

Political economy of state-indigenous liaisons: Ecuador in times of Alianza PAIS

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Abstract

This article analyses the contentious liaisons between the indigenous movement and the state in Ecuador during the government of Alianza PAIS under the presidency of Rafael Correa (2007-2017). The research question examines to which measure, how and why the shift from neoliberal to leftist administrations could have affected the principal strategic repertoire of the indigenous movement. Leaning on a political economy approach and social movement theorizing, and accentuating the relative power balance between the indigenous movement and the state, it focuses on indigenous oppositional strategies and the ambivalent attitude of the state regarding participatory democracy and the rights of the indigenous peoples. By contrasting this period with the neoliberal 1990s – considered the heyday of the indigenous struggle – we examine contemporary strategic responses of the movement amidst the new political setting characterized by hyper-presidentialism and a systematic effort to de-corporatize the state. A central finding is that, while retaining its powerful organizational network which could be reactivated during critical situations, the indigenous movement weakened in relation to the 1990s. This relative decline is manifested in three types of social movement relationships: between leaders and grassroots (*mobilizing capacity*); between the movement and its alliance partners (*alliance politics*); and between the movement and the legal institutional terrain of the state (*institutional participation*). *Keywords:* Alianza PAIS, Citizens' Revolution, CONAIE, de-corporatization, Indigenous movement, Indigenous societal corporatism.

Resumen: Economía política de las relaciones Estado-indígenas: Ecuador en tiempo de Alianza PAIS

Este artículo analiza las relaciones conflictivas entre el movimiento indígena y el Estado en Ecuador durante el gobierno de Alianza PAIS cuando ejercía la presidencia Rafael Correa,

(2007-2017). La pregunta de investigación es la medida en la cual, cómo y por qué el desplazamiento desde el neoliberalismo hacia la izquierda pudo afectar los principales repertorios de estrategias del movimiento indígena. Desde un enfoque de economía política y de las teorías de los movimientos sociales y considerando los cambios en el balance de poder entre el movimiento indígena y el Estado, el artículo se enfoca en las estrategias de oposición de los indígenas y en la actitud ambivalente del Estado respecto a la democracia participativa y a los derechos de los pueblos indígenas. En contraste con los años neoliberales (1990s) que fueron considerados los de mayor influencia de la lucha indígena, examinamos las estrategias contemporáneas del movimiento en medio de las nuevas circunstancias políticas caracterizadas por el hiper-presidencialismo y un sistemático esfuerzo de descorporativización del Estado. Un hallazgo central del trabajo es que, aunque conserva la potencia de su poderosa red organizativa, que le permite reactivarse en coyunturas críticas, el movimiento indígena se debilitó en comparación con los años 1990. Este declive relativo se manifiesta en tres campos: la relación entre los líderes y las bases (*capacidad de movilización*); la relación entre el movimiento y sus aliados (*la política de alianzas*); y la relación entre el movimiento y el terreno institucional del Estado (*participación institucional*). *Palabras clave*: Alianza PAIS, CONAIE, corporativismo social indígena, descorporativización, movimiento indígena, Revolución Ciudadana.

Introduction

The Andean Leftist governments of the twenty-first century have often been depicted as agents for a reorientation towards more participatory forms of democracy and for promoting the political inclusion of those social movements which previously had spearheaded the resistance against neoliberalism. In Ecuador, the most prominent of these movements is that of the indigenous peoples, which has been referred to as the strongest indigenous movement of Latin America, particularly in its heyday during the 1990s (Yashar, 2005; Mijeski & Beck, 2011; Becker, 2015).¹ In the 1990s, the indigenous movement – spearheaded by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador/CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador) – initiated a process that we term “indigenous societal corporatism”, that is, a largely organic and grassroots anchored realignment of the indigenous movement with the state, following several of the traits characterizing a corporatist model of interest intermediation. During this neoliberal decade in which classic labour and peasant movements were severely weakened, the indigenous movement achieved prominence in anti-neoliberal alliance politics and as a representative of wider social demands vis-à-vis the state. This position was owed mainly to the ways in which CONAIE managed to insert itself nationally by drawing on an impressive organizational strength at the community level (Guerrero Cazar & Ospina Peralta, 2003; Yashar, 2005; Van Cott, 2008; Becker, 2015). Moreover, alongside other organizations, CONAIE founded the político-electoral movement Pachakutik in 1995, sometimes referred to as the indigenous political party (Van Cott, 2008; Lalander, 2010), which has since triumphed in various sub-national elections.

In 2006, economist and radical Catholic Rafael Correa Delgado won the presidential elections on the platform of the PAIS Alliance (*Alianza PAIS/Patria Activa y Soberana* [Proud and Sovereign Fatherland]). With the political project and state policy of a “Citizens’ Revolution” (*Revolución Ciudadana*), Correa swore to rescue Ecuador from the long and dark nights of neoliberalism (Becker, 2015, p. 4). Once installed in government, he paved the way for a rewriting of the Constitution to restructure the political system. The draft of a new Constitution was approved by a landslide in a popular referendum in 2008. The Constitution augmented a set of rights which had been at the centre of previous indigenous-led struggles – that is, the plurinational state, legal pluralism, participatory democracy, and the right to administer ancestral territories. However, these rights clashed with other tendencies of the Correa government: centralism, de-corporatization and extractivist projects (Lalander & Ospina Peralta, 2012; Lalander & Lembke, 2018; Lalander & Merimaa, 2018).

Regardless of the contradictions embedded in *Correísmo* – the political project of Correa – the new administration managed to initiate a new era of political stability. From 2006 to 2017, Alianza PAIS won 10 successive elections and managed to virtually maintain political hegemony, which was a clear break with the previous decade and its high levels of electoral volatility and presidential destitutions. Economically, the government could initially rest on good results, allowing it to maintain high levels of public spending. However, the good economic years were soon ending. As the commodities boom started to wane, the government decided to further its grip on welfare, health and social security funds. Particularly since 2014, the government suffered from the decline in oil revenues, and poverty and inequality increased anew (INEC, 2016; Ospina Peralta, 2017).

Despite promising initial conditions for a fruitful cooperation between the allegedly leftist political project of Correa and the indigenous movement, the relationship quickly turned sour, particularly with CONAIE.² One central reason was that *Correísmo* included a constitutionally backed process of state restructuring towards centralization, the strengthening of executive power and the policy we label de-corporatization (Lalander & Ospina, 2012; Becker, 2015; Ospina Peralta, 2019a), a reorientation which seemingly jeopardized the vitality of several previously established arrangements for participatory democracy. A second reason was the expansion of export-oriented economic policies, not only regarding the extractive industry, but also the support of agro-industrial elites (Clark, 2017), which seriously challenged the constitutional commitment of the state towards the rights of indigenous peoples and nature. However, the increasingly tension-ridden relationship between the state and the indigenous movement should not merely be understood in terms of different conceptions of democracy; it also affected the system of interest intermediation. As a consequence of increasing statism and stronger governmental sup-

port for the export of primary products, indigenous societal corporatism was rapidly dismantled.

