A Critique of President Rafael Correa’s Protection of Indigenous People and the Environment in Ecuador

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A Critique of President Rafael Correa’s Protection of Indigenous People and the Environment in Ecuador

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Abstract

In 2008, the Ecuadorean National Assembly established a new constitution under the guidance of President Rafael Correa. The Quechuan phrase sumak kasway (Buen Vivir in Spanish) is incorporated throughout the constitution and grants nature the same legal rights as citizens. Sections in the Buen Vivir clauses also allow for further protection of indigenous groups, including those living in complete isolation in the Ecuadorean Amazon. The aim of this thesis is to examine the legal actions taken by President Correa to protect the environment and the indigenous people, and his actions later in his preidency that disregarded such laws. The language used in Buen Vivir and the actions taken by the government following the implementation of the new Constitution demonstrate an egregious failure of environmental and indigenous rights. This failure culminated when a governmental agency destroyed and tampered with a national referendum opposing the cancelation of the Yasuní ITT Initiative. The initiative, an extension of Buen Vivir, would have prohibited drilling oil in Parque Nacional Yasuní, a mega diverse area that is imperative for combating climate change and expanding global scientific knowledge. In protest of the cancelation, a social and political movement group called the Yasunidos developed throughout the country with a common cause: stopping the government’s extractivist agenda. Physical and psychological attacks spearheaded by President Correa against the Yasunidos created a political atmosphere that deterred democratic discourse. Once a proud voice for the struggling and forgotten citizens of Ecuador, President Correa neglected his initial intentions that could have successfully alleviated the pressures of climate change as well as made him a pioneer for environmental law and the protection of indigenous people. By comparing legal documents and public actions by the president, this thesis demonstrates the contradictory policies of his presidency.
Introduction

Preface:

I vividly remember the terrible ache in my stomach when I saw the living conditions of families in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Underneath the sticks and leaves that had fallen from a family’s fruit trees was a black stickiness that could easily be identified as crude oil. It was covering the ground and was deep enough and so far spread that finding soil underneath was impossible. The mother was standing with her children, as they played with the chickens, dogs, and turtles in their front yard. It was not the first time during the ten-day trip that I witnessed the poor and unsafe living conditions of residents in the Amazon. The water they were drinking was contaminated, and the animals and plants they would soon eat were being drowned not only by oil, but also by the chemicals used to extract it. At that moment, our local guide switched from speaking Spanish and said quietly in English that the kids we saw playing wouldn’t live to be our age because each one would die of cancer due to the hazardous living conditions they were forced to live in as a result of oil drilling.

Historical Overview of Ecuadorian Politics and the Environment:

Ecuador and its history are not well known outside South America. Even within the continent it does not hold the same political clout as Brazil, Argentina, or its northern neighbor, Colombia because of its small size. Ecuador is approximately as large as the state of Colorado covering just less than 110,000 square miles. What has been overlooked is emerging in part because of the increase in tourism over the past twenty years (Index, n.d.). Visitors from the United States, Europe, and other Latin American countries are witness to a rich history that draws from indigenous cultures as well as the cultures that emerged during and after Spanish conquest. Declaring independence in 1809, the country has seen many political changes, specifically in how the national government uses its power to benefit more people than an elite group of Ecuadorians (de la Torre, 2009).

19th and 20th Century:

The political and economic changes that have taken place since the 1800s have shaped the physical landscape as well as the social climate of the country. Beginning on the coast in the early 19th century, cacao was the leading export. Coastal ecosystems were destroyed, and the political system favored the wealthy elites. Post-World War II, the banana business thrived in Ecuador. The country was at one point the largest exporter of bananas in the world. While this brought wealth to the country, the money mainly stayed at the top, with the highland elites taking advantage of the marginalized races, genders, and ethnicities within Ecuador. Agrarian reforms
that started in 1964 provided poorer citizens the chance to own their own land, and create a better standard of living for themselves (Martínez Novo, 2008). However, in order to provide land, forests were destroyed and ecosystems ruined in the hope that economic disparities would diminish.

The discovery of oil in the 1970’s brought both positive and negative change to Ecuador. Much like the last two economic booms that occurred in Ecuador, cacao and bananas, the exploration and drilling for oil destroyed many ecosystems; parts of the Amazon basin continue to be destroyed due to this exploration. Many indigenous groups, such as the Tagaeri and Taronmenane tribes, were displaced and their homes destroyed. At the time, the right wing military was in control of the government. Using profits from oil exploration, they were able to provide services such as health care and education to a larger portion of the citizens, many of whom lived in cities. The land reforms and an increase in globalization brought an end to some institutionalized discrimination policies; many marginalized groups were granted the right to vote in 1979 (Becker, 1999). These large economic and political changes brought positive development to the country such as better healthcare, increased infrastructure, and a stabilized economy. Urbanization was met with a growing middle class, and higher wages were granted to unionized workers. A large portion of the change can be credited to indigenous groups’ social movements that have regularly taken place since the early 1980’s and continued into the 21st century (de la Torre, 2009).

The strategies used by political groups have mostly been peaceful, and the government has followed suit in their handling of political dissent (de la Torre, 2009). Many of the violent uprisings seen in other Latin American countries, such as dirty wars and mass incarcerations, have not occurred in Ecuador. This can be attributed to the racially fragmented elite class; the majority of citizens are some form of mestizo (a bi-racial person with both Spanish and Indigenous heritage). Because the elite class does not fully stem from one racial background, there have not been genocides against indigenous people similar to other Latin American countries. The changes seen within the nation have taken years, and are brought about due to high rates of poverty and increasing economic pressures as a result of globalization. However, minority groups have used activism to create the change they believe they deserve, and the political mechanism has adapted to meet those needs, yet not all problems are solved (de la Torre, 2009).

21st Century:

Rafael Correa was elected President of Ecuador in 2007 (BBC, 2013). With a background in economics, his plan was to provide Ecuadorians with better benefits and access to education
and healthcare while purposely defaulting on international debt (The Editors, 2016). Poverty rates dropped 12.7% between when he took office and 2014 (The World, n.d.). He overwhelmingly won his reelection in 2009, receiving 56% of the vote compared to his closest opponent, Luicio Gutiérrez with 23%. The 2008 constitution, constructed by Correa and his supporters, gives power to the citizens in what is called La Revolución Ciudadana or a Citizen’s Revolution. It was through his campaign and left wing political party that he planned on creating a more stable economy; shifting away from neoliberalism and more towards the socialist ideals used by Evo Morales in Bolivia and Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. He was a strong opponent of the World Bank and was a member of the Pink Tide, a group of South American countries that were populist and left leaning. 

Oil dominates the nation’s exports (60%), and Correa’s national development plan was aimed at moving away from an extractivist economy, yet this has proven to be difficult. He notably stated that while oil provides enormous profits “the socio-environmental impacts of this extraction are very high, such as…deforestation…loss of biodiversity, (and the) contamination of soils and water sources” (as cited in Rory and Chimienti, 2017, pg. 108). In addition, oil production provides a less stable labor force as compared to agriculture and manufacturing. The dollarization of the Ecuadorean currency in 2000 has also threatened the success of oil. Because Ecuador’s economy is smaller than the United States and they use the same currency, it is likely that the continued exportation of oil could overvalue the dollar and make exports too expensive on the global market (Rory and Chimienti, 2017). Furthermore, in an attempt to eradicate poverty, Correa has become reliant on foreign investment and debt aid from China, a move that can be seen as beneficial by those who wish to see the United States play a smaller role in Latin America (Rory and Chimienti, 2017; Ross, 2014). While the aim of this chapter and thesis is focused on domestic policy implementation, it is important to note that China now plays a major role in the Ecuadorean economy. Pledging financial investment as well as debt forgiveness in exchange for oil rights, China gave Ecuador $6.2 billion, an estimated 61%, of the government’s financial needs to continue to cover development costs (Ross, 2014). This dynamic relationship will only make it harder for President Correa and future administrations to implement National Development Plans and the current Constitution.

Plan Nacional Buen Vivir, translated to the National Plan for Good Living, and is a framework for development in Ecuador. Within the plan are steps to continue the clauses and notions of ‘good living’ found within the 2008 Constitution. The specifics of the constitution are written about below and found within chapter II of this thesis. However, to understand the

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1 See Sankey, 2016 and De Santiago, n.d. for more information regarding the Pink Tide in Latin America.
national plan and further understand the complexity of President Correa’s ideas in creating a better nation, it is important to dive into, if only briefly, the basics of development, sustainable development and its relationship with the study of political ecology. The terms are defined here so that the discussion of such ideas and concepts are clear throughout this thesis.

Dr. Richard Peet writes in *Theories of Development* that development is much more than an economic shift. Development incorporates social and cultural progresses that include human welfare and income distribution (Peet, 1999, pg. 1). Peet argues that following the Second World War, early trade theories of development favored the countries importing raw material rather than the producers; this relationship was evident in Latin America where raw coffee and other agricultural goods were shipped to the United States and Europe. These practices disproportionately benefited the West and only a small percentage of Latin American elites. While President Correa is an economist, his approach through his national plan was to create a better country not just through greater wealth, but also by advancing culture and society. This task was to be completed by decreasing income inequality (a cornerstone of Ecuador’s history), and through sustainable development. Sustainable development relates to the development that looks at long term goals, not just short-term gains and has the conservation of the environment incorporated with the plans; exploiting oil fields in the Amazon would not fall into this category (Kates et al., 2015). Peet argues that strictly speaking in terms of economics, this strategy is not the most profitable.

However, President Correa, through the establishment of Buen Vivir, Yasuní ITT, and Plan Nacional Buen Vivir, demonstrates that the continuation of growth (economic, social, and cultural) go in congruence with environmental protection and conservation. This planning falls within the study of political ecology. Lamont Hempel defines political ecology as, “the study of interdependence among political unit and of interrelationships between political unites and their environment…concerned with the political consequences of environmental change” (pg. 150). Hemple describes how policy implementation relates to environmental protection, for President Correa this connection also entails the advancement of his society through sustainable development (Peet, 1999; Porto-Goncalves, 2015; Robbins, 2012; Rory and Chimienti, 2017). The 2008 Constitution can be seen as the primary framework for President Correa’s national plan for sustainable development.

The new constitution was unique in that there is explicit language that protects nature and the well-being of the environment (Nueman, 2013). It also expands upon previous legislation that grants rights to indigenous groups. These clauses found within the Constitution are called Buen Vivir. While originally seen as success, these articles in the constitution have been difficult to
implement due to the President’s primary focus on improving the economy with little regard for environmental protection.

Prior to his 2014 speech, where he declared himself one of the best presidents in Ecuadorian history, President Correa’s democratic control shifted to singular power in order to, according to him, provide better and more stable support for the economic problems facing the country (Alvaro and Molinski, 2014; BBC, 2013; The Editors, 2016). This power can be seen in the control of private and public media sources that have been outspoken regarding policy changes and the President himself (Coryat, 2015). As the international market for oil changes rapidly and relies heavily on global speculation, Ecuador faces challenges because of its reliance on fossil fuel. Oil is responsible for over one third of all exports (Omar, 2016). The country will likely see a continuation of political, economic, and social modifications because of the President’s policies if the country relies heavily on an extractivist agenda. If history is any indication of the future, and President Correa cannot provide adequate services to enough of his constituents, organizations rooted in the advancement of human, social, and political rights will bring their supporters’ grievances to the government through demonstrations and legal action in order to create a better society.

**Political Movements within Indigenous Communities:**

International backing of indigenous political movements has been profoundly helpful in indigenous people gaining access to basic rights across Latin America. However, it is the mobilization of indigenous groups and their overarching goal to preserve language, culture, history, and territory that have brought legal change and formal recognition throughout Latin American countries. Indigenous groups have been fighting for much of their existence for these rights stemming from the Spanish conquest. Within the last two decades, Argentina and El Salvador have still refused to recognize the very existence of an indigenous population within their countries; rhetoric that exemplifies how recognition and protection of indigenous groups continues today throughout the region (Brysk, 2000).

