markets and politics over Latin America. At the time, Washington had its eyes and its resources concerns turned in a different direction – the Middle East – making the effort to de-link easier for countries like Ecuador. Ecuador shifted its debts toward China, with whom it would also trade oil.

In 2014, USAID ended its program in Ecuador altogether after President Correa sent a letter to the Embassy informing them not to initiate new activity. State actions made transnational corporations, bilateral donors and international nonprofit funders reluctant to continue investing in Ecuador. During this era, the state would pass and enforce new laws. The Correa administration created an Undersecretary for Climate Change within the Ministry of the Environment. The shift in social structure – the simultaneous strengthening of the state and weakening of international influence – debilitated national *ecodependent* NGOs, such as

Fundación Natura and Jatun Sacha in two ways. The first way was there was a brain drain from the NGOs into the state as government agencies grew and poached staff from the leading environmental organizations. And second, transnational partnerships and funding that had formally gone to ecodependents were being shifted to the state. On October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Fundación Natura puts end to 35 years of work in Ecuador. The most obvious problem was that international funding had ceased. The boom-and-bust of international funding had finally taken its toll in Ecuador. Fundación Jatun Sacha, owned and managed nine biological research stations during the boom period; by 2013, this had declined to four. Foreign actors could no longer dictate environmentalism in Ecuador. Ecoresisters debated with their neighbors the costs of environmental protection versus modernization and roads.

While the socialist state may prioritize social welfare, that does not decrease its role in the accumulation; in fact, it can increase the need for accumulation. In regard to the environment, this creates a paradox: to protect the environment, the state needs to make money from the environment. The two most prominent legitimizing acts were: incorporation of environmental protections into the new constitution and the promotion of the Yasuní-ITT proposal.

Participants in ANA say that the approved 2008 constitution contained more than thirty articles formulated by the alliance that gathered at ANA. In addition to the rights of nature, the constitution gives every individual and community the right to demand that the state uphold the rights of nature. President Correa's administration created the National Secretary for Planning and Development, as the name suggests, to develop the national development plan for *sumac kawsay/buen vivir*. Environmentalists think this organization has good ideas, such as using green accounting and considering the nation's global footprint in planning. The concept of *buen vivir* was supported on the ground by ecoresisters. The constitution trumps local sovereignty with national priorities in two ways: there is a clause that gives the state power over "strategic sectors" and the constitution only requires consultation of the people in taking such an action on their lands, not consent.

In 2007, President Correa present a concrete proposal, seemingly influenced by *sumac kawsay*: the Ishpingo, Tambocoha, and Tipuntini (ITT) Initiative to leave the oil in the soil in Yasuní National Park. However, despite the deadline for pledges being extended several times, Ecuador was not able to secure funding. And in August 2013, Correa signed the documents that ended the experiment and would allow the area to be exploited for oil. A coalition of environmentalists, social activists, and indigenous groups formed the YASunidos – a youth movement seeking to save Yasuní and to keep the Yasuní-ITT Initiative alive.

The Citizen's Revolution Era (2006-2015) can be summarized by a strong, populist, and socialist state. Transnational funding was limited, especially public ones, while private funds were directed to the state. Ecodependent organizations continued to be weak, while ecoresisters are vocal and active. As far as environmental and development policies were concerned, there were big environmental and development alternatives proposed but not executed, new constitution that recognized nature, and resource extraction "for the people." Schaiberg would classify this era as managed scarcity in practice with rhetorical calls for ecological synthesis.

## **Reflection**

The people loved Correa because they had jobs, roads, schools, and health care, and there was a more equitable distribution of profits. The stronger presence of the state was not just in the

Ministry of the Environment, it was also in the Ministry of Energy and Mines. Members of Correa's original administration had left the government over disputes between ministries. Alberto Acosta did not believe that Correa's extraction plans were consistent with *sumac kawsay/buen vivir*. Like Acosta, ecoresisters believed that Correa was taking the wrong path. Correa had limited the role of the public in a few ways. One way is informal: he's mocked resisters to his plans, with a focus on anti-mining resisters. The second way, which more difficult to track back to the government, was through repressive actions that have been taken to subdue activists. A third way was by using legal system to make specific changes to the legal system. There was also a new mining law in 2009, which Correa promoted what he calls socially responsible mining – however, this was at odds with the rights set out in the 2008 Constitution.