In comparison with the neoliberal era, the aim of this study is to examine and problematize the contentious liaisons between the indigenous movement and the state during the governments of Alianza PAIS from 2007 onwards. More specifically it asks: *How and why was the principal strategic repertoire of the indigenous movement affected by the shift from neoliberal to leftist administrations?* Methodologically, the study is based on decades of ethnographic observations and interviews, and critical reading of previous thematic literature in the field that mainly contrasted the 1990s with the era of *Correísmo*. Within an overarching political economy framework, it employs an approach that accentuates the relative power balance between these actors, particularly emphasizing the oppositional responses of the indigenous movement vis-à-vis the often-contradictory expressions of the state, in practice manifested in state policies that during *Correísmo* served to marginalize the indigenous movement and its demands within the system of interest representation. In analysing these oppositional responses, the article concentrates on the three types of relationships which we consider essential for a better comprehension of the relative power and strategies of the movement since the 1990s, namely: between leaders and the grassroots of the movement, between the movement and its existing and potential alliance partners, and finally, between the movement and the entities that comprise the legal institutional terrain of the state (Foweraker, 1995).

These relationships are examined with the assistance of three notions which originate from social movements theorizing (e.g. Cohen & Arato, 1992; Foweraker, 1995; Yashar, 2005; Van Cott, 2008), namely *mobilizing capacity* (internal), *alliance politics* (external), and the *institutional participation*, that is, the operation of the movement within the state apparatus. Mobilizing capacity refers to the extra-institutional strength of the indigenous movement, that is, its ability to push forward its agenda by means of direct actions and the orchestration of mass mobilizations. The second form of relationship – labelled alliance politics – is a key element in ensuring and maintaining mobilizing capacity, but it specifically refers to how the movement has managed to cooperate with other social forces, such as the academic community, workers and environmental organizations. We distinguish between two forms of alliance politics, one enhanced by the indigenous movement (mainly CONAIE) within civil society, aiming at increasing its extra-institutional strength as an outside challenger vis-à-vis the traditional political establishment; the other performed principally by Pachakutik – the political arm of the movement – aiming at gaining electoral strength by means of alliance-building within political society. The third type of relationship – institutional participation – refers to the achievements by the movement (mainly CONAIE and Pachakutik) within the legal and institutional terrain of the state. Indigenous societal corporatism is a concept that characterizes one specific form of state-indigenous relationships.

In practice, evidently, there are no clear-cut frontiers between the three strategies, and historically the indigenous movement has employed them in combination. In referring to such a blending of strategies, authors sometimes refer to a so-called *dual logic* (or dual strategy), that is, whether and how to act within state and electoral institutions while maintaining a powerful social movement repertoire at the fringes of the state (Cohen & Arato, 1992, pp. 508-509; Foweraker, 1995, pp. 21-24). In the case of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, the notion of a dual logic has mainly been adopted for describing a relatively successful common strategic front between CONAIE and Pachakutik, primarily in the late 1990s. Nonetheless, the coexistence of institutional and extra-institutional logics also characterizes CONAIE since it operates inside as well as outside of the state. It is important to stress, though, that the dual logic sometimes creates tensions and conflicts between CONAIE and Pachakutik as well as within the former, as has often been the case since the beginning of the new millennium.

With the Left in power since 2007, the Ecuadorian political economy of state-indigenous relations experienced significant alterations. As previously mentioned, the Correa government initiated a more top-down process of state-society liaisons. Paying attention to an increasingly top-down process of state-society liaisons and the dismantling of the model we label indigenous societal corporatism (Chartock, 2013; Andrade, 2019, pp. 18-19), some scholars define *Correismo* as an anti-corporatist political project. Though concurring with the opinion, we stress the need to bring forth the ambivalent position of the Correa project towards the indigenous movement. Correa's disciplinary and technocratic version of *statism* contrasted – at least discursively – with a *socialist* project with civil society as an important shareholder in state affairs and economic policies (Wright, 2010; Ospina Peralta, 2018).

The article accordingly identifies a contradiction in *Correismo* between a strong formal commitment towards a participatory democracy respecting the values and rights of indigenous peoples and nature on the one hand, and, on the other, a process of state transformation heading towards increasing hyper-presidentialism, de-corporatization and extractivism. A central argument is that *Correismo*, despite its progressive profile and declarations, marginalized the indigenous movement by weakening the central strategies of the movement: mobilizing capacity, alliance politics and institutional participation. Although the neoliberal governments of the 1990s also had ambivalent postures towards the movement, their double standard arguably did not have an equally negative impact on the strategic repertoire of the indigenous movement as did *Correismo*. We should emphasize that the key contribution of this article is not just another analysis on the nature of *Correismo*. Rather, we problematize the ways in which the state transformation during these years impacted on the repertoire of the indigenous movement, focusing on the three aforementioned strategies.

State-Indigenous liaisons and movement strategies since the 1990s

During the neoliberal regimes in the 1990s, indigenous issues were internationally in vogue. In line with Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization, several states in Latin America restructured their relationship with the indigenous populations, leaving behind the so-called *indigenista* policies of previous years (Díaz Polanco, 1997; Yashar, 2005; Van Cott, 2008). Terms like ethno-development, development with identity and multiculturalism were established in the official discourse to capture an outspoken ambition to increase the decision-making power of the indigenous peoples in matters concerning their own development. During these years, indigenous organizations and movements across Latin America nurtured a complex relationship with the neoliberal administrations. Whereas many welcomed official multiculturalism to leave the policies of forced assimilation behind, others interpreted these policies as new means of suffocating, co-opting and marginalizing a social movement that had emerged as one of the most vocal opponents of neoliberalism and agro-industrialization (Guerrero Cazar & Ospina Peralta, 2003; Díaz Polanco, 1997; Yashar, 2005).

The traditional state corporatist model of interest intermediation had already come under attack during the decades of neoliberal rule (Yashar, 2005; Lembke, 2006). Political scientist Sarah Chartock analyses ethnodevelopment in terms of being a form of indigenous corporatism; a subtype of traditional, state-orchestrated, corporatism that primarily addresses an increasingly powerful indigenous movement. Unlike classic trade unionist and/or peasant-based corporatism in, for example, post-Great Depression Argentina, Brazil and Mexico (Collier & Collier, 1991) in which associational life was orchestrated by the state into hierarchical, functionally specific and class-based categories (Schmitter, 1974), indigenous corporatism was rooted in the increasing politicization of ethnic cleavages from the 1980s onwards (Chartock, 2013, p. 60), that is, in a democratic context in which the state could no longer control associational life by means of coercion and repression. In the Ecuadorian case, indigenous corporatism was organized around institutions such as the *Council for the Development of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Ecuador* (CODENPE) and the *National Directorate for Intercultural Bilingual Education* (DINEIB) (see also Mijeski & Beck, 2011, pp. 44-45). Although the classification of Chartock is useful, we prefer the concept *indigenous societal corporatism* because it better captures this form of state-indigenous interest intermediation, in which the movement sacrificed some of its independence for taking a seat in the institutional and technocratic management of indigenous affairs, as a product largely initiated and developed from below, that is, emanating from the mobilizing capacity of the indigenous movement.³ It evolved from autonomous societal spheres which were brought to life in association with the agrarian reforms in the 1960s and 1970s, strengthened by the insertion into an ever-stronger indigenous movement in the 1980s and 1990s, and further politi-

cized by the subsequent attachment of the movement to legal-institutional terrains at various levels of the state (Mann, 1984; Yashar, 2005). Thus, although the state by means of this corporatist subtype “structured, subsidized, and exercised a degree of control over indigenous interest groups” (Chartock, 2013, pp. 64-65), it could not prevent the indigenous movement – CONAIE in particular – from preserving much of its mobilizing capacity and its anti-neoliberal and government-critical discourse.