Because of the many groups of indigenous people throughout Latin America, it is impossible to define the complexities of each group, both by how they identify themselves and by what rights or opportunities they are pursuing within their given communities. Thus the following subsection cannot properly represent the centuries of hardship generations of indigenous groups have faced. While there are cultural differences between indigenous groups, a quotation defines how different movements face a similar struggle. In response to a question  

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2 See Brysk, 2000 for further information on specific indigenous groups advocating for equality in their communities.
regarding his identity, an Ecuadorian indigenous leader said, “Indian identity is imposed—we have our own names. But if they call us Indians, we will rebel as Indians” (Brysk, 2000 pg. 57). The attitude of this organizer shows that the movement and correction of laws in order to grant equality amongst the most marginalized peoples is important no matter how they are categorized, what they are called, or how they are being oppressed (Brysk, 2000).

The 1990 movement known as *levantamiento* was a successful large-scale mobilization of indigenous people and allies who occupied the Church of Santo Domingo in Quito (Acción, 2010). They presented their plans for political change such as bilingual education, to the President. At the same time, the organization Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE) was established and, because of their work, indigenous groups were granted more rights under the constitution regarding land ownership, bilingual education, and protection of lands. CONAIE continues to play a role in the protection of indigenous groups. Through local meetings, national conferences, and an increased administrative organization they can provide adequate representation for all groups, including those in isolation (Mijeski and Beck, 2011). Many times these groups first call for change in education or healthcare systems, yet they also strive for the protection of their lands and preservation of ecosystems that are imperative to more than just their cultures and communities. It is always through collective challenging and a common cause that changes can be made. Even failure can shift mindsets that can inspire a new generation of social movements (Tarrow, 2011).

**Climate Change:**

The majority of the scientific community agrees that the earth’s temperatures are rising, and that the spike in temperatures is largely due to human activity (Earth, 2016; Intergovernmental, 2014). The industrial revolution (1790-1840) was the starting point for an increase in greenhouse gases (GHGs), and increased trends of global warming. The Greenhouse Effect is the system in which gases such as carbon dioxide are trapped within the earth’s atmosphere preventing the sun’s rays from exiting thus creating a trap causing the earth’s temperature to rise (Environmental, 2016b).

The most common GHG is carbon dioxide, but methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases are common and add to climate change. CO₂ is most prevalent, accounting for 76% of total concentrations in the atmosphere; methane has the second largest concentration (16%). Nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases account for 6% and 2% respectively, of GHG concentrations in the atmosphere (Environmental, 2016a). Each of the gases are a result of different mechanisms, but overwhelmingly can be attributed to the burning of fossil fuels. The practice of burning fossil...
fuels for energy production began at the onset of the industrial revolution (mid to late 18th century), and has continued to increase worldwide every year. Until recently, the United States has produced the most GHGs in the world per year through transportation, agriculture, and energy production for electricity; China and India are now leading in GHG production. Ecuador does not emit nearly as much as the highest emitters, falling within the Rest of the World category of global CO\textsubscript{2} emissions in 2011 (Union, 2014). There are 21 countries that emit at least 1% of total emissions and are quantified in the data individually, while Ecuador and 171 other countries emit a total of 20% of global CO\textsubscript{2} emissions combined. The latest complete data set regarding national emissions in Ecuador is from 1990, where the energy sector was the largest contributor (Cornejo and Wilkie, 2010). This imbalance in countries’ emissions makes international conversations on global reduction of GHGs complicated (Bethurem, 2016a; 2016b).

In 1992 the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established to write international laws on climate change. They made decisions based on the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC is the leading scientific group in charge of gathering information regarding climate change; it was set up by the UNFCCC. In the same year, they developed the idea of “differentiated responsibilities” which clarifies the weighted obligations developed nations have compared to developing nations, whose GHG emissions are traditionally lower than those of a developed nation. As a result of their work in 1997, they negotiated the Kyoto Protocol (Bethurem, 2016c).

The Kyoto Protocol was to be signed by national governments and required them to reduce the emissions of six major GHGs—carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride. Its goal was to reduce emissions 5% compared to 1990 levels by 2012. The Kyoto Protocol was a binding agreement that 192 nations signed. Annex II nations (global south nations including Ecuador) were encouraged to reduce emissions but not required to, whereas global north countries were pressured to meet all demands. The United States did not sign the Protocol. Emission reductions were met by some nations, but overall, worldwide GHG emissions continued to rise. While the Kyoto Protocol was productive in creating international agreement about the seriousness of climate change, it did very little to mitigate the problem (Bethurem, 2016c; United, n.d.).

Many scientists and national governments have applauded the Paris Agreement on Climate Change of 2015 for creating a fully encompassing agreement that would help reduce GHG emissions and start to mitigate the effects of climate change (Climate, 2015). It was more comprehensive than Kyoto and its international support (notably from President Obama of the United States) was farther-reaching than previous agreements (Corybn, 2016). Within the
agreement an international support system was set up to provide help for poorer nations. Mitigation goals are made very clear in the Paris Agreement: global temperatures should not exceed an average of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The 2-degree increase is a significant figure that has been a cornerstone in fighting climate change. The number is an ultimatum, that if the earth’s temperature exceeds it, the global consequences will be deadly (Climate 2015; Corybn, 2016). Some of the catastrophic impacts of climate change are explained below.

The effects of climate change are being seen throughout the world even when countries take circuitous routes through international policy toward cutting GHG emissions. The largest and possibly gravest effects from the changing temperature are rising sea levels. Glaciers melting in the Arctic will increase sea levels, threatening coastlines throughout the world. Estimations vary, but small island nations as well as coastline metropolises could be altered greatly, with the effects becoming irreversible. Climate scientists have also credited climate change with producing more powerful and frequent natural disasters such as hurricanes. Droughts, floods, and increased temperatures will change the way food is produced and affect crop yields. These changes to the food system could create shortages and leave much of the world hungry. Because of changing weather patterns due to climate change, sourcing clean water will be an issue for the majority of people living on sea or ocean coasts. Without fresh water, diseases are widespread, and millions of people could die from diseases such as malaria, cholera, and dysentery. Negative changes will also be seen in ecosystem diversity. Pests, invasive species, and the decrease of biodiversity will create a negative feedback loop that will continue to plague ecosystems worldwide. All of these effects will disproportionately affect people in poorer nations because they lack ample resources or adequate support by developed nations to solve these problems (Bethurem, 2016d). While the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement have included funding for the most vulnerable nations, the continued emissions by developed nations could easily outweigh the funding for climate change adaptation given to poorer nations. The protection of already vulnerable areas is one key factor for mitigation (Bethurem, 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d).

Ecuador faces the same challenges other global south nations face. With over 2,000 kilometers of coastline, many people and livelihoods are at risk of being underwater due to global climate change. Genetically modified organisms (GMO) are outlawed in Ecuador, thus the production of crops will be increasingly difficult due to climate variability (Legislativo, 2008). As recently as 2009, there were impoverished coastal communities with only 5% of their citizens having access to potable water (The World, n.d.; Widforss, 2013). Cholera, malaria, dysentery and diarrhea are common diseases and deadly symptoms related to dirty water that already pose
threats within many parts of Ecuador. Rapid changes will prevent more citizens from accessing clean water and create a greater risk of preventable deaths (Widforss, 2013). The risks on the coast may be more evident for outsiders, yet deep within the country where the Amazon rainforest begins, communities are at a similar risk of catastrophe for many of the same reasons.

Amazon:

As one of the most biodiverse places on earth, the Amazon rainforest extends to nine different countries within South America. It is calculated that 600 million metric tons of CO₂ are absorbed by the Amazon each year and help balance the earth’s total CO₂ emissions (Kintisch, 2015). Carbon dioxide is stored in the trunks, leaves, and roots of the millions of plants. Due to its sheer size of 7,000,000 square kilometers, it does not seem penetrable by the actions of mankind. However, logging practices, natural resource extraction (mainly crude oil and minerals), and large-scale agriculture taking place in all nine countries over a long period of time (which have increased greatly since the 1960s) have changed the forest’s composition. Habitat loss and a decrease in forested lands lead to land slides due to runoff and the destruction of fragile ecosystems (de la Torre, 2009; Veiga et al., 2003).

Ecuador is considered one of the most mega-diverse countries in the world. With one square kilometer containing more bio-diversity than anywhere else on Earth, it is a haven for many endemic species of birds, plants, frogs, insects, and more (Pimm et al., 2013). One section of the Ecuadorian Amazon is Parque Nacional Yasuní (PNY). It was designated an UNESCO World Heritage site (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 1989 by the United Nations because of its biodiversity. The number of amphibian species in the park is 153 and growing, with some currently being described. There are an additional 121 reptile species in the park, totaling 274 herpetofauna species; the highest species count in the entire world. Of the Amazon’s total bird species, one-third live in PNY. A total of 597 bird species have been identified as living in the park. Again this figure represents the highest species richness globally known. Of the mammals living in the park, 176 are documented with new species of bats and others being discovered yearly. Within the mammal classification, ten separate genera of primates can be found in PNY. Again, the park is the only known site in the world with such high primate species richness (Pimm et al., 2013).

Fish species also are in abundance in the park, with over 383 identified species. It is estimated that some 120 species have not yet been identified. In regards to arthropods, one hectare of PNY is home to at least 100,000 species; similar amounts of species are found in all of North America. Forty-three vertebrate species are endemic. Unfortunately, there are 28
Threatened or Near Threatened vertebrate species. These include the Amazonian Manatee, Lowland Tapir, White-Bellied Spider Monkey, and the Poeppig’s Wooly Monkey. Many of these species are at a high risk of extinction due to human activity in the park (Pimm et al., 2013).

The biodiversity does not just pertain to fauna; the flora in PNY is also incredibly diverse. In 2010, there were 2,700 known vascular plant species. By 2013 that number had increased to 3,135 documented vascular plant species. This demonstrates the tremendous amount of diversity, and that there is more to learn regarding the species found within the park. Scientists estimate that there are over 3,200 species. Of the over three thousand species, 2,300 are trees and shrubs while 800 are epiphytes, ferns, and lianas. One hectare of PNY contains over 900 vascular plants species with 666 being tree species; that is more than all the native species found in North America. The terra firme forest consists of many lianas or woody climbers. The number of species found of lianas throughout the park is estimated at 550. Of the thousands of plant species, over 100 are threatened or near threatened and are regionally endemic (Pimm et al, 2013).

Each year the PNY captures CO₂ emissions and stores it in the soil and leaves, trunks, and roots of plants. Its biodiversity is important to the ecological balance of the forest as well as the mitigation of climate change. As destruction of the forest takes place in the form of oil drilling, palm oil agriculture, logging, and other harmful human activities associated with these practices, the forest cannot mitigate the effects of climate change at the rate it previously has. It is a rare place on earth, containing an incredible number of different species, yet its natural beauty, ecological importance, and cultural significance are susceptible to negative change everyday (Pimm et al., 2013).

**ITT Initiative:**

In 2007, the Ecuadorian government proposed the Yasuni-ITT initiative to protect three drilling blocks (Ishpingo, Tambococha, and Tiputini) within Parque Nacional Yasuní, where indigenous tribes still live an uncontacted existence. The strategy was a bold initiative that required international cooperation, where governments would pay US $3.6 billion to the Ecuadorian government to forgo drilling in these blocks indefinitely (Ahrens, n.d.). The cancelation of the initiative five years after its announcement was seen as a failure. President Correa, in his speech canceling the agreement, proposed plans to begin drilling in the park (Correa, 2013). The sudden policy shift caused a political and social movement within the country led by a group of activists called the Yasunidos. Their movement is a culmination of individual’s disappointment and anger towards the government’s neglect of human rights and the protection of the environment. The organized protests stem from periods of indifference towards the most marginalized groups, including systematic destruction of ecosystems, by the
government. The group is asking for the government to suspend all drilling within the Forest in order to protect the ecosystems as well as the indigenous people living within the Amazon.