In addition to being verbally chastised by the President they elected, protesters were harassed. Police have searched activists' homes without just causes. The state was criminalizing protest, and it appeared as if it was targeting critics of its extractive practices. In March 2012, the government signed an agreement with the Ecuacorrientes, a Chinese-funded company, to do large-scale mining for copper, gold, and silver. Activists responded with protests, including a fifteen-day, 600-kilometer march led by CONIE. The dangers of harassment, imprisonment, and/or death have made it far riskier for ecoresisters to act against the state. In March 2009, the government shut down Acción Ecológica, which had helped organize and lead the protests against mining, based on legal technicalities related to AE's charter. In 2011, sixteen international NGOs were expelled from Ecuador, including Conservation International – and in 2012, 26 were asked to leave.

In 2013, President Correa enacted another key legal action that limited civil society organizations: Decree 16. It dictated new procedures for NGOs to register with the state, including: new paperwork requirements, a centralized system that would collect data from all of the groups, and actions that the state could take to intervene in groups' activities. On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the government shut down Fundación Pachamama, for violating provisions of Presidential Decree No. 16. Other national organizations, not just environmental, but civil society groups, were discouraged, frustrated, and distrustful of what was happening with Correa's administration.

With many environmentalists going to work within the government, there been a mixed result. On one hand, there are environmentalists within the government who can promote environmentalism. On the other hand, they aren't listening to the ecoresisters because they fear the repercussions of siding with them. The government no longer welcomed the input of civil society. Ecoresisters, ecodependents, and ecoentrepreneurs, all remarked that the governments' policies had made people happier, more hopeful, and better off economically. While activists had achieved some institutionalization of their goals, it appears as if the state wanted to be completely in charge.

The government dedicated a little more to exploit more resources because it needs the money to stay in power, because without money, there isn't a government on the left or on the right. Environmentalists made gains in this era: they became institutionalized within the state structure and their actions and ideas altered the constitution and the state's plan for development. In prior eras, ecoresisters and indigenous groups fought transnational corporations – in this era, they fought the newest extractor: the state. The people had chosen Correa's form of

“development” – which prioritized the broad distribution of economic gains at the cost of the environment, which also planning for *buen vivir/sumak kawsay*. For now, at least Ecuador is prioritizing the economic and social pillars of sustainability but not the environmental one.

Based on what was discussed in the text I believe that the strengthening of the state was not beneficial for the environment and especially environmental organizations. While I really like Correa’s idea of distributing wealth to the people who create it rather than aggregating it to the elites at the top unjustly, Correa and his administration put too many restrictions on environmental organizations and therefore hurt the environment more than helped it. Decree 16 made it harder for NGOs to accomplish their goals because of new paperwork requirements, a centralized system that would collect data from all of the groups, and actions that the state could take to intervene in groups’ activities. Activists and organizations helping activists were afraid to protest due to the threat of harassment or imprisonment. The people were now fighting against the government which was supposed to be helping them economically, socially, and environmentally. However, in this the new, stronger state a paradox was formed – where to better the economy, social welfare and to protect the environment, the state needed to make money from the environment.

As I was reading the book, I came across a fact I thought was very interesting – when Lewis was discussing the new elements that describe this new era Under President Correa and she writes that “in Ecuador, all voting age citizens are required to vote.” This to me, made it sound like President Correa enacted this during this presidency. However, after doing some research, I discovered that compulsory voting in Ecuador has been around since 1936 (“Compulsory Voting,” 2009). In addition to twenty-two other countries having some sort of compulsory voting laws. In Ecuador, the law is that voting is compulsory for literate persons ages 18-65 and optional for other eligible voters (“Compulsory Voting,” 2009). If a person does not vote they are fined but only a small amount, usually it is equivalent to twenty US dollars (“Compulsory Voting,” 2009). What really amazes me is that these countries that have mandatory voting and penalties for not voting, have very high turnouts to the polls. For example, Uruguay has a 96.1% turnout and Australia has a 94% turnout (Samuelson, 2016).

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