Indigenous societal corporatism was at the centre of the highly ambivalent relationship between the Ecuadorian indigenous movement and the neoliberal governments. At the same time as the movement entered the ethno-developmental arenas designed in concert with the state, it also gained a reputation as a leading anti-neoliberal challenger within a mushrooming Latin American social movement sector. In our view, the strength of the movement hinged on three successfully employed strategies. The first strategy rested upon an impressive extra-institutional mobilizing capacity. By June 1990, the indigenous confederation CONAIE had – in a surprising and massive way – entered the national political scene by staging its first nation-wide uprising (*levantamiento*). In subsequent years, CONAIE orchestrated several important large-scale mobilizations (as in 1992, 1994 and 1997).

Ever since the mid-1980s, pressures for the enactment of political, socio-cultural, economic and judicial reforms intensified among the indigenous organizations, partly as a result of academic training, consciousness-raising, formation of a proper indigenous leadership and an increasing disaggregation of the links with agents hitherto considered to be prime orchestrators of indigenous mass organization, particularly the Roman Catholic Church and the Communist and Socialist parties. The provincial indigenous federation of central-Amazonian Pastaza, OPIP (*Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza*), co-founder of CONAIE in 1986, was a key factor in this process. Throughout the 1990s, the Amazonian peoples were particularly successful in the negotiation on territorial autonomy whereby the OPIP distinguished itself in establishing vast territories for the indigenous communities (Ortiz-T, 2016), an impressive achievement considering that the organization did not benefit from acting under the protection of a “progressive” Constitution speaking favourably of ethno-territorial rights. Blockades of roads, mass gatherings outside government agencies and, indeed, the sheer threat of staging uprisings were manifestations of its newly gained mobilizing capacity (Yashar, 2005; Mijeski & Beck, 2011; Becker, 2015). Moreover, enjoying considerable mobilizing capacity, CONAIE contributed significantly to the relatively peaceful overthrow of two national governments, Abdalá Bucarám in 1997 and Jamil Mahuad in 2000.

The second strategy concerns how the movement managed to position itself as an attractive alliance partner for other popular organizations which had been marginalized by the neoliberal onslaught on prior corporatist arrangements. We have made a distinction between alliances formed in the extra-institutional con-

text (mainly performed by CONAIE) and within electoral politics (mainly performed by Pachakutik). With regards to the former, it is important to mention the Coordinator of Social Movements (*Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales – CMS*), which in the mid-1990s emerged as the most important umbrella organization for different social movements. CMS grouped CONAIE and other indigenous, peasant and urban organizations and had a central role in the formation of Pachakutik and, thus, in creating possibilities for alliance politics at the electoral level as well (Ortiz Lemos, 2013, p. 281; Becker, 2015, pp. xv; 60).⁴ A frequent discursive catchphrase of the indigenous movement has been “Nothing only for the indigenous” (*Nada solo para los indios*), which impressed and appealed to other non-indigenous social sectors, considering that the indigenous movement proposed concrete political solutions to long-standing national problems (Lucas & Cucurella, 2001; Mijeski & Beck, 2011).

The third strategy, institutional participation, relates to the entrance into electoral and politico-institutional arenas. Thus, in tandem with street protests, the movement managed to capture multiple mayoralties and accepted positions in various ministries. Within these arenas, it gained position as an influential interlocutor in political negotiations within a large variety of thematic fields, such as bilingual education, rural development and models of participatory democracy, but also with regards to policy areas that collided with its ideological standpoint, such as the privatization of social security and financial deregulation. Most importantly, the movement – together with non-indigenous actors – formed the politico-electoral movement Pachakutik which, since its creation in 1995, has participated in national and, more successfully, subnational elections (León, 1994; Guerrero Cazar & Ospina Peralta, 2003; Lalander, 2010).⁵ Thus, while taking part in electoral politics and co-operating with state authorities in advancing ethno-development, the movement upheld its position as the leading anti-neoliberal force of the country. However, this dual logic was not devoid of friction. Tensions arose within CONAIE in relation to the social movement dilemma of whether to seek autonomy from the state or enter its orbit.⁶ In the literature, this tension has been illustrated as one between “autonomy and possible isolation and political institutionalization and possible co-optation” (Lembke, 2006, p. 70; see also Munck, 1990, p. 35; Prevost et al., 2013).

Tensions also emerged between the exclusively indigenous organization CONAIE and the more inter-culturally oriented Pachakutik with regards to extra-institutional contentious actions and a more orderly conduct within the sphere of electoral politics. Moreover, whereas CONAIE sought to deepen a political project related to issues of indigenous identity, Pachakutik soon developed a broader ideological platform, conditioned as it was in the electoral arena to play according to the logics of compromise politics and within a context marked by deep-seated oligarchic power structures. However, tensions not only arose in cases when Pachakutik felt obliged or committed to represent the non-indigenous population and its grievances, but also when leaders of the po-

litico-electoral movement placed individual careerist priorities before the collective concerns of the indigenous population (Van Cott, 2008; Lalander, 2018: p. 89).

With the beginning of the commodities boom, in 2002 and 2003, the economy recovered, and the state was strengthened, whereas the outcomes of the three strategies of indigenous movement were negatively affected. However, the key explanatory factor behind the crisis of the movement was the electoral alliance formed between the indigenous movement and the lieutenant colonel and former coup leader Lucio Gutiérrez in the 2002 presidential elections, which resulted in three cabinet posts for CONAIE-Pachakutik representatives. Merely six months into the Gutiérrez presidency, the movement withdrew from a government that was turning increasingly neoliberal. The general sentiment within Pachakutik-CONAIE was a feeling of betrayal and an expanding distance between the grassroots and the national leadership (Lalander, 2010; Becker, 2015). Nonetheless, despite the relative weakening in national political influence and increasing internal tensions, Pachakutik maintained its strength at subnational levels with various kinds of local political alliances. In the 2004 elections, Pachakutik triumphed in eighteen municipalities (Becker, 2015, p. 105).

Although economic indicators had already begun to improve in 2001 – following the rise of international commodity prices – political instability lingered on. The Ecuadorian political landscape was ready for an outsider who could capitalize on the economic improvement and the declining legitimacy of the old establishment to launch a project for restructuring the state apparatus and its system of interest intermediation. Lucio Gutiérrez was such an outsider, but did not have the skills, capacity or congressional support to foster political stability. Instead, by mixing political incompetence and economic orthodoxy, political turbulence increased. Nevertheless, another outsider was looming in the background, ready to take the scene. With him, Ecuador not only entered a period of political stability, it also joined Venezuela and Bolivia in embracing twenty-first century socialism.