This type of conservation is known as payments for ecosystem services. A basic definition of the term is funding given to a farmer or landowner in exchange for certain practices that are beneficial to the environment and/or conservation of the land or water. The initiative is a large-scale system in which foreign national governments are paying Ecuador, a sovereign nation, to protect and conserve a large swath of land. Benefits of the practice include cash for low-income areas, increased education of sustainability and conservation practices, as well as protection of fragile or important ecosystems. Disadvantages to payments for ecosystem services include the valuation of ecosystems and the changing price of such areas, especially if valuable resources are found in that area. Other disadvantages include, limitations of local government to further preserve or develop areas and funding may not be allocated in the most sustainable manner (United Nations Development, n.d.). This brief description of payments for ecosystem services helps provide information for chapter III that will discuss the Initiative at length.

Indigenous people:

This section provides an abridged history of one of the last un-contacted tribes in the world, the Huaorani tribe. Living within the Ecuadorian Amazon Basin, these groups of indigenous people have lived in isolation for generations. The term Huaorani means “human beings” or “people,” and they live a hunter-gatherer lifestyle (Rival, 1993). It is believed that they live in an area for ten years, and cultivate crops such as manioc, maize, peanuts, sweet potatoes, and fruits (Crystalinks, n.d.). After that time, they move to a different area yet much of their previous and current territories are found within Parque Nacional Yasuní. They do not have a hierarchy within their society, but rely on personal duties of each individual to create a successful community (Waddington, 2003). Their population size is unknown, but there are multiple groups of Huaorani. The Tagaeri and Taronmenane tribes are both subgroups of the Huaorani and split from one another at an unknown time (Waddington, 2003). They are rival groups and violence has stemmed from their negative relationship with one another.

Contact with the outside world has negative impacts. The communities do not have the immunity to common diseases such as the flu that ‘contacted people’ have, thus it is dangerous for contact to take place. The exact population of these groups is unknown, but there has been a large decrease in numbers due to oil exploration and contact with the outside world, and it is believed that population could be below one hundred now (Crystalinks, n.d.; Foreman, 2003; Waddington, 2003; Whittmen, 2003).
These communities came in contact with the outside world in the mid 1900’s. Oil explorers, logging operations, and missionaries were some of the first people to make contact with one of the Huaorani tribes (Crystalinks, n.d.). Contact with these groups has been both successful and deadly. As recently as 2008 there have been deadly interactions between loggers and the tribesmen. In an attempt to illegally cut trees in Parque Nacional Yasuni, loggers killed five members from either the Tagaeri or Taronmenane tribes (BBC, 2008). A few missionaries have stayed in the communities and have had positive relationships with the tribes, but the contact is limited, thus making information on these groups scarce (Foreman, 2003).

There have been groups that move into more traditional Western towns in the Amazon, and they have helped create better relations between the government, oil companies, and the uncontacted peoples (Waddington, 2003). Many of them speak Spanish and have attended college or university in larger cities. The Huaorani Nation of the Ecuadorian Amazon (ONHAE) is an advocacy group comprised of Huaorani people who advocate for the rights of those still in isolation. However, with oil operations growing in the Ecuadorian Amazon, these groups are becoming smaller and being pushed further into the forest away from their ancestral lands (Foreman, 2003). The expansion of oil drilling requires large amounts of ecological destruction and diminishes the forests’ ability to store carbon. At the same time, the oil extracted will lead to further GHG emissions and add to the already changing climate. Therefore the rights of the indigenous groups within the Amazon are not only about the protection of a culture, but of the earth’s stability as a whole.

Moving Forward:

Climate change is the most devastating problem the world faces today. Millions of lives are being affected by the changes already taking place, and millions more will see the ecological, economic, social, and health effects. Ecuador has taken unique approaches to combating climate change. The government, led by President Correa, developed a bold proposal known as the Yasuni ITT Initiative that challenges the traditional way in which the international community approaches and implements climate change policy and environmental conservation. The following work will explore the complex relationship between Titles II and VII of the Ecuadorian constitution and the inherent violations of the law that stemmed from the cancelation of the Yasuni ITT Initiative in 2013. In protest against the government’s actions, indigenous and environmental groups created a social movement and took legal action against their government. They fought to protect the land, culture, and lives of affected indigenous people while also mitigating global climate change. It must be noted there are multinational corporations that are a
part of this picture and continue to play a role in the development of oil in the Amazon, yet the main focus of this narrative is to develop an understanding of how the Ecuadorian government has failed to protect their environment and indigenous communities living there.³

The aim of this thesis is to understand how President Correa went from an advocate to an adversary of the environment and the indigenous people living in the Amazon. This will be done by analyzing his initial years in office compared to the actions that he took throughout his tenure. There are specific laws and regulations established, and written about in this thesis, that are broken and neglected. This thesis gives evidence to these claims of negligence by President Correa and his administration.

Chapter I, titled Buen Vivir, will set up the rest of the thesis through its summary of the Buen Vivir clauses of the constitution that cover environmental and indigenous peoples’ protection. Specifically Titles II and VII of the 2008 constitution created by President Correa and his administration will be examined. The new constitution explicitly grants rights to nature, protects the environment of natural resource exploitation, and deems indigenous rights and cultures more important than monetary gains. Examples of specific articles are found in the chapter and critically written about. The summary of Buen Vivir will provide details on how President Correa set out to protect ecosystems across Ecuador in 2008.

The second chapter, titled Yasuní ITT will address in greater depth the Yasuní ITT initiative and how the government planned and started to implement a new form of environmental conservation. It will include the initiative as a primary document, while academic critiques and supporting arguments of the plan will be secondary sources. Based on these secondary sources, a skeptical opinion regarding the success of the Initiative will be given. A discussion on the broad ideas of payments for ecological services is also present.

The third chapter, titled Los Yasunidos, discusses the cancelation of the Yasuní ITT initiative and the social movement created in the aftermath of the cancelation by a group called the Yasunidos. The clash between President Correa’s media power and the voices of hundreds of thousands of Ecuadorians will be discussed at length. The description and result of weekly speeches made by the President as well as laws passed to limit journalistic freedom is presented in the chapter. A critique of the government is exemplified in this chapter as it specifically lays out how the government used nuance and centralized power to silence its people’s voices. These ideas will be summarized in the final chapter in the thesis.

³ See Ross, 2014 for further information of Chinese developers in the Ecuadorean Amazon.
Chapter 2

Buen Vivir

When President Correa began his presidency in 2007, he initiated new ideas of development and environmentalism to create a better Ecuador through left wing policies intended to rid the country of political elites that have plagued the country for many years. He developed a Constitution that year, which passed in a national referendum in 2008 (BBC, 2013). The new constitution established the laws of Buen Vivir. The establishment of these laws is a response to the concerns stemming from poor natural resource management by previous administrations. President Correa also followed three presidents who did not finish their terms due to military coups and hostile takeovers. Correa was seen as a stable hand that could lead the country, contrary to previous leaders (Kauffman and Terry, 2016). One presidential exit was notable because of his self-proclaimed name “El Loco,” that led to a national referendum ousting him as mentally unfit for the job; President Abdala Bucaram fled the capital city with $3 million in cash in a getaway car (Goering, 1997).

By 2008, the government was more stable and open elections were held. The country has three branches: the executive, judicial, and legislative. The legislative branch is called the Asamblea Nacional, or national assembly. A national referendum to create a new constitution passed with approximately 80% approval. By September 2008 a new constitution was written, and this passed a national referendum with 63%. Within the constitution there are many parts concerning the protection of the environment and indigenous people (Kraul, 2008).

The idea of ‘good living’ that is explored throughout the constitution is represented through environmental protection laws, an expansion of indigenous rights, and freedom of expression and communication (Caria and Domínguez, 2016). This chapter describes the laws regarding environmental and indigenous rights that are found in Title II and VII of the Constitution. The two Titles contain the most extensive literature on the environment and indigenous people compared to other sections of the Constitution therefore they are the focus here. This chapter explains the basic principles and rights granted to the people of Ecuador, as well as the legal responsibilities the government has in protecting the rights of its citizens and nature. Following the descriptions of the laws is a synopsis of reactions and possible outcomes as a result of the establishment of Buen Vivir. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how President Correa initially established a government that supported the conservation of the environment and the protection of indigenous groups. Grievances against such claims are made
later in this thesis. Below are examples from the 2008 Constitution and an analysis of such passages.

**Title II:**

Overall, this title of the Constitution describes the protection of environmental and indigenous rights through constitution law. While the language can be vague in how the laws are going to be enforced, they are the framework for the protection of fragile ecosystems and indigenous groups throughout Ecuador.

*Chapter II: Rights of the Good Way of Living (Buen Vivir)*

Within chapter two, there are eight sections that describe the importance and rights of a good way of living. The sections include water and food, healthy environment, information and communication, culture and society, education, habitat and housing, health, and labor and social security. With exception to the last section of this chapter, each section discusses the pivotal role the government has in protecting Ecuador’s environment. The culture and society section (found within Title II) contains four articles that describe how culture must be preserved. The constitution cannot impede on the choices of groups and the historical heritage they encompass (Legislativo, 2008).

Article fourteen from the healthy environment is an important section because it gives all citizens the right to “a vivir en un ambiente sano y ecológicamente equilibrado, que garantice la sostenibilidad y el Buen Vivir, sumak kawsay.” *Sumak kawsay* is a term in Quechua, a language spoken by many indigenous Ecuadorians, which means good life. It represents how indigenous communities strived to live, in accordance with their fellow people, their personal being, and with an equal relationship with the environment (Legislativo, 2008). Indigenous groups have powerful and sacred connections to the earth, which have gained the support of environmentalists and brought indigenous rights and environmental protection together (Brysk, 2000). There is a reason for the government to include this terminology, and its inclusion suggests that the government wanted to create a constitution that represents the entire nation, not just the elites, but members of the indigenous groups that identify with a certain culture and believe in their heritage. A similar tone and acknowledgement to indigenous communities is common throughout Title II.

Articles sixteen through nineteen in “Section Three: Information and Communication” are also an essential aspect of the constitution. They discuss the free access to media and how no matter their socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, or gender, citizens have the right to produce and consume all types of media with differing perspectives. It is also indicated that the production of harmful information that insights violence or any form of discrimination, or depicts ‘political intolerance,’ is not permitted (Legislativo, 2008). Including a section on media and free speech in
this section does seem peculiar, but the language that is used seems to stem from the idea of *sumak kawsay*, and the all inclusive respect citizens must have for each other. It also acts as a call to knowledge; people have the right and should take advantage of the right to be educated in the governmental workings of the country. This includes looking at environmentally detrimental practices taking place throughout the country’s vast energy sector.

*Chapter IV: Rights of Communities, Peoples and Nations*

Articles fifty-six through sixty explicitly protect the rights of marginalized groups within Ecuador. The majority of the legislation in this chapter focuses on the protection of the identity, culture, heritage, and lands of indigenous groups; it also focuses on the protection of Afro-Ecuadorians and other ethnic/racial minorities including Andean indigenous peoples. Discrimination is the first focus of this section, and it is evident from the language used that the current administration wants its citizens to know how important their rights and heritage are to the overall well-being of the country. An example of this is found within Article 57, which states, “Mantener, recuperar, proteger, desarrollar y reservar su patrimonio cultural e histórico como parte indivisible del patrimonio del Ecuador. El Estado proveerá los recursos para el efecto” (Legislativo, 2008). The example given provides readers with the active language being used by the government to better the country, rather than passive language that may seem defensive or ambivalent to environmental protection. There are times in this section, as well as others where the material is redundant. Repetition demonstrates a viewpoint as well as the goals of the authors (Osbeck, 2010). By stressing their appreciation and mindfulness for indigenous cultures and the protection of those cultures, the government makes a case for their leadership to remain in power.

In the seventh section of Article 57, the government unequivocally states that in order to extract nonrenewable resources, including oil, from lands where indigenous groups live, the government must obtain permission from those communities. The language does not describe how or in what manner permission must be obtained, which could be a concern for environmental or indigenous groups who are adamant about the protection of fragile ecosystems. At the same time, the communities have the right to partake in the planning of the extraction, the implementation of said plan, and the benefits of profit sharing from the extraction. On top of the profit sharing, the government would compensate people for all damages caused by the extraction-including cultural, social, and environmental damages.

However in the same paragraph, there is some ambiguity. It says, that if an agreement cannot be reached between the community and the government that “se procederá conforme a la

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4 See Ross, 2014 for examples of poor redistribution of oil wealth to indigenous communities.
Constitución y la ley.” It then continues on the protection of biodiversity, peaceful relationships between territories, and greater rights for women under Ecuadorian law. A few lines later, it states that indigenous groups are, “No ser desplazados de sus tierras ancestrales” (Legislativo, 2008). The line is clear, concise, and simple. The first quotation could be interpreted as a way to give the government more power, yet the second indicates that the government is on the same side as indigenous groups. The evidence that supports the outright protection of the environment and indigenous people by the government is written out, yet the language used may create narrow pathways, which the government could use to negate prior agreements.

It is also important to note that the government uses language to include groups living in complete isolation (Legislativo, 2008). It may be implied that parts of the constitution regarding the protection of indigenous communities includes those considered uncontacted; yet the clear use of the terminology indicates the fragility of the issue, and the governments’ attempt to create equality amongst all its citizens. Because the uncontacted tribes that live in Parque Nacional Yasuní are greatly affected by oil drilling and will be victims of such activities later highlighted in this thesis, their explicit protection is imperative. The government, through the new Constitution, states that these groups will continue to be protected, a fact that is later discredited by the cancelation of Yasuní ITT and a failed referendum trying to protect their lands.

Chapter VII: Rights of Nature

This chapter in the Constitution is short. It consists of only four articles (71-74), yet it represents a progressive set of intentions by the Ecuadorian government to maintain and preserve the environment. The term sumak kawsay has been described in previous sections, but its Spanish translation has yet to be mentioned. The terminology Buen Vivir is used to portray the same sentiments as sumak kawsay. Both the Constitution and this thesis use the terms interchangeably. Whenever there are phrases regarding a good way of life, these are followed by sumak kawsay. The constitution has many parts that define the rights of people, indigenous heritage and culture, and how the government supports the protection of the environment and biodiversity. This chapter goes a step further in that it grants privileges and rights, the same given to every man and women of Ecuador, to nature. The law indicates that individuals or groups can advocate for and have legal precedent to fight for the protection of lands, forests, animals, ecosystems, and environmental conservation (Legislativo, 2008).

In addition to the legal rights granted to nature, the government states that they will give monetary support to individuals or groups that uphold the rights of nature. Article 71 states, “El Estado incentivará a las personas naturales y jurídicas, y a los colectivos, para que protejan la naturaleza, y promoverá el respeto a todos los elementos que forman un ecosistema” (Legislativo,
2008). Ecuador is unique in its robust language, which protects the ecosystems of its country (Legislativo, 2008; Whittmore, 2011). On a national scale, the new government of 2008 indicated its continued support of the environment through extensive legislation, rather than term related policies that have the possibility of being overturned by future opposition groups that may control the government. While the previous discussion has been about protection, this section also refers to producing clean energy.

‘Nonrenewable’ as a term is only used ten times in the entire constitution. One of these instances is in chapter seven where the government declares their responsibility in the event of negative environmental impacts as a result of nonrenewable extraction. While not specifically stated, it can be deduced that oil spills, chemical leaks, or other drilling related hazards would fall under this law. The government’s goal is to “establecerá los mecanismos más eficaces para alcanzar la restauración, y adoptará las medidas adecuadas para eliminar o mitigar las consecuencias ambientales nocivas” (Legislativo, 2008). Therefore the government, while not specifically liable for the damage, will be responsible for organizing the clean up that takes place after the destruction. Another interesting part is the use of ‘mitigation.’ Different from adaptation, mitigation of climate change or other environmental problems indicates the avoidance of certain actions. Therefore the Ecuadorian constitution specifies how the avoidance of such practices (i.e., pursuing nonrenewable energy sources) would not only be advantageous for the protection of the environment, but a legal responsibility of the government and the citizens of Ecuador (Legislativo, 2008).

The restoration and protection of the environment are the responsibilities of the government and, if the state fails to follow through, citizens have the right to stand up for their lands, ecosystems, and the biodiversity that thrives in those environments. While not explicitly stated, the extensive protection of the environment by the government indicates that it is the citizen’s duty to hold the government accountable if there is a failure in the system. The accountability does not imply passive action by Ecuadorians. The proper tools (legal precedent) have been handed to them in this constitution to defend the rights of nature.

The final line of the Rights of Nature chapter again sets a tone that emulates that of the environmentalist, because it is forward in how the environment, if harmed, will be restored to its original state. It establishes the need for state help in the protection of ecosystems with the notion being the foremost important aspect of their governmental duties. It states, “Los servicios ambientales no serán susceptibles de apropiación; su producción, prestación, uso y aprovechamiento serán regulados por el Estado.” It could be argued that this empowers the government, it must be reiterated that throughout the chapter and the many parts of the
Chapter IX: Responsibilities

The constitution defines the government’s role in the protection of the environment, indigenous people and their culture. In the ninth chapter, the constitution outlines the responsibilities that fall on Ecuadorian citizens in order to have *sumak kawsay* or Buen Vivir. Below are four sections to Article 83 that all citizens must uphold:

3. Defender la integridad territorial del Ecuador y sus recursos naturales.
4. Colaborar en el mantenimiento de la paz y de la seguridad.
5. Respetar los derechos humanos y luchar por su cumplimiento.
6. Respetar los derechos de la naturaleza, preservar un ambiente sano y utilizar los recursos naturales de modo racional, sustentable y sostenible.
7. Promover el bien común y anteponer el interés general al interés particular, conforme al Buen Vivir. (Legislativo, 2008)

These are the responsibilities of each citizen in regards to the protection of their environment and the people who live on those important lands. Again the usage of ‘good way of living’ pertains to *sumak kawsay* and Buen Vivir. An extension of the rights of nature, the government is calling upon its people to fight for the wellbeing of their country (Legislativo, 2008). Because Ecuador has relied on the exportation of fossil fuels to support its economy, Buen Vivir has been seen as both a plan to move away from oil exploration, and a façade of sorts, to protect some areas while exploiting more lucrative oil reserves. The international reactions to this assertive constitution came with both praise and critique because of the environmentally friendly language used, and a further discussion of such points are found at the end of this chapter (González and Vázquez, 2015; Whittemore, 2011).

Title VII: The Good Way of Living System

This section of the Constitution focuses on natural resources within Ecuador and the laws pertaining to the protection and conservation of the environment in relation to extraction of said natural resources.

Chapter II: Biodiversity and Natural Resources

Title VII contains two chapters: the first is titled inclusion and equity, while the second is in regard to biodiversity and natural resources. The second is important regarding the protection
of the environment and the use of nonrenewable energy sources. There are seven sections of the chapter, each exploring a different topic. The first four are nature and the environment, biodiversity, natural assets and ecosystems, and natural resources. The last three differ in that they focus on soil, water, and biosphere urban ecology and alternative sources of energy (Legislativo, 2008).

There are three parts to section one “Nature and the environment” that are important for understanding the environmental context of the constitution. The first point is that the government, in its insistence that the environment is important, states that if there are discrepancies about permitting for development that may have negative impacts on the environment, the permits will not be given. The executive branch of the government would rule in favor of the environment, not business interests. The government will side with the ecosystem rather than the project if there is uncertainty regarding the negative environmental impacts of a certain development project. The language used is vague and up for interpretation, making situations like these subjective to the people involved in the legal proceedings. However articles 83, 396, and 399 (the latter two are discussed below) help define or explain the perspective in which the government views environmental issues (Legislativo, 2008).

First, the government guarantees that communities and individuals have “la participación activa y permanente… en la planificación, ejecución y control de toda actividad que genere impactos ambientales” (Legislativo, 2008). This is an extension of chapter four where indigenous groups, and all citizens, have the right to help create and oversee policy operation, especially projects regarding environmental issues. Secondly, the government, in Article 396, says that any and all damage towards the environment must be restored to its original setting. The law says, “Cada uno de los actores de los procesos de producción, distribución, comercialización y uso de bienes o servicios asumirá la responsabilidad directa de prevenir cualquier impacto ambiental, de mitigar y reparar los daños que ha causado, y de mantener un sistema de control ambiental permanente.” The article continues to state that all damages must be restored and that there is no statute of limitations for these reparations. The constitution extends its promise when it states that, “La responsabilidad por daños ambientales es objetiva” (Legislativo, 2008). It is explicit that through these laws, the Ecuadorian government is presenting two different, yet equally as important, messages. One, to the Ecuadorian people, is that the environment matters
and will be seen as an important asset to the government. The second message is that multinational corporations will not take advantage of the people and environment of Ecuador.  

The last part of “Section one: Nature and the Environment” is concerning due to its vagueness. The law explains the role of the government, the citizens, and communities, as well as the responsibility that outside corporations have. Briefly, Article 399 mentions who would enforce these laws, which is described as “un sistema nacional descentralizado de gestión ambiental.” While the phrase is not mentioned anywhere else in the constitution, the phrase ‘decentralized autonomous government’ is used more than sixty times (Legislativo, 2008). Mostly pertaining to fiscal spending, the decentralization of Latin American governments has been a common trend related to neoliberal policies that has its benefits and disadvantages (Stein, 1998). In terms of environmental protection, it could benefit local communities who need assistance that otherwise would not have it if a centralized agency had been in charge. Or the opposite could take place. States that rely heavily on oil extraction or other environmentally harmful industries could take relaxed approaches to the set forth policy.

In “Section three: natural assets and ecosystems”, there is another description of governmental power. Below is the entirety of Article 407.

Se prohíbe la actividad extractiva de recursos no renovables en las áreas protegidas y en zonas declaradas como intangibles, incluida la explotación forestal. Excepcionalmente dichos recursos se podrán explotar a petición fundamentada de la Presidencia de la República y previa declaratoria de interés nacional por parte de la Asamblea Nacional, que, de estimarlo conveniente, podrá convocar a consulta popular (Legislativo, 2008).

The President has the power to determine whether or not to produce nonrenewable energy sources in protected lands. The premise of the second chapter of this thesis is to understand the environmental context of the constitution, and how the government plans on managing and protecting the vast ecosystems that are a part of Ecuador. The opinion of the government, specifically how it is portrayed in the constitution, favors democracy and an inclusive process with communities. The Constitution states why communities are included, but not how they would be directly included in the decision-making process. Therefore the specifics of this clause could indicate other motives of the government such as over powering communities in order to drill oil or destroying ecosystems for economic gain. The laws of nature inherently protect all other lands, and the use of the lands is subject to community agreement, as well as clean practices, human displacement laws, and overall understanding that the environment plays a

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5 See Ross, 2014 and Sawyer, 2008 for differing opinions regarding oil companies and indigenous communities.
critical role in defining people and culture within the country. So the President’s power to drill for oil, log, or disrupt ecosystems within protected areas is worrisome to environmentalists and indigenous groups living within the Ecuadoran Amazon (Legislativo, 2008).

Within the article, a referendum by the people can be convened if the National Assembly deems it necessary; an imperative right that plays a role in the fight for environmental and indigenous peoples’ protection. This is a key aspect to a democracy in order to create a check and balance system for the government. Within Article 104 of Title IV, citizens are given the right to create a national referendum to make changes in national policy (Legislativo, 2008). Title IV is not included in the examination of the constitution in an environmental or indigenous rights context, yet it is included in this section to explain how citizens can ensure the government follows the laws of Buen Vivir. By creating a national referendum, Ecuadorians are able to create laws that protect aspects of society and culture they deem imperative. While creating new laws may be unlikely, the use of a referendum as a check for the national government is common. In Chapter III and IV of this thesis, the most recent environmental referendum will be discussed, both in terms of why it was created and how the government handled the outpouring of political and social engagement.

The final part of the constitution that will be discussed is Article 414 of the seventh section titled “Biosphere, urban ecology, and alternative sources of energy.” Here the government expresses a lofty concise plan for the future. It may be seen as an idea rather than a true plan, yet in the larger scale, and when combined with the pages and pages of progressive ideas preceding it, it does imply the seriousness the Ecuadorian government is taking in regards to the protection of the environment. The article states,

El Estado adoptará medidas adecuadas y transversales para la mitigación del cambio climático, mediante la limitación de las emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero, de la deforestación y de la contaminación atmosférica; tomará medidas para la conservación de los bosques y la vegetación, y protegerá a la población en riesgo (Legislativo, 2008).