De-corporatization and the Citizens' Revolution

Rafael Correa, the winner in the 2006 presidential elections, was a young economist who had rehearsed heterodox and neo-Keynesian economic policies during a fleeting passage in the Ministry of Finance. His anti-neoliberal, neo-developmental political doctrine was named the Citizens' Revolution, the central pillar of which was the expansion of social citizenship by means of financial and tax reforms (Clark & García, 2019, pp. 2, 4-5; Nelson, 2019, p. 46). For Gustavo Larrea (2009, p. 21), the vision of citizenship in the PAIS project explicitly rejected the concept of classes, sectors and organizations as protagonist actors in the re-founding of the state. According to Pablo Andrade, *Correismo* sought to integrate the popular sectors for electoral purposes, but

without the creation of explicit links between popular organizations and the political process (Andrade, 2019, p. 5).

Moreover, to manage the commodities boom, *Correísmo* sought a reformation according to which the process of decentralization was replaced by a developmental state prioritizing infrastructural investments and the expansion of social services. Another concern was to restructure the system of interest intermediation, key components of which were de-corporatization and the centralization of power in the executive. Some scholars conclude that the purpose of the former was to weaken, divide, sideline and, at times, co-opt powerful social movements (Ospina Peralta, 2019a, p. 51; Nelson, 2019, p. 48). De-corporatization particularly aimed at increasing state autonomy vis-à-vis two types of collective actors: those who had preserved a privileged position in former corporatist arrangements (such as the traditional business sector and media) and those, like the indigenous movement, who by means of their mass mobilizing capacity had forced themselves into crucial arenas of political decision-making (Clark & García, 2019, p. 4; Nelson, 2019, pp. 50-51). During Correa, traditional business and media actors started to lose some of the channels which during neoliberal times had given it privileged access to the state. Though still far from being politically excluded, it was increasingly replaced by an emerging elite and a new generation of political technocrats who consolidated their power by managing state contracts and aligning with international capital (Ospina Peralta, 2018). In attacking movements with mass mobilizing capacity, de-corporatization struck against a largely bottom-up orchestrated societal corporatism. More particularly it confronted *indigenous societal corporatism*.

The other central feature of the new system of interest representation was thus the centralization of power in the executive. What took shape was a system in which the “only guarantor of public interest was the state and its leaders” (Ospina Peralta, 2019a, p. 51-53). Mindful of this, some scholars speak in terms of *statist technocracy* – stressing increased state autonomy in the service of a technocratic elite – or *technocratic populism* (de la Torre, 2013), alluding to the direct relationship between a charismatic leader and an atomized and depoliticized citizenry. Andrade prefers to speak in terms of a *technocratic strategy of interest intermediation* in which certain popular sectors were recognized and where social policies were not primarily launched for wealth distribution but as political instruments strengthening direct state-citizen linkages (Andrade, 2019, pp. 5-6).

Alongside de-corporatization and hyper-presidentialism, the Citizens’ Revolution comprised a willingness to uphold a model rooted in the ideals of participatory democracy, on the one hand, and the recognition of the rights of indigenous people and nature, on the other. Various forms of participatory democracy had been central ingredients in the strategic repertoire of the indigenous movement, such as previous consultation, informed consent and territorial circumscriptions (Lalander, 2010; Ortiz-T, 2016). On the part of the Correa

government, the ideal of participatory democracy was especially manifested in the 2008 Constitution and in the new role given to the Council for Citizen Participation and Social Control (*Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social* – CPCCS), an entity established to move the responsibility for appointing public officials, such as the Attorney General, the members of the National Electoral Council and the Human Rights Ombudsman, from Congress and the political parties to civil society. By means of the CPCCS – in conjunction with the Organic Law of Civil Participation (*Ley Orgánica de Participación Ciudadana*) – the government indicated its preparedness to fulfil the Constitutional declaration to “established a system of participatory democracy” (Ortiz, 2015, p. 34).

Despite promising declarations in the Constitution, critics feared that the true purpose of the new pro-democratic institutions was precisely the strengthening of the executive. In their view, institutions like the CPCCS accentuated the tendency to degrade parliament and other institutions of liberal democracy and to promote state-civil society delinking (Ortiz Lemos, 2013; Becker, 2015; Clark & García, 2019). Marcel Nelson, for one, does not recognize the Correa government as an agent of participatory democracy, arguing instead that it generated democratic stagnation in the form of de-energizing of overall societal political activity. Rather, a conceptual differentiation was made between *social organization* and *citizens*, in which the latter were equated with voters. Andrés Ortiz suggests that the Citizens’ Revolution was premised on the belief that: 1) key social grievances had already been met and that social movements therefore ought to adopt a supportive role; 2) a direct linkage between the government and the citizenry was justified due to an increasing discrepancy between movement leaders and grassroots; 3) the prominent position of key movements was owed to a privileged status in discredited corporatist arrangements; and that 4) social movements lacked the legitimacy of having triumphed in electoral competition, the only process considered democratically justified (Ortiz, 2015, p. 36).

As mentioned, another source of ambivalence within *Correísmo* was its position towards the rights of nature and the indigenous people (Lalander, 2014, 2016). It is important to remember that several elements of the initial PAIS agenda were directly copied from the political platform of the indigenous movement. The new Constitution, for example, encompassed not only the rights of nature and the indigenous peoples, but also themes like interculturality, the plurinational state, legal pluralism and participatory democracy. Consequently, the great majority of indigenous organizations (as also the ecologist ones) supported the draft of the constitution in 2008, though with a “Critical Yes” (*Un Sí crítico*) (Lalander, 2016). In an extraordinary assembly of ECUARUNARI,⁷ the regional CONAIE organization of the Sierra, in 2008, the following statement of the indigenous position to the new Constitution was declared:

[...] Considering that the Constitution project was the result of the struggle of the indigenous peoples ... aimed to make the Plurinational State and intercultural society viable, as well as to overcome neoliberalism, racism, the mechanisms of political, economic, social and cultural exclusion, the ECUARUNARI resolved the following: 1) The vote for the YES, a vindication of struggle and resistance of indigenous peoples; 2) To summon a large front, between the indigenous movement and social sectors for the referendum and promote the vote for the YES in the new Constitution; 3) Promote processes of socialization of the new Political Constitution approved by the Constituent Assembly, through campaigns on its progress and limitations (ECUARUNARI, 2008, quoted in Ortiz Lemos, 2013, pp. 79-80).

In this sense, it is understandable that several scholars praised *Correísmo* – particularly in its 2008 constitutional manifestation – for being an anti-neoliberal popular countermovement largely brought to the fore by two decades of indigenous social movement resistance. However, in the years following the enactment of the new constitution, such acclamations sounded increasingly hollow. First, although the indigenous population benefitted – along with other marginalized sectors – from an economic model based on public sector investments, tensions emerged following the failure of the government to fulfil its promises to redistribute land and ensure equitable access to water (SENPLADES, 2009). Second, an increasingly intensified critique concerned the seeming unwillingness of the government to comply with the constitution and let the rights and dignity of indigenous peoples and *Buen Vivir* serve as leading principles for the restructuring of state-nature-society relations (Domínguez & Caria, 2014; Lalander, 2016; Lalander & Lembke, 2018). Spokespersons of the indigenous movement accused the government of betrayal (Lalander, 2014; Lalander & Merimaa, 2018).