This concludes a wide range of motions put forth by the government. Through the implementation and execution of legislation that protects ecosystems, cultures, ways of life, biodiversity, and promotes a high quality of life in congruence with the environment, the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 reflects a progressive and highly celebrated piece of legislation. It creates a framework of legal precedent for more than just the humans living on the land, but the land itself and all that entails. The support by the people through the referendum indicates that the citizens of Ecuador also believe in the importance of the environment. The government recognizes climate change as a major issue, and by supporting and enacting laws that mitigate the
effects of climate change in a multitude of ways, they are stating to the world and their citizens that positive steps forward are being made.

**International Reaction:**

For much of the world, and most prominently in the West, development is seen as a hierarchy of man over nature and the continuation of positive linear growth where humans derogate natural resources through production and consumption (Kauffman and Martin, 2014). Globalization has pushed development and consumption into every part of the world, yet many of the consequences of this development contradict views of indigenous groups (Brysk, 2000; Vanhulst and Beling, 2014). The concern for the environment and desire for development in Latin America by national governments created the notion of sustainable development, an idea that formed difficulties for nations trying to enter into the ‘first world’ while also protecting key elements of the nation’s environment. President Correa’s establishment of Buen Vivir is the intersection between development and natural preservation.

The creation of Buen Vivir is an attempt to make a transition away from traditional development, which focuses on large economic growth without regulation and without regard for environmental protection. However, Buen Vivir was not a specific solution for sustainable development either (Fuhr, 2015). It established a dual relationship between humans and nature; it neither is broad, nor definitive in how development under this plan could be implemented. As Kauffman and Martin write, “Rather than a linear progression of accumulation, development is understood as the attainment and reproduction of the equilibrium state of Buen Vivir, which refers to living in harmony with nature” (2014, pg. 43). The academic response to Buen Vivir differed because of the uniqueness of the laws presented in the 2008 Ecuadorian Constitution (Fuhr, 2015).

The clarity of language used within the constitution articulates the seriousness of the government to implement a new type of development. However, by traditionally being an extractivist country, Ecuador will likely face an economic struggle when attempting to implement the laws, a struggle that has been seized upon by China’s involvement in oil production in the Amazon (Fuhr, 2015; Kauffman and Martin, 2014; Vanhulst and Beling, 2014). It is argued in an academic review of the law that even in the attempt to create the laws of Buen Vivir, the government is taking a capitalistic approach, which detracts from the importance and significance of *sumak kawsay*, an ideal pivotal to indigenous communities (González and Vásquez, 2015). By using this terminology, the government may be undermining the relationship it is working to

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6 See Peet, 1999 for more on development strategies.
rebuild with the indigenous population. *Buen vivir*, as an indigenous philosophical idea, establishes a social code for a community, yet it does not delineate how to have economic stability or how to create a nation similar to those in the Global North. This is due to the fact that the idea of *sumak kawsay* is an ancient idea that cannot easily be translated into modern day terms. This separation is difficult to bridge.

The establishment of the laws is innovative. While there are no case studies to follow or examples of successes and failures of Buen Vivir as a national outline for growth, it does establish a new beginning for environmental protection. If Ecuador can establish a positive model for growth while protecting some of the most bio-diverse ecosystems in the world, Buen Vivir would be a success. It then could be useful to nations looking to bridge the gap between development and environmentalism. Buen Vivir is one step forward towards understanding how to implement regulations, which protects both the environment and indigenous people.
Chapter 3
Yasuní ITT Initiative

On September 24, 2007, President Rafael Correa spoke at the general assembly of the United Nations in New York City. In his speech, he spoke of the challenges the world will face as a result of climate change, and how the world’s governments are responsible for combating and mitigating these changes. During his speech he also illustrated the inequities associated with climate change. Discussing the disproportionate emissions of carbon dioxide by United States citizens, Europeans, and Ecuadorians, he noted the importance of diminishing the world’s reliance on fossil fuels. After blaming the industrialized world for much of the climate problems, he reiterated the fact that the problems do not have boundaries, and that Ecuador is at the forefront of some of the most drastic changes to come. At this time, he proposed the Yasuní-ITT Initiative to the UN Assembly (Correa, 2007).

The aim of the chapter is to outline the Initiative, giving specifics into how the initiative worked and functioned as a payment service for the environment. The reasoning behind this is to examine the actions taken by President Correa in the beginning years of his presidency in order to protect the environment and indigenous people who live there. This chapter explains the specific details of the Yasuní-ITT Initiative. The economic aspects of the proposed plan such as the management of funds and allocation of funds are discussed. Two annual reports will be summarized as well as the valuation of environmental services that is at the center of this policy proposal. In addition to providing this information, this chapter will explain the broader scope of payments for ecosystem services as a method for combating climate change. First is a further description of President Correa’s speech at the UN National Assembly in 2007 and his beliefs as to why the Initiative is important towards combating climate change.

Knowing that climatic changes throughout the globe are inevitable due to human impact, President Correa stated that his country is willing to make economic sacrifices in order to preserve the environment. The Yasuní ITT Initiative is an international plan that would indefinitely suspend drilling within the Parque Nacional Yasuní in the heart of the Ecuadorean Amazon. It is calculated that within the three drilling blocks of Ishpingo, Tambococha, and Tiputini (ITT), there are 920 million barrels of petroleum (Correa, 2007; Republica, n.d.). By not burning the oil, 407 million metric tons of CO$_2$ would not be emitted into the atmosphere (Republica, n.d.). In addition, there would be a significant reduction of carbon storage as a result of deforestation if drilling took place. That figure is calculated to be 800 metric tons of CO$_2$ stored. President Correa said that while the Initiative would affect the 13 million residents of
Ecuador, nearly half of whom live in poverty, they would be willing “to make this immense sacrifice” by incorporating this international plan into their strategic environmental protection planning (Correa, 2007).

At the time of the announcement the President stated that current government profits from oil are priced anywhere between US$10-$15 per barrel yet, through the establishment of the Initiative, the Ecuadorean government would be requesting only US$5 per barrel. The value requested by the president was US $3.6 billion (Correa, 2007; Hannan, 2015; Republica, n.d.). Foreign governments, companies, non-governmental organizations, and the general public would be able to make payments towards the fund (Republica, n.d.). The funds were to be spent on diversifying Ecuador’s energy sector, sustainable development programs, scientific research, and other conservation efforts (Republica, n.d.). The president did not specify how these projects would come to fruition or who would be implementing these plans. It took over a year after his speech for the Yasuní ITT Trust Fund Steering Committee to be established and given the power to manage the funds associated with the Initiative (Correa, 2007).

The Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee was responsible for all aspects of the fund, and ensuring that the allocations of the funds were within the framework of the Initiative. Members of the Committee include Ecuadorean and foreign nationals, governmental agency members, and a private citizen. The differing types of business related backgrounds within the group were aimed at providing the most optimal services to Ecuador with the resources provided by fund. The Steering Committee consisted of six full time members. The President appointed the Coordinating Minister of Strategic Sectors and the Minister of Planning and National Development to the Committee, as well as the Chairperson who was the Coordinating Minister of Patrimony. Two additional members were from contributing governments; as of 2012, Italy and Spain each had contributed to the Fund and had representatives on the Committee (Administrative, 2012). Other countries must apply to the Committee after making a minimum donation of US $50,000 to sit on the Committee, and only two contributing countries can have members at the same time. The sixth member is a representative from the Amazon community; in 2012, the individual was a member of the Huorani tribe. Because the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) was a signatory to the agreement with the Ecuadorean government, a representative from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and the UNDP Representative “participate as ex officio members” (Multi-Partner, 2011). The official Committee members make decisions based on a majority vote. Their power and main responsibilities revolve around the allocation of funds from the trust.
Managing the Funds:

The Committee was responsible for the allocation of two specific funds. The first was the Capital Fund Window and was focused on financing renewable energy sources within Ecuador. The scope ranges from hydroelectric, solar, and wind, to geothermal, biomass, and tidal plants (Republica, n.d.). With the support of and suggestions from the Ministry of Environment, National Planning Secretariat, and other applicable entities, the Steering Committee directed funding to projects throughout the country (Multi-Partner, 2011). The second fund overseen by the Steering Committee was the Revenue Fund Window. Funds from this trust aimed to work on conservation and reforestation projects. This includes the “natural regeneration and watershed management” of over 1 million hectares of forested lands (Republica, n.d.). Both windows require applications from government agencies requesting funds and the Committee based their decision on applications forms and presentations from those groups.

The main purposes of these funds were to benefit the environment and the overall wellbeing of ecosystems across the country. In addition to these environmental aspects, the Committee will provide monetary support to education programs in the Amazon as well as continued support for science and technology programs created and maintained by the National Secretariat for Research, Science, and Technology. Citizens also have the ability to propose ideas through the Coordinating Ministry of Heritage office. Ideas were screened and those that incorporate the aims of the Initiative were sent to the Committee. The Initiative was developed and announced for the 2007 meeting at the United Nations, yet it was not officially established until August 2010 when many of the rules and regulations were decided upon (Republica, n.d.).

There are currently two annual reports from the Trust Fund, for the 2011 and 2012 calendar years. These reports developed by the Steering Committee and the UNDP are synopses of the meetings that took place by the Committee, the funds raised, and any changes that took place to the agreement or governance of the Initiative.

2011 Annual Report:

At the first meeting on June 1, 2011, the Committee worked on and created many logistical and organizational aspects of the fund (Administrative, 2012). The Yasuni Certificate of Guarantee (CGY) was a governmental guarantee to a contributor upholding the promise of not drilling within the national park; this was one program established at the first meeting. The CGYs are legal documents that, if the Initiative were to fail, are guaranteed by the Ecuadorian government to be reimbursed in full. At the meeting, a minimum of US $100,000 or more in contributions would qualify for CGYs, yet it was later reduced to US $50,000 (Administrative, 2012; Republica, n.d.). Anything below the threshold was considered a donation to the
government and fund, and would not be refunded in the result of a nullified agreement. The change to the figure and nominal news from the meetings did not hinder support for the Initiative in the first active year of fundraising (Administrative, 2013).

In 2011, the contributions exceeded goals set by the Steering Committee as over US $116 million were raised. This prompted President Correa to extend the Initiative and continue to pursue the total fundraising goal of US $3.6 billion. At the end of 2011, the Italian government pledged the largest amount of funds, totaling US $50.8 million. Spain was second in a list of contributors with just under US $7 million pledged. Colombia, Peru, and Turkey, were among the other national governments pledging funds to prevent from drilling in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Germany also agreed to contribute US $47 million in a bilateral agreement that specifically funded sustainable activities in the national park. While international governments were imperative to the 2011 fundraising goals, the people of Ecuador were supportive of the agreement and showed their support by donating to the Fund. The Yasunízate campaign took place on November 20, 2011 and raised just under US $3 million from small contributions by over 47,000 Ecuadorians. The fundraiser took place in 24 provinces across the country as citizens came together with artists, musicians, and local politicians to show their support for the Initiative. The momentum from the event and the success of the year continued into 2012 (Administrative, 2012).

2012 Annual Report:

In 2012 the Steering Committee met in April, August, and December to discuss the events of the year and continue planning for the Fund. In the first meeting, they planned for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development called Rio+20. They also announced over US $300,000 worth of donations from private individuals or entities from outside Ecuador. In their August meeting, the Committee reviewed the status of funds and made the following assessment. Of the US $117 million fundraised, US $61.05 million was confirmed to be available for ongoing projects within the country, US $5.45 million was stagnant in the fund, and the remaining $50 million was pledged through other funds and deemed “technical cooperation.” In the third meeting, the Committee reviewed and approved a hydroelectric dam called Huapamala Hydroelectric Project (Administrative, 2013).