Already at the onset of his presidency, Correa viewed indigenous and ecologist resistance as an obstacle for “progressive extractivism” (Gudynas, 2015), that is, the continued emphasis on export-led growth by means of the intensification of mining, hydrocarbons and export-oriented agribusiness, a strategy that would assist the government in accumulating capital to be re-invested in infrastructure and welfare policies. Progressive extractivism was also a key ingredient for an overall “change of the productive matrix”, according to which the country would be further industrialized and acquire a “knowledge economy” (SENPLADES, 2013). Determined to move in this direction, Correa turned against the indigenous and environmental discourses, defining them as mythical millenarianism or Leftist *naïveté* (Clark & García, 2019, pp. 4-5). For example, when publicly defending the signing of the new mining law in 2009, he referred critically and pejoratively to “these small indigenous and fundamentalist ecologist groups” that mobilized against the law: “The biggest threat to our political project is the naïve Leftism and ecologist” (Los Tiempos,

2009). Former CONAIE president Luis Macas suggests that the objective was to eliminate a powerful oppositional movement:

It's not that the government wants simply to get rid of the Indians, or that it is racism for racism's sake.... The objective is to liquidate the indigenous movement in this country, to dismantle and destroy this movement ... [because] the indigenous movement is the principal social and political actor in the country that has struggled against the economic model, against neoliberalism (Macas quoted in Webber, 2011, p. 13).

With the forthcoming four years of oil production committed to Chinese companies' external loans and with the exhaustion of external credit, Rafael Correa ended his presidential period in 2017, and his former vice-president Lenín Moreno narrowly won the elections of April 2017, as a representative of PAIS. In the electoral campaign Moreno had promised the fortification of ambitious social programmes. Two months after Correa left the presidency, the relations with his successor had fallen into a pit of distrust. It is worth noting that dialogue with oppositional sectors marked the first year of Moreno's presidency. One of his first meetings as president was with the indigenous movement. Moreover, Humberto Cholango, former CONAIE president, was nominated director of water (and later Minister of Environment) in the Moreno cabinet. The new president also called for a popular consultation that addressed several demands from the indigenous movement that were eventually supported in the referendum, such as the prohibition of mining activities in protected and intangible areas. Furthermore, after a meeting with CONAIE in December 2017, Moreno declared the ending of all new mining and oil concessions unless prior consultation with affected peoples was held according to the constitution. At the same time, Moreno initiated negotiations with economic elite groups and, in early 2019, he negotiated a \$4.2bn loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Indigenous strategies in times of Alianza PAIS

Mobilizing capacity

The ability to rapidly rally people for the staging of mass protests awarded the Ecuadorian indigenous movement with a certain level of protection while approaching and entering a corporatist, clientelist and co-optative state apparatus. This mobilizing capacity had primarily been based on a fruitful and tight connection with the bases. To a large extent, the movement is a force rooted in local spaces and circumstances. The deepening of fissures between the national leadership and the bases thus constituted an ostensibly fruitful albeit problematic strategy for the Correa government. On the one hand, it could capitalize on an increasing discrepancy between the bases and the leadership of the indige-

nous movement (Lalander & Ospina Peralta, 2012; Ortiz, 2015, p. 36), a distortion which had already started in 2007.

On the other hand, its strategy of divide-and-conquer was still difficult to employ at the local level, especially in areas characterized by strong identity-based dynamics. More broadly speaking, Latin American states have demonstrated a historical inability to impose their authority uniformly across the nation. In fact, government attempts to marginalize, fractionalize or co-opt influential social movements have at times produced contradictory results locally. Deborah Yashar (2005) refers to this phenomenon as the unintended consequences of state reform. The Correa government was no exception in this regard. Thus, at the same time as the Correa government was more skilful than its predecessors in turning the sympathies of the indigenous grassroots towards the government, the ambition of state reformers was still obstructed by historically rooted circumstances and by an indigenous movement which – in a Latin American comparison and notwithstanding its increasing divisions – still enjoyed the historical experience of having worked closely with local communities.

Several strategies were applied by the Correa government to divide the indigenous movement. Chief among them was to de-corporatize the system of interest intermediation and, particularly, dismantle what we label indigenous societal corporatism. Also worth mentioning are the creation of parallel and more accommodating organizations, the reawakening of dormant organizations like, for example FEI, and the co-optation of middle level leaders of the movement (Ortiz Lemos, 2013, pp. 278, 301-302). While considering these strategies, this section will highlight two central strategies adopted with the specific aim of reducing the mobilizing capacity of the indigenous movement: bypassing the indigenous national leadership and the criminalization of social protest. As for the first strategy, the administration sought to foster more direct linkages to the local level. In accordance with the Citizens' Revolution, state entities like the Secretariat of Peoples and Social Movements (*Secretaría de los Pueblos y Movimientos Sociales*) assisted in creating a non-corporatist and assistance-based system of state-indigenous interest intermediation in which local level and issue-oriented interest groups gained status as principal counterparts to the state, a reorientation criticized by the indigenous movement as clientelist (Ortiz Lemos, 2013, p. 254).

The second strategy of criminalization of social protest turned particularly conflictive and infected in relation to the intensification of extractivism since the expansion and protection of the rights and dignity of indigenous peoples and nature were central grievances within the movement (Lalander & Ospina Peralta, 2012; Ortiz Lemos, 2013; Becker, 2015; Lalander & Merimaa, 2018). On several occasions, indigenous and environmentalist protesters were defined as saboteurs and imprisoned (PADH, 2014: pp. 95-96). As illustrated below, nonetheless, the Correa government was not spared from social unrest and from mass mobilizations marked by the presence of indigenous protests.

Selected mobilizations and alliances by CONAIE in times of Correísmo		
Mobilization	Date	Alliance observations
Uprising against mining concessions (for the reversal of the concessions).	June 2007	Epicenter in Azuay of the southern highlands of the Sierra. Included mestizo communities, small artisanal miners and environmental groups (supported by CONAIE and Ecuarrunari).
Uprising against mining law approved by the National Assembly.	January 2009	Supported by environmental and peasant organizations in Azuay. Included mestizo communities and small artisanal miners.
Protests and mobilizations against the approval of the Water Law.	May 2009	A protest vigil at the National Assembly. In alliance with FENOCIN and FEINE.
Uprising against the Water Law processed in the National Assembly.	October 2009	Alliance with FENOCIN and FEINE. Demands for a Plurinational Water Council (<i>Consejo Plurinacional del Agua</i>) and prior consultation for affected indigenous peoples.
March for Life, Water and the Dignity of the Peoples. (<i>Marcha por la vida, el agua y la dignidad de los pueblos</i>).	March 8-21, 2012	CONAIE central convener and organizer. Started in Zamora Chinchipe (southern Amazonia) and ended in Quito. Supported by environmental and peasant organizations, students, teachers and provincial Prefect of Azuay, Paúl Carrasco, among others.
National Mobilizations convened by the labor union organization FUT (<i>Frente Unitario de Trabajadores</i>).	Sept. 17 – Nov. 19, 2014	Against the adoption of reforms to the Labor Code.
National Mobilizations convened by FUT.	March 19 and May 1, 2015	Against Decree 16 that attempted to control social organizations and against the withdrawal of government contribution of 40% to the pension fund of the IESS (<i>Instituto Ecuatoriano de Seguro Social</i>).