The hydroelectric project was one of many that the Ecuadorian government planned on implementing with the funds of the Initiative. Creating a diversified and cleaner energy plan for the nation was the main objective of the Capital fund. The project was to be built in the Loja

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7 See Union, n.d. and Foundation, 2017 for further information regarding the negative impacts of hydroelectric power.
province in a remote area where residents lack access to reliable electricity. Working at only 30% of its energy producing potential, the two turbines would be able to produce enough energy for the surrounding communities. This would be a cost effective project requiring only US $8.7 million from the fund. The Committee stated that the project could easily be replicated throughout the country and that hydropower can be a staple of energy production in Ecuador (Administrative, 2013). The positive reactions to this project from the Committee emulated the views of many world leaders, environmentalists, and much of academia surrounding the subject of environmental and indigenous rights protection.

**Yasuní ITT on a Larger Scale:**

After announcing the agreement to the UN General Assembly, the government of Ecuador received support and praise. Then Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said at a special meeting regarding the Yasuní ITT that the Initiative “is supporting indigenous livelihoods and culture. It is protecting biodiversity. It will help avoid emissions of greenhouse gases. And it is showing the contribution that can be made through an innovative financial mechanism” (Administrative, 2012). Support from the leader of the UN helped bring further donations from UN members to the fund (Administrative, 2012; Administrative, 2013). In the first years of the agreement, international support was both vocally and fiscally demonstrated. Successful fundraising was necessary to keep the government from drilling in the Amazon. However, the greater significance of the environmental protection cannot be taken lightly. This would be one of, if not the biggest, payments for ecosystem services ever to take place.

One author on the topic of the Initiative writes, “our consumption of ecosystems services so permeates our lives that we are normally altogether unconscious of it, creating the paradox that we cannot conceptualize our willingness-to-pay for something not only valuable, but indispensable” (Hannan, 2015). The author continues to say that in order to be able to create the agreement a monetary value needed to be placed on a ‘unit’ of the ecosystem. In this case, the result is based on oil extraction that has direct impact on the health of the forest and the biodiversity. Creating payments for ecosystem services is nothing new, yet there are challenges that cause this to be difficult. The first most glaring challenge is that the ecosystem cannot be created, they are well established prior to the creation of markets and thus valuation can be based on the scarcity or limited product of such ecosystems rather than a ‘true’ value. A second challenge to the paradox is that the current models for valuation are, according to some, subjective based upon the persons’ (in this case the government’s) preference. Therefore, Ecuador uses oil and the profits that would come directly from the production of oil as the key factor in
creating a valuation of the ecosystem. The world’s dependence on oil and the monetary benefit from oil is part of the consumption that “so permeates our lives” as Hannan states. The major risk in economic and environmental thinking by Ecuador has not been overlooked by exports. Some economists and environmentalists believe failure is a likely outcome for the Initiative.

The creation of CGYs was based on the realistic understanding that risk is inevitable in a project with such complexity. The successful implementation of the Initiative would prove that in order to mitigate climate change, complex and innovative solutions are needed. However, Ecuador may be forced to back out of the Initiative in order to protect its economy and its people. One article states, “Si esta iniciativa fracasa, Ecuador igual va a requerir estos recursos económicos que son esenciales para financiar las políticas sociales que permitan avanzar en su desarrollo, combatir la pobreza y generar más equidad entre sus ciudadanos” (Espinosa-Landázuri and Mancera-Rodríguez, 2014). Ecuador relies on oil as a major export and contributor to the GDP; futures on oil are speculated, but drilling may be more profitable and more economically sound for the country on a short-term basis. Yet the redistribution of wealth within the oil profits does not always properly provide services to the poor and marginalized within Ecuador (Ross, 2014). On a positive note, the implementation of the Yasuní ITT would be an extension of the preexisting laws of Buen Vivir found in the 2008 constitution. These are two regulations established by President Correa to protect the environment in the Amazon and the indigenous people living there.

This Initiative and the Ecuadorean government gave the forests of Parque Nacional Yasuní a valuation, yet every other hectare of rainforest land in the world has no valuation. Therefore the market prices of other forests and ecosystems is zero dollars. Ultimately, the Initiative is asking for money for a product everyone else receives for free. It may seem more like a ransom note by President Correa rather than a comprehensive transition away from oil extraction and dependence. However, because the Buen Vivir laws directly established the unalienable rights of nature, the Initiative is a continuation and formal implementation of these constitutional laws with the support of outside funds. The Yasuní ITT Initiative is a two-step solution for the conservation of Ecuador’s Amazonian forests. On the surface it is a new large-scale system of pay-it forward conservation, and on a more philosophical and holistic level it validates the Buen Vivir law by proving to international governments that it is possible to apply a more liberal, non-capitalistic approach to environmental conservation. Whether one’s opinion falls on either side of this argument, the further discussion of the ethics surrounding the specific Initiative is futile. In August 2013, President Correa canceled the Yasuní ITT Initiative due to a lack of funds and international support. National reaction was negative and an immediate
campaign against the executive order began. The next chapter explores the reasoning behind the cancelation and the subsequent relations between the President and those in support of the Initiative, the Yasunidos.

However, as a basis for further implementation of payments for ecosystem services, this example may be beneficial. There were financial limitations to this project, yet success in the future is possible. If a project of similar caliber were to focus on other areas throughout the world that do not contain fossil fuels, but still an abundance of biodiversity, the international community may be more apt to provide funding. Protection of national parks is vital for many reasons, one being the conservation of fragile ecosystems. For that reason, a pay-it-forward model could help areas decrease development projects near uninhabited parks and wildlife refuges. Therefore, on a national scale, the actions by President Correa present concern, the ambition to value and ask for such a large-scale conservation operation is favorable for future endeavors.
El discurso del Presidente Correa a 15 de agosto de 2013, era emocionante y profundo. Con la bandera de Ecuador en el fondo, él habló con claridad y el porte (Presidencia, 2013). Por seis años, el Presidente tenía orgullo en la Iniciativa Yasuní ITT, la iniciativa que dejaría la exploración de petróleo en la Amazonia. Sin embargo, en esta ocasión el tono fue diferente. Para los periodistas, las cámaras de televisión y el país en todo, Presidente Correa anunció la cancelación de la iniciativa. Este capítulo resaltará el discurso del Presidente; específicamente las razones para la cancelación, el lenguaje del discurso y cómo usó hechos para apoyar su posición. Además, el capítulo articulará las reacciones de la gente de Ecuador ahora que no había una propuesta para proteger el Parque Nacional Yasuní (Correa, 2013; Presidencia, 2013). Un grupo de activistas, los Yasunidos, se formó en las días después de la cancelación; fueron contra el gobierno y la cancelación. Durante los años después de la cancelación había luchas contra el gobierno y Presidente Correa. Al final, el capítulo va a enfatizar cómo los aspectos de “Buen Vivir” de la Constitución de 2008 juegan una parte de la conversación sobre Yasuní ITT.

El discurso del Presidente:

El discurso era de veintidós minutos en una sala grande en la casa del Presidente Correa. Mientras el Presidente es indígena, este día se puso un traje formal y una corbata verde y amarillo. Se sentó detrás de una silla elegante. A excepción de algunas veces las cámaras enfocaban sólo en él. Era obvio que estaba leyendo de un teleprompter (Presidencia, 2013). Al principio del discurso, el Presidente empezó con la mismas ideas del anuncio de Yasuní ITT. Dijo que el cambio climático es un problema por todo el mundo, y mientras Ecuador es una parte, es una parte pequeña (Correa, 2007; Correa 2013). Sin embargo, este discurso culpa a los gobiernos internacionales por el fracaso de la Iniciativa. Describió que la Iniciativa no fue una caridad, fue una oportunidad internacional para combatir el cambio climático. A causa de la falta de los gobiernos internacionales, según Presidente Correa, la Iniciativa no fue exitosa. La introducción era acusatoria en tono. Sin embargo, el Presidente no tenía una opción. Continuó cuando dijo que la idea de la Iniciativa fue más avanzada y que los países que causaban el cambio climático no entendían la situación ni la importancia de la Iniciativa. Usó la palabra “hipocresía” para describir las opiniones de las comunidades internacionales. Después de su insultos y declaraciones sobre otros países, el Presidente habló sobre y a la gente en Ecuador (Correa, 2013).
Después de los comentarios sobre los gobiernos internacionales, las introductorias páginas del discurso Presidente Correa describieron las situaciones negativas en el país. Por ejemplo, los problemas del acceso a los recursos básicos. Cuando Correa quería presentar un solución, usó hechos negativos para crear una necesidad por él y el gobierno. Usó la misma táctica que en el anuncio de la Iniciativa en 2007 (Correa, 2007). También la repetición de palabras y frases son efectivas para demostrar su punto, una táctica en todo el discurso (Osbeck, n.d.). Correa usó la repetición durante todo el discurso cuando el Presidente usó las palabras “patria, jóvenes, y conciudadanos” (Correa, 2013). Las palabras son reconciliatorias e informales para captar a todos los ecuatorianos. El discurso tenía noticias negativas para el pueblo. Entonces, Correa creó un tono simpático como si él fuera un amigo de la gente.

Es evidente que la cancelación de la Iniciativa Yasuní ITT no sería una idea popular, entonces el Presidente continuó para reconciliar con su gente. El Presidente resumió que la mitad de la población ecuatoriana no tenía acceso a gestión de los residuos, agua potable y alcantarillado. Las condiciones de la población son inaceptables, dijo. Entonces describió su responsabilidad como Presidente,

Con profunda tristeza, pero también con absoluta responsabilidad con nuestro pueblo y con la historia, he tenido que tomar una de las decisiones más difíciles de todo mi Gobierno. El día de hoy he firmado el Decreto Ejecutivo para la liquidación de los fideicomisos Yasuní ITT, y con ello, poner fin a la Iniciativa (3, 4).

Sin una reacción de las cámaras, Presidente Correa continuó con el discurso y los planes para el país sin la Iniciativa. Ahora Correa trató de justificar su acciones con una referencia de la Constitución de 2008. Dijo que el Artículo 407 dio el poder para la extracción de los recursos naturales de un área protegida. Entonces, declaró que el Parque Nacional Yasuní se explotará.

Otra vez, el Presidente usó saludos informales para hablar con la gente (Correa, 2013). Dijo con convicción y sentimiento múltiples veces que la extracción en el parque será pequeña. Cuando el Presidente dijo que la extracción y destrucción solo será menos de un mil el por ciento del Parque, la transcripción del discurso tiene frases negritas y dijo los comentarios con un tono seguro (Correa, 2013; Presidencia, 2013). Su voz era fuerte porque quiso convencer a la gente ecuatoriana de su plan. Continuó y dijo que él iba a supervisar personalmente el proyecto de la extracción de petróleo (Correa, 2013). Esta línea es un poco chistosa porque el Presidente tiene muchas cosas que hacer. No hay tiempo por el Presidente de la República supervisar un proyecto de la extracción de petróleo en un área muy lejos de la capital. Para enfatizar su punto, dijo “el pueblo ecuatoriano ya me conoce, sabe que si digo ‘personalmente’ ahí estaré” (Correa,
2013, p.4). Mientras el comentario puede resolver algunas de las dudas, necesitamos examinar la validez del Presidente.

Hacía seis años el Presidente tenía confianza que la Iniciativa fuera exitosa. Sería una página nueva para la producción de energía en Ecuador porque la Iniciativa daría dinero a los proyectos de energías renovables (Correa 2007). Dijo en el anuncio de la Iniciativa que, “la propuesta ecuatoriana busca transformar las viejas concepciones de la economía y el concepto del valor” (Correa, 2007, 5). Entonces hacía seis años el plan no fue solo sobre las ganancias. También la Constitución nueva en 2008 fue un éxito por los indígenas y el ambiente por todo el país (Correa, 2007; Legislativo, 2008). Sin embargo, cuando había problemas o un cambio de corazón, el Presidente dijo que la extracción de petróleo era una necesidad (Correa, 2013). Entonces esta frase sobre la supervisión personal por el Presidente está sospechosa. Además el Presidente dijo que solo un por ciento del Parque tendría las compañías de petróleo. Hay evidencia anterior que representa una historia diferente y que dicen que un porciento de destrucción es imposible. Sin embargo, el Presidente insistió que era posible, y que el dilema no era blanco o negro, “naturaleza o extractivismo” (Correa, 2013, 5). Esta narrativa es constante por el resto del discurso. En este punto el Presidente dijo sobre el pasado, pero ahora habló sobre el futuro de Ecuador y cómo el petróleo de Parque Nacional Yasuní beneficiaría a las comunidades (Correa, 2013).

Al principio, Presidente Correa presentó las ventajas de dinero cuando las comunidades ganarán a causa de la explotación. Dijo que el beneficio de la perforación será más de US $18 millones, aproximadamente US $7 millones más que las proyecciones originales. El dinero iba a combatir la miseria en la Amazonia, dijo el Presidente. Aquí en el discurso Presidente Correa presentó que la extracción es para el futuro del Ecuador. Solo dos veces en el discurso hay aplausos: aquí y al final. Como un círculo usó hechos negativos con comentarios positivos para reconciliar con la gente. Obviamente, el futuro del Ecuador es imperativo, entonces el grupo muy grande aplaudieron (Presidencia, 2013). Otra vez el Presidente enfatizó que menos de un por ciento del Parque Nacional Yasuní sería destruido. La decisión es claramente un su mente. Entonces el Presidente cree que el dinero disminuiría la pobreza y miseria en las comunidades de la Amazonia. La malnutrición, el agua sucia y otras enfermedades afectan a mucha de la gente, y el dinero del petróleo les beneficiará a ellos. Fue un cambio de tono y es obvio que las conclusiones del discurso eran precipitadas.

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8 Ver Finer, Pappalardo, Ferrerese, & De Marchi, 2014 y Ross, 2014 pg 5 por más evidencia que la extracción de petróleo es más destructiva que un porciento.
Después de que Correa le dio gracias al Funcionamiento de Comité de Dirección, el grupo que supervisaba la Iniciativa, había un comentario grave (Correa, 2013). Dijo, “El mayor atentado a los Derechos Humanos es la miseria, y el mayor error es subordinar esos Derechos Humanos a supuestos derechos de la naturaleza: no importa que haya hambre, falta de servicios…lo importante es el conservacionismo a ultranza (Correa, 2013,10). Se refiere precisamente a la Constitución de 2008 donde dice que la naturaleza tiene los mismos derechos que la gente de Ecuador (Legislativo, 2008). Por lo tanto, esta contradicción está preocupante. El contraste entre el plan del gobierno y las leyes del “Buen Vivir” de la Constitución se discutirán más delante en el capítulo.

Los últimos comentarios del Presidente Correa representan comentarios que los jóvenes apoyaran el gobierno y la decisión. Presidente Correa no quería violencia ni una desestabilización del país por los pensamientos y las creencias afuera. Destacó la importancia de un país unido. Sin embargo, su consejo no fue tomado. El discurso por Presidente Correa del 15 de agosto de 2013 fue el principio de una lucha fundamental por los derechos humanos y la naturaleza (Correa, 2013). En la misma noche del anuncio había una protesta pacífica en el centro histórico de la capital, Quito. Dos días después del anuncio, más demostraciones tenían lugar. El 18 de agosto de 2013 los grupos de activistas y ecuatorianos formaron los Yasunidos. Los Yasunidos fueron el movimiento principal contra Correa y sus planes para extractar petróleo de la Amazonia (Coryat, 2015). Un proceso de participación democrático representaba el amor por la naturaleza en Ecuador, también la relación dificultada entre Presidente Correa y la gente de Ecuador.

Las consecuencias:

Los Yasunidos establecieron sus planes para un referéndum nacional siete días después del Decreto Ejecutivo por Presidente Correa que detalló los planes para extractar petróleo en el Parque Nacional Yasuní (Coryat, 2015). El Artículo 407 de la Constitución de Ecuador dice que la gente puede convocar un referéndum si hay una acción por el gobierno que no le gusta. También el mismo Artículo le da al Presidente el poder para extractar los combustibles fósiles en un área protegido, si es necesario (Legislativo, 2008). Entonces, el mismo Artículo permite las dos acciones. El Presidente usó el Decreto Ejecutivo para la extracción y los Yasunidos usaron la frase sobre un referéndum en contra del gobierno (Legislativo, 2008). La lucha entre los dos grupos no fue civil y faltaba las cualidades de la verdadera democracia. Para entender la situación grave se puede examinar la información importante en cuatro categorías. El primero es El uso de los medios por El Presidente contra los Yasunidos, la segunda y tercera secciones son

9 Ver capítulo dos, Buen Vivir, por una explicación más extensa y cita de Artículo 407.
Las leyes nuevas contra los medios, y a los acciones por los Yasunidos para mantener la lucha. Finalmente va a hablar una sección en La violencia y distorsión de la evidencia física.

El uso de los medios por el Presidente contra los Yasunidos:

Mientras los Yasunidos intentaron recoger firmas, la Asamblea Nacional intentó a detener a los medios de comunicación de presentar la historia de los Yasunidos. Cuando Presidente Correa empezó su trabajo no fue el medio público. Todos los medios de comunicaciones fueron privados, entonces los periodistas podían escribir o decir sus opiniones abiertamente. Ahora el 17% de los medios de comunicación en radio y televisión es del gobierno. La divulgación es en apoyo a Correa (Coryat, 2015). Eso permite que el mensaje de Presidente Correa llegara a todos partes del país. No hay un ejemplo más profundo que los “Enlaces ciudadano”.

Cada semana el Presidente viaja a lugar en Ecuador para hablar sobre el estado y los proyectos exitosos del gobierno para el pueblo. En la mañana de los sábados, Correa habla por tres horas a la gente. Él habla sobre muchas cosas y mientras Correa tiene enemigos o personas a que no les gusta él, cada televisión o radio proyecta su discurso. El fin de semana después de la cancelación de Yasuni ITT, Presidente Correa tenía “Enlace número 335”. Aquí mencionó la vela en el Centro Histórico de Quito, tenía orgullo porque la juventud creía en la conservación del ambiente. Pero en las semanas después, Correa fue más crítico de los Yasunidos y su trabajo contra el gobierno. Por más de ocho semanas los ataques continúan por el Presidente. En “Enlace 335, 336, y 337” Correa presentaba imágenes de las demostraciones y a veces buscaba individuos para atacar verbalmente. Siempre usaba palabras negativas sobre los Yasunidos y declaraba que los manifestantes perezosos no sabían nada sobre la Amazonia. Describió a los Yasunidos como “childish ecologists (who are) the same stone-throwers as always, (and) middle-class urbanites with full bellies” (Citado en Coryat, 2015, pg. 8). Otros oficiales describieron a los Yasunidos como “enemigos del estado” (Citado en Ross, 2014, pg. 19). Los Enlaces son una plataforma para el Presidente.

En “Enlace 337” del 31 de agosto de 2013, había una película pequeña que representaba la violencia por los Yasunidos contra la policía nacional. La policía antidisturbios fueron víctimas de los Yasunidos según Correa. Él creyó que los manifestantes “estaban tratando de desestabilizar al gobierno y crear caos” (Coryat, 2015, pg. 8). Fue una amenaza contra los Yasunidos cuando dijo que el gobierno estaba leyendo sus cuentas de los medios sociales. Es evidente que Presidente Correa no quería una lucha contra los Yasunidos, y además no iba a dejar la lucha
hasta que el gobierno ganara. Los Enlaces son una manera efectiva para hablar con la gente, pero Correa usaba otras tácticas en los medios de comunicación para demostrar su opinión.

El año antes de la lucha contra los Yasunidos, el gobierno pasó US $71 millones en propaganda que apoyaba los mensajes del gobierno (Lemos, 2014). Entonces, es evidente que el gobierno iba a dedicar tiempo y dinero para representar su mensaje. Entre agosto y septiembre de 2013 había 126 anuncios en los canales nacionales en televisión. Además había 555 comerciales en el mes de septiembre; un total de 530 minutos sobre los aspectos positivos de la perforación de petróleo. Otras narrativas positivas como ‘Speaking about Yasuní,’ ‘Yasuní lives,’ y ‘The President Said’ fueron en las televisiones y el radio muchas veces durante la campaña a favor de la extracción de petróleo en la Amazonia (Coryat, 2015). Sin embargo, Correa continuó con la propaganda sobre la cancelación de Yasuní ITT.

Con el apoyo de una firma de relaciones públicas en Nueva York, McSquared, el gobierno de Ecuador pagaron dos celebridades de Hollywood para visitar la Amazonia. En el pasado había problemas ambientales con la extracción de petróleo por Texaco-Chevron. Petroamazonas, la compañía nacional que era responsable por la extracción se comprometieron a hacerlo mejor. Las personas famosas estaban allí para demonizar Texaco-Chevron, y para representar Petroamazonas en una manera positiva. Danny Glover fue pagado US $330,000 y Mia Farrow pagó US $188,000 para mostrar los ríos de petróleo a causa de las acciones de Texaco-Chevron. De acuerdo al informe, el gobierno de Ecuador pagó US $6.4 millones a la compañía de relaciones públicas (Plan V, 2014). Este ejemplo no sólo es una apropiación indebida de fondos, sino también es engañoso. Como argumentos anteriores, la destrucción de solo un por ciento del Parque Nacional Yasuní (que Presidente Correa declara) es falsa, y muchas compañías de petróleo no protegen el ambiente (Finer et al, 2014). Es decir, el uso de celebridades fue una distracción de los problemas reales con la extracción de petróleo. El uso de dinero en campañas de propaganda no fue la única manera que el gobierno distribuía la información negativa sobre Yasuní, los Yasunidos, y los medios de comunicación.

Las leyes nuevas contra los medios:

Los “Enlaces” fueron una manera donde Presidente Correa insultó a los Yasunidos y su movimiento. Al mismo tiempo, el gobierno pagó mucho dinero para distribuir la información a su favor. Entonces, para los periodistas privados había confusión o desprecio hacia el gobierno. ¿Había unos problemas si apoyaran a los Yasunidos? Los ataques violentos y personales contra los Yasunidos por el gobierno fueron comunes. Así que era que los periodistas enfrentarían consecuencias similares si hubiera historias positivas sobre los Yasunidos. Sin embargo, en los

10 Ver Sawyer, 2008 para más información de la batalla legal.
meses antes de la cancelación de la Iniciativa Yasuní ITT, había una ley que cambió cómo los medios informan público en las noticias importantes.

El 14 de julio de 2013 la Ley Orgánica de Comunicación se estableció. En menos de treinta minutos la Asamblea Nacional aprobó la ley, sin un debate grande. Mientras Correa y sus partidarios en la Asamblea creaban en la ley, muchas activistas de la libertad de expresión tenían otras ideas sobre lo que la ley dice. El Artículo 26 es más grave en conexión con la cancelación de Yasuní ITT, los Yasunidos, y el posterior desprecio entre los dos. El nombre de Artículo 26 es “Linchamiento mediático.” Básicamente es una ley que dice que los periodistas no pueden distribuir información que pueda impactar, en una manera negativa, unas personas de credibilidad pública. Entonces, los periodistas no pueden criticar a los políticos sin consecuencias. Las organizaciones internacionales que trabajan con los derechos humanos describen la ley como una “ley mordaza” (Gabilondo, 2015). Entre octubre de 2013 y septiembre de 2014 había aproximadamente 130 quejas, 42 sanciones, y cuatro lugares de medios cerrados. Esas regulaciones o castigos paran las periodistas de trabajar. El ejemplo de “Hoy” está perfecto para entender el control completo del gobierno.

“Hoy” fue una víctima de la Ley Orgánica de Comunicación (Gupta, 2015). Cuando Presidente Correa visitó Chile para recibir un título del Universidad, el periódico no escribió bastante sobre el viaje. Al gobierno no le gustó. Además, el periódico tenía imágenes de la guerra civil en Siria; las imágenes gráficas de los niños muertos fue contra la ley. Finalmente, el periódico no tenía artículos suficientes sobre la contienda judicial legal entre Chevron y el gobierno de Ecuador. En julio de 2015 “Hoy” se cerró. El presidente del periódico dijo en una entrevista “Rafael Correa and his supporters think that only the government is right, that they have a monopoly on the truth… The government’s objective is to eliminate the independent press” (Gabilondo, 2015, pg 1). Este ejemplo es solo uno que describe la atmósfera de los medios de comunicación en Ecuador. Carlos Lauria del Committee to Protect Journalists, cuando le preguntaban sobre la ley y la creación de información por los ecuatorianos dijo, “This is not water or electricity that can be regulated by the state. This is a right-you cannot regulate a right”(Gabilondo, 2015, 1). Sin embargo, los Yasunidos y la gente que cree en la protección del medio ambiente y los derechos humanos buscaban unas maneras para demostrar sus opiniones.