Table 1, elaborated by the authors.

Do these mobilizations demonstrate that the Correa government failed in its attempts to weaken the mobilizing capacity of the indigenous movement? In our view, it is important to consider the character of social protest during the Correa government, more than the size and quantity of the mobilizations. First, it is striking that the calls for mobilizations in relation to the economic downturn since 2014 onwards were no longer convened by CONAIE, but by the labour union organization FUT (Ospina Peralta, 2015). CONAIE accordingly

joined forces with FUT as an invited guest, that is, without the prominence it had had during the entire 1990-2001 mobilization cycle (Sánchez Parga, 2010, pp. 85-111).

Second, with regards to the mobilizations that indeed were orchestrated by CONAIE, one may identify not only higher levels of punitive state responses, but also weakened public support for the protesters. As noted above, many of these protest actions were related to the expansion of extractivism. In 2012, for example, the CONAIE initiated a mobilization on the rights to water, life and dignity (*Marcha por el Agua, la Vida y la Dignidad*), a massive 15-day march along the 700 kilometres between the mining areas of the southern Amazon to the city of Quito, where a mobilization of thousands of protesters accompanied the exhausted indigenous activists as they entered from the south of the city. The government responded with counter-marches, massive advertising campaigns, harassment in various places and deliveries of funds to allied groups in localities through which the indigenous march passed. However, the protesters still enjoyed public support. The media coverage by the highly influential oppositional newspapers and television networks was constant, pleased as they were to report and broadcast any sign of resistance against the government (authors' observations in Quito). As reflected in the photo below of the graffiti on a wall in central Quito during the mobilization, the two most important Ecuadorian newspapers recognized the "existence of the indigenous" for the first time in many years.



Photos by Rickard Lalander.

It is interesting to contrast this manifestation with another one taking place six years later, in November 2018, during the presidency of Lenín Moreno. The battle cry of the 2018 manifestation was *Por el agua, la vida y contra la corrupción* (For water, life and against corruption), and it was led by anti-mining and ECUARUNARI leader Yaku Perez Guartambel. At this occasion, the press was more indifferent (authors' observations, 2018) and the government less obsessed with obstructing the protesters.

Third, reconnecting to the issue of an increasing internal division, the previous example also demonstrated that mobilizations due to internal divisions of the leadership no longer evoked the same massive enthusiasm within the indigenous movement as, for example, during the 2012 march. With regards to this comparison, one source of division was that the main leader of the 2012 mobilization, then president of CONAIE Humberto Cholango, had accepted a cabinet position, namely as Minister of the Environment and Secretary of Water Resources, precisely the instance to which the march was directed on behalf of CONAIE and the regional highland federation ECUARUNARI.

The three tendencies mentioned above suggest a relative weakening of CONAIE's mobilizing capacity during *Correísmo*. However, this indication should not be considered definitive. On many previous occasions CONAIE had been declared dead or at least failing, when in fact it was more likely a transient lethargy. The CONAIE-led anti-IMF riots of October 2019 further emphasize this point, as will be argued in due course.

Alliance politics

The ability of the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement to balance political action in the streets and within the legal and institutional terrain of the state made it into an attractive alliance partner. Throughout the years, CONAIE has cooperated with several social organizations, such as the other indigenous confederations (FENOCIN, FEINE and FEI) and from 2010 onwards with the workers and teachers' unions respectively, *Frente Unitario de Trabajadores* (FUT) and the *Unión Nacional de Educadores* (UNE). Moreover, in the various mobilizations and uprisings of the past decade, the indigenous movement has frequently allied with small artisanal miners and environmental organizations. With regards to the latter relationship, the importance of economist Alberto Acosta in serving as a bridge should be emphasized. Acosta was close to Rafael Correa in 2006-2007 and chaired the Constitutional Assembly in 2007-2008. In that capacity he facilitated the connections between the indigenous movement, the ecologist movements and the Correa-PAIS project. After cutting his ties with Correa – even before the final draft of the Constitution was finished in 2008 – Acosta has continued to encourage alliances not only between indigenous and ecologist movements but also with leftist-intellectuals and other social sectors in opposition to the Correa government (Becker, 2015).

However, the environmental organizations were natural allies of the indigenous movement long before the Correa era and the Acosta-led constitutional process. For instance, the Ecuadorian ecologist NGO *Acción Ecológica* (Ecological Action) has collaborated with the indigenous peoples' organizations for decades, both in the Amazon and the highlands (Becker, 2015, pp. 209-210; Lalander & Merimaa, 2018, p. 499). The globally most debated indigenous-environmental case in recent times is that of Yasuní, an Amazonian protected national park and biosphere reserve, with some of the richest biodiversity in the

world, and likewise the home of several indigenous groups, some of whom live in voluntary isolation. However, Yasuní is also a territory of large oil reserves. Already in 1995, the so-called Yasuní initiative was launched by CONAIE as a rejection of petro-capitalism. Thereafter, the proposal was also carried forward by academics and environmental organizations, such as Oilwatch and *Acción Ecológica*. In 2007, the Ecuadorian government joined in. It strengthened the initiative by proposing to protect the indigenous peoples and the biodiversity and to “Leave the oil underground” in exchange for contributions from the international community equal to 50 per cent of the expected income that the oil exploitation would have generated. Nonetheless, in 2013, Correa declared the end of the government’s support for the Yasuní initiative due to insufficient international contributions and based on the argument that incomes from oil exploitation were needed to cover social reforms (infrastructure, health and education). Merely 0.37 per cent of the estimated contributions had been achieved at the time of the closure. In the protest activities against the opening of oil drilling in Yasuní from 2013 onwards, CONAIE was an active albeit relatively subordinated actor in relation to national and transnational environmental organizations, such as the *Yasunidos* (United for Yasuní), *Acción Ecológica* and *Fundación Pachamama* (Lalander & Merimaa, 2018).

Comparing the 1990s and the Correa years, there has been a marked alteration in the alliance politics of CONAIE. Whereas the confederation in the 1990s upheld the position as the strongest and most vociferous social force in the ideological battle against neoliberalism, during *Correísmo* it increasingly dedicated itself to resisting policy-oriented reforms, especially within an environmental framework, partly leaving the ideological vanguard position to other social organizations.

Evidently, alliance politics also constitutes an important strategic dimension within the realm of electoral politics. Since its foundation in 1995, Pachakutik has engaged in a series of electorally fruitful or dubious alliances. During 2007 to 2009, Pachakutik stood on relatively good terms with Alianza PAIS, though ruptures appeared following the enactment of the new mining and water laws. The estrangement culminated when Pachakutik joined a coalition of social and electoral forces for bringing forth a NO vote in the 2011 popular consultation that was convened by the government to take control of the judicial system. The triumph of the YES campaign further accentuated the gap between Pachakutik and the government and paved the way for an even larger anti-Correa alliance – the Plurinational Unity of the Left (*Unidad Plurinacional de las Izquierdas/UPI*). UPI included a myriad of primarily leftist, environmental and pro-democratic organizations and parties and was formed as a counter-weight to Alianza PAIS in the upcoming 2013 elections with Alberto Acosta on the presidential ticket. With the elections approaching, the political movement of the prefect of Azuay, Paúl Carrasco (at that time called *Participa*), as well as the social democratic RED movement (*Red Ética y Democracia/Ethics and Democracy Network*) had joined UPI. As an integrated part of UPI, Pachakutik

had decisively moved into opposition. However, the turnout was a disappointment. Acosta acquired slightly over three per cent of the votes in the presidential elections (CNE, 2013).

Though occasionally having extended its support to centre-right movements in local elections, the alliance with UPI seemed to underline that Pachakutik, in terms of political and ideological affinity, belonged to the Leftist and centre-leftist side of the political spectrum. However, since 2011, and particularly in the negotiations foregoing the 2017 election, several leaders of Pachakutik approached parties of the political right, primarily CREO (*Creando Oportunidades*) of banker Guillermo Lasso. Whether attacking Alianza PAIS from the left or the right, the relation had now reached such a level of polarization that, in the second presidential electoral round of May 2017, the internal debates of Pachakutik demonstrated a dead heat between the sympathizers of Lasso and those who called for null voting.

Whereas the relationship between Alianza PAIS and the indigenous movement experienced a steady deterioration throughout the Correa years, relational changes were happening within the movement itself, particularly between CONAIE and Pachakutik. It was increasingly evident that the leadership of CONAIE had decided to further subordinate Pachakutik, especially considering the tumultuous years of the Pachakutik-Gutiérrez governmental alliance. This manoeuvre was not explicit but rather an unofficial reorganization of the different arms of the movement. However, already by fall 2008, one of the authors of the article received an internal working document of an extraordinary assembly of CONAIE (mistakenly emailed to a broader group of recipients) which emphasized, among other things, CONAIE's responsibility to deauthorize official statements by elected Pachakutik authorities that lacked approval by the confederation (CONAIE, 2008). Moreover, since the 2016 election of Kichwa-Sarayaku leader and former CONAIE President Marlon Santi for the national leadership of Pachakutik, the subordination of the politico-electoral instrument to the social movement CONAIE has been noticeable.

Institutional participation

Whether to enter or stay at arm's length from the legal and institutional terrain of the state is a constant dilemma for social movements whose legitimacy rests precisely on challenging the political establishment. For the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement this positioning was particularly intricate during *Correísmo*, that is, when it had to confront a government that seemed to share the movement's ideological framework, though departing from it in key areas, such as economic development and environmental politics. Besides constant disagreements regarding environmental politics, Correa's move against CODENPE and DINEIB – the key instances of societal indigenous corporatism – added to the hostile relationship between the government and CONAIE.⁸ The decisions in 2009 and 2010 to stop the funding of CODENPE and the removal of the au-

tonomy of DINEIB were interpreted as attempts to discipline indigenous actors who condemned government-led extractivism (Mijeski & Beck, 2011, p. 121; Chartock, 2013, pp. 64-65). In its place, a Plurinational Advisory Council of the Sub-secretariat of Intercultural Education was formed, in which appointments were based on merit and not on corporatist-clientelist forms of top-down nominations or bottom-up selections based on ethnic criteria. The new nomination procedure placed under the auspices of the Council for Citizen Participation and Social Control (*Consejo de Participación Ciudadana y Control Social*, CPCCS) undoubtedly served to further exclude CONAIE by evicting the confederation from the positions it had achieved in the instances of public policy deliberation. It was reiterated in other governmental entities such as, for example, the Plurinational and Intercultural Conference for Food Sovereignty (*Conferencia Plurinacional e Intercultural de Soberanía Alimentaria/COPISA*) (Asamblea Nacional, 2009, art. 43).

Whereas radical changes in state-indigenous relations occurred at the national level – with the dismantling of indigenous societal corporatism and the passing of several former CONAIE members to the Correa camp – the dynamics of this relationship at the subnational level were quite different. Most importantly, the proportion of elected Pachakutik representatives at the subnational level has been preserved. For example, from the two elected indigenous Pachakutik mayors in 1996 (Becker, 2015, p. 61), the number of municipal victories – frequently through strategic alliances – increased to 19 in 2000 (Becker, 2015, p.76) and then 18 in 2004 (Becker, 2015, p. 105), to thereafter achieve 23 mayoralties in 2009 and 26 in 2014 (Ospina Peralta, 2014). In three of these municipal victories in 2014, Pachakutik closed a regional electoral deal with PAIS in the highland province of Chimborazo (Ospina Peralta, 2014). Pachakutik was likewise the second most voted party in the country in the election of members of rural parochial boards (*juntas parroquiales*, the smallest instance of local administration in Ecuador) both in 2009 and 2014. This indicates that the community level organizations in areas of proportionally high indigenous presence has remained decisive throughout the period.

In the post-Correa period in the subnational elections of 24 March 2019, Pachakutik obtained five provincial prefectures and 19 mayoralties in the Sierra and Amazonia, of which several were achieved through local electoral alliances. The five provincial prefectures included the two important ones of Tungurahua in the central highlands and that of Azuay in the southern highlands where the ECUARUNARI leader Yaku Pérez Guartambel had triumphed.⁹ Accordingly, at the provincial level, Pachakutik was strengthened, in comparison with the three provincial governments it achieved in 2014, although at the same time the number of mayoralties decreased from 26 to 19 (CNE, 2019; El Telégrafo, 2019; Ospina Peralta, 2019 b). After the Social Christian Party PSC (*Partido Social Cristiano*), *Democracia Sí* of Correa's former ally Gustavo Larrea, Pachakutik is the third political force of the nation in numbers of mayoralties and prefectures (El Telégrafo, 2019).

In these elections, another phenomenon was apparent, namely the increasing dispersal of indigenous candidacies in other political parties, which is to be compared with the previous tendency of CONAIE-Pachakutik as the practically exclusive channel for indigenous electoral participation (Lalander, 2018; Ospina Peralta, 2019b). Paradoxically, the end of *Correísmo* government seems to have accelerated the electoral dispersion of the indigenous movement. However, this is a paradox only in appearance. First, it is expressed in the declining mobilizing capacity of CONAIE. This relative decline is also expressed in the ability to keep cadres and militants unified. This was already explicit during *Correísmo*, but a more favourable “window of political opportunity” appeared when Correa left the presidency and the pressure on the organization was loosened. Both structural and cyclical explanations help us to understand the recent dispersal of indigenous candidacies. From a structural viewpoint, the sources upon which communal indigenous leaders based their authority and prestige among the local electorate were no longer that strongly connected to the organizational structures of CONAIE as during the heyday of the organization. Instead, old structures were revived in which prestige and authority emanated from a variety of sources, such as, among others, family bonds, educational titles, economic wealth and the generosity associated with the latter (Sánchez Parga, 2013; Lalander, 2018; Ospina Peralta 2019b). Nonetheless, despite this dispersal tendency, the Pachakutik support in subnational constituencies has, as mentioned, remained relatively stable and even growing over the past twenty years.

Summing up, some signs of relative recovery of the indigenous movement should be highlighted, not only in terms of the comparatively friendlier approach of the president towards the indigenous peoples in times of Lenín Moreno. For example, the Amazonian peoples, particularly the Waorani women of Pastaza province, have been practically in constant low-intensity mobilization since 2017, defending their territories which have been threatened by oil extraction since 2012. In April 2019, the Waorani won the first legal battle as the provincial court decided in favour of the Waorani and declared the prohibition of oil extraction in these territories, particularly considering the neglect of the constitutionally granted rights to prior informed consent before any extractive activity takes place in the indigenous territory (El Universo, 2019). However, the government immediately appealed this court’s decision, although in July 2019 this appeal was dismissed by the court, thus impeding the entrance of oil companies in this Waorani territory of 180,000 hectares (El Comercio, 2019).

Moreover, just before the finalization of this article, in October 2019, CONAIE spearheaded a national protest action against the IMF-backed neoliberal economic package that included a decree of a removal of fuel subsidies that forcefully affected the most vulnerable sectors of society. A state of emergency and eventually a curfew were declared, and the police and armed forces were ordered to control the disturbances. In this context, the social clashes pro-

duced eight deaths, as well as hundreds of wounded and arrested protesters. Other popular sectors participated in the protest, albeit with the objective to topple Lenín Moreno. For CONAIE, a central concern during the protests was to not be associated with *Correísmo*, which most likely took advantage of the general anti-Moreno atmosphere. To avoid further violence, CONAIE accepted an invitation to direct dialogue with Lenín Moreno on the eleventh day of the protests. This recent advocacy of CONAIE clearly shows that the mobilizing capacity is not always an indicator of the actual strength of the movement. When there is a good reason and a clear target at hand, the mobilization networks are activated and thus CONAIE was able to once again unify the forces of all those who opposed the IMF package.

Conclusions

We have examined the political economy of state-indigenous relationships during *Correísmo*, contrasting it with the previous neoliberal era. The indigenous movement was already debilitated when Correa entered the presidency, due to internal divisions and the crisis originating in the alliance with Lucio Gutiérrez. After a few years of conditional support for the Correa government, indigenous activists soon questioned the sincerity of those constitutional claims that spoke of participatory democracy and the rights of indigenous peoples and nature, a critique that was evidenced in areas such as environmental protection, decriminalization of social mobilization and the maintenance of indigenous societal corporatism. Rather than a doctrine for advancing radical democracy, the Citizens' Revolution largely came to assist the government in marginalizing a social movement which had grown increasingly influential during the 1990s and early 2000s. In the new political setting, the indigenous movement had to act upon seemingly irreconcilable arenas. Although the neoliberal governments also nurtured an ambivalent relationship with the movement, neoliberalism was clearly identified as the "enemy". Due to its society-wide recognition as a significant oppositional force, the movement could at times establish close relationships with these governments without putting at risk its status as a radical challenger.

Correa's Janus-faced administration constituted a more delicate challenge in that it blurred the depiction of a common enemy. This ambiguity turned into a prime asset for the government in not only attacking the strategic arsenal of the indigenous movement but also in co-opting central parts of its discourse. Moreover, in the absence of a clear ideological adversary, the movement could not capitalize on its multifaceted repertoire as easily as in the 1990s. The three strategies which had been successfully employed by the movement were now placed under increasing attack. The mobilizing capacity declined due to the criminalization of protest activities and partly successful government attempts at divide-and-conquer. The attractiveness of the movement as an alliance partner was affected because it was no longer the central challenger of neoliberal-

ism, a role discursively seized by Correa. Institutional participation was blurred with the creation of populist channels to the citizenry.

Whether *Correísmo* managed to increase the distance within the movement between leaders and bases is difficult to determine. Undoubtedly, the indigenous movement has maintained a special anchorage at the local level, as demonstrated in the recent subnational elections of 2014 and 2019, as also in the advocacy of CONAIE during the protests against the IMF-backed economic package of October 2019. This anchorage is still of crucial importance. Undoubtedly, the strength of the movement will ultimately depend on the maintenance of a solid connection between leaders and the bases. And, for those aiming at debilitating the movement, this linkage is also potentially its Achilles heel.

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Notes

- 1 While CONAIE undoubtedly by far is the biggest indigenous confederation, we should clarify that three other national indigenous confederations exist: the socialist indigenous-peasant organization FENOCIN (Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras), the evangelical FEINE (Consejo de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indígenas Evangélicas del Ecuador), and the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians/FEI (Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios), founded in 1944 by the Communist Party. At times, the four confederations have cooperated in mobilizations, both in the 1990s and during Correísmo.
- 2 While the smaller peasant indigenous federation FENOCIN was an early ally of PAIS and Correa, Pachakutik-CONAIE never had a formal alliance with Correa-PAIS.
- 3 A possible comparison could be that of the indigenous societal corporatism in Bolivia, which was introduced in the 1990s during the Sánchez de Lozada administration and accentuated under the Evo Morales government of MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) (Yashar, 2005; Van Cott, 2008; Chartock, 2013). The Ecuadorian case is accordingly different in that indigenous societal corporatism had already been fully established in the neoliberal 1990s.
- 4 We should emphasize the importance of transnational social movement connections during the 1990s, which contributed to the achievements of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, such as the Oxfam-orchestrated Andean Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Organizations/CAOI (Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas), Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin/COICA (Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica) and Vía Campesina, in the case of the peasant-indigenous FENOCIN.
- 5 For a comparison between the electoral participation of Pachakutik and that of the Bolivian MAS (Movimiento Al Socialismo) party, see Van Cott, 2008.
- 6 This dilemma is not only present in right-wing political settings. It is also a notable characteristic of state-social movement liaisons under left-wing governments, particularly during the Latin American Pink Tide (see Larrabure, 2019).
- 7 Confederación de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichwa del Ecuador (Confederation of the Peoples of the Kichwa Nationality of Ecuador).
- 8 CODENPE was a council in charge of defining state policies towards the Indigenous peoples. Originally the directorate of CODENPE included delegates of the indigenous organizations, particularly of CONAIE. DINEIB did not only establish the policies of intercultural education, it also administered this entity with a relative financial and political autonomy (Chartock, 2013).
- 9 These elections coincided with a local binding referendum in the municipality of Girón, Azuay province, in which an overwhelming majority sided with protecting the water reservoir of Quimsacocha by voting for the prohibition of mining extractivism in the area. A central leader of the protection of Quimsacocha is the very same Yaku Pérez Guartambel.

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