Los acciones por los Yasunidos para mantener la lucha:

Las redes sociales como Twitter y Facebook eran fundamentales en el movimiento de los Yasunidos. A través esas tecnologías, los Yasunidos estaban comunicando con la gente de Ecuador. Mientras no todos en el país tienen acceso al internet, las redes sociales permitian que el mensaje contra del gobierno fuera escuchado. Consciente de la ley contra los medios de
comunicación y las demostraciones contra la cancelación de Yasuni ITT, había eventos culturales se llaman zapateadas. Los eventos fueron efectivos para destacar los beneficios de la Amazonia: tanto para la biodiversidad como la gente indígena.

Las zapateadas fueron unas celebraciones de la cultura andina. En las ciudades grandes, o parques centrales en las locaciones rurales las zapateadas fueron una manera donde grupos diversos hablaban sobre la importancia de justicia ambiental y los derechos humanos. La culminación de las frustraciones sobre esos temas fue la cancelación de la Yasuni ITT. Los eventos enfatizaban los artistas, la música, y otros eventos que representaban el patrimonio de los ecuatorianos y las ecuatorianas. Las historias de los proyectos artísticos fueron positivas; los ríos, la biodiversidad, la gente y la Amazonia en total fueron representados de una manera positiva. Es decir, la extracción de petróleo o destrucción del ambiente no formaron una parte de las zapateadas. Entonces el gobierno no tenía la autoridad para parar los eventos. Al mismo tiempo la circulación de información afuera de las zapateadas era positiva. En vez de luchar contra el gobierno y su mensaje negativo sobre los Yasunidos, el movimiento retrataba las imágenes y los mensajes que representan buen vivir, una vida mejor con el ambiente. El resultado de esta estrategia fue efectiva. El apoyo para los Yasunidos estaba creciendo a causa del mensaje global o un tema no partidista. En general las ideas de los Yasunidos fueron ampliamente accesibles porque hablan a las muchas creencias de los pueblos.

Un ejemplo del apoyo por los Yasunidos fue cuando más de 60 mujeres de la Amazonia caminaron a Quito desde Puyo. El viaje fue de 240 kilómetros a la Amazonia desde la capital de Ecuador (Bartecchi, 2013). En el camino la gente de Ecuador apoyaba a las mujeres. Les daban comida, ropa y dinero para hacer el camino mejor para las mujeres. Otra vez, ellas representaban las ideas de buen vivir. La vida depende del ambiente y una vida perfecta requiere una vida juntos con las animales, las plantas y la gente. Su viaje fue poderosa para los Yasunidos. Los Enlaces por Presidente Correa dijo que la gente de la Amazonia quería PetroAmazonias en sus pueblos. El camino reveló una historia diferente. Las mujeres no eran miembros de los Yasunidos por decir, pero apoyaban las ideas centrales de los Yasunidos.

Cuando las mujeres fueron a Quito, ellas querían un reunión con el Presidente Correa. No sucedió. Ellas querían ser escuchadas, pero el gobierno no les reconocen por muchas días. Finalmente, ellas hablaron a la Asamblea Nacional, pero no fueron apoya por la Asamblea. Sin embargo su camino fue exitoso. Un grupo de las indígenas presentó sus opiniones y desagrado por los planes de la extracción de petróleo en la Amazonia. Mientras los Yasunidos recibieron los insultos por el presidente porque ellos eran ignorantes sobre las problemas reales, los indígenas les daban a los Yasunidos el apoyo necesario para continuar la lucha (Bartecchi, 2013; Coryat,
2015). Desafortunadamente la lucha no fue fácil por los Yasunidos después del camino exitoso de las mujeres.

La violencia y distorsión de la evidencia física:

El 22 de agosto de 2013 los Yasunidos presentaron un referéndum al Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE). En Título IV de la Constitución está el Artículo 104 que dice que la gente puede convocar un referéndum si tienen problemas con una ley. Para rechazar la ley un referéndum necesita el 5% de la gente. En 2013 el número de firmas fue aproximadamente 583,324. Dos meses después del plan de un referéndum, el CNE permitió la pregunta. La pregunta fue, ¿Está usted de acuerdo en que el gobierno ecuatoriano mantenga el crudo del ITT, conocido como bloque 43, indefinidamente bajo el subsuelo?” (Constante, 2014, pg 1.). Entre el 14 de octubre 2013 y el 12 de abril 2014 los Yasunidos se reunían con la gente de Ecuador para ganar firmas a favor del referéndum. Los meses fueron difíciles y no siempre positivos para los Yasunidos.

En las mesas cerca de las paradas de autobuses, afuera de las escuelas e iglesias y muchos lugares más los voluntarios empezaron las conversaciones sobre la Amazonia, los indígenas que vivían allá y finalmente sobre el referéndum. Como las zapateadas, esas experiencias se establecieron en las comunidades. Las “citas” entre los Yasunidos y el pueblo crearon unas conversaciones sobre los problemas. Mientras el Presidente tenía una decisión decisiva, ahora el pueblo tenía su oportunidad para presentar sus ideas. A veces los ciudadanos no querían firmar porque tenían trabajos en el gobierno, y no querían un problema. Sin embargo, traían amigos y familia para firmar el referéndum. Había apoyo nacional para la protección del ambiente. El lado de los Yasunidos fue exitoso porque fueron muchas firmas, pero en el otro lado el gobierno tenía un ojo escéptico en el referéndum (Coryat, 2015).

En el principio el CNE tuvo que aprobar la pregunta. Entonces entre agosto y octubre el CNE decía si la pregunta estaba bien o no. Además tenían el poder para dejar el referéndum en cualquier momento. Porque tenían este poder fue importante que los Yasunidos trabajaran muy rápido en conseguir las firmas. Durante este tiempo el gobierno empleó trolls de internet para crear información negativa sobre los Yasunidos y el referéndum. Los trolls de internet usaban las redes sociales como Facebook y Twitter para perturbar el proceso de democracia. Las estrategias en los medios de comunicación nacionales fueron un área grande por la lucha por el gobierno contra el referéndum. El Presidente Correa continuó a insultar el movimiento en los Enlaces. El 5 de noviembre de 2013 había una filtración de información secreta. Fue un informe del área de inteligencia. El informe tenía las imágenes e información personal sobre los miembros de los Yasunidos y sus partidarios. Los líderes de los Yasunidos dijeron que sus teléfonos fueron
escuchados (Coryat, 2015; Wilkinson, 2015). Además, hay dos más ejemplos que representan la lucha sucia por el gobierno contra los Yasunidos.

El 4 de diciembre de 2013 se cerró la Fundación Pachamama. Una ley o el Decreto Ejecutivo del gobierno tiene el poder de cerrar una organización que afecta la paz de la comunidad. La Fundación Pachamama fue una organización que trabajaba en los derechos humanos y los derechos del ambiente en la Amazonia. Eran amigos de los Yasunidos. La Fundación Pachamama empezó en 1997 y fue una parte grande en los movimientos sociales en la Amazonia antes del Presidente Correa y esta situación. La acción por el gobierno es increíble en que de acuerdo al gobierno una voz contra el gobierno no debe tener una voz (Wilkinson, 2015). Además Presidente Correa usó los Enlaces para declarar que los Yasunidos tenían el apoyo de los gobiernos internacionales. Esta paranoia fue destructiva para el Presidente Correa y su partido político.

Las acciones destructivas al nivel administrativo no fueron las únicas acciones destructivas contra los Yasunidos. Cuando los Yasunidos tenían las tiendas de campaña para proteger a los firmantes de la lluvia, los guardias privados destruían las tiendas. La destrucción física por el gobierno es una destrucción de democracia (Coryat, 2015). Cuando hay un gobierno al que no le gustan las opiniones del pueblo y que intenta sistemáticamente parar el compromiso político, no hay una democracia. En la relación de la Amazonia y los indígenas que viven allá es evidente que la opinión de Presidente Correa es más importante que la de la gente. Además, el Presidente no quería una discusión abierta sobre los problemas importantes. Durante de los eventos de los Yasunidos las personas extrañas trataron de entrar en las reuniones de los líderes de los Yasunidos para aprender sobre los objetivos o planes de ellos. Finalmente había un grupo de “voluntarios” que tenía un referéndum diferente que los Yasunidos que apoyaba la extracción de petróleo de la Amazonia (Coryat, 2015). Le pregunta fue,

Do you support the President’s proposal to exploit petroleum in an area no more than 1 per 1,000 in the Yasuní National Park, and that the oil that is extracted from Block 43, in the ITT camp, is directed toward the fight against poverty, the financing of life plans of ancestral communities, and the provision of basic services? (Coryat, 2015, pg 3753)

El uso del referéndum diferente es problemático. Los Yasunidos trabajaban con mucha gente y si hubiera un segundo referéndum sería posible que hubiera confusión. Los Yasunidos pusieron las formas en los periódicos con explicaciones entonces el grupo diferente, Amazonía Vive, pusieron el mismo formato para su referéndum. Es increíble que el gobierno utilizaría las estrategias
enormes para afectar una democracia. Después de todas las estrategias negativas del gobierno para prohibir el referéndum, los Yasunidos tuvieron éxito.

El 12 de abril de 2014 los Yasunidos presentaron los firmantes de 757,623 al CNE. El número de firmantes fue 25 por ciento más que lo necesario por un referéndum exitoso. En una demostración grande, más de 55 cajas fueron dadas al CNE. La gente de cada parte del país fueron allá para celebrar el momento grande. Los indígenas de la Amazonia, los afro-ecuatorianos de la costa, los niños y los Yasunidos celebraron en las calles. El evento fue una culminación de trabajo y éxito nacional por un lugar, El Parque Nacional Yasuní. Sin embargo, la lucha continuó por los Yasunidos y sus simpatizantes. Tres días después de la fiesta en las calles en Quito, el CNE creó una película corta que describía los problemas posibles con los firmantes del referéndum. Cuando los Yasunidos visitaron las oficinas del CNE hubo problemas con las cajas. No había listas completas de los firmantes y todas las cartas de identificación no estaban.

El problema continuó cuando las cajas iban a una oficina secreta del ejército. El CNE culpó a los Yasunidos de fraude. Más del 60 por ciento de los firmantes fueron eliminados por el CNE. Los Yasunidos necesitaron 496,943 firmantes más para el éxito del referéndum. Diez y siete días después de la presentación de firmantes, Presidente Correa anunció la cancelación del referéndum (Coryat, 2015; Wilkinson, 2015). Más que los firmantes, este anuncio por el Presidente fue una distorsión de los hechos, y una destrucción de democracia. Entonces, la cancelación fue la terminación de la discusión nacional y fundamental sobre la derechos del ambiente y la gente en la Amazona.

Conclusión:

Los eventos en torno al Yasuní ITT y el referéndum son importantes para el país en total. Las acciones del Presidente y su gobierno estaban terribles y no permitían un diálogo abierto por el pueblo. Los resultados del referéndum podrían parar las generaciones futuras de ser activistas. Esas cosas son importantes pero estarán más información sobre las temas globales o nacionales en el próximo capítulo. A un nivel básico es importante comparar las acciones del Presidente Correa y las leyes del “Buen Vivir” en la Constitución de 2008. En Capítulo II había información sobre la Constitución, y una descripción de las secciones que se llama “Buen Vivir”. Si miramos a la cancelación de Yasuní ITT con atención a “Buen Vivir”, es evidente que Presidente Correa engañó a la gente de Ecuador. Las conclusiones sobre los aspectos de “Buen Vivir” son imperativos para la protección del Parque Nacional Yasuní con o sin Yasuní ITT.

Para empezar, los planes de la extracción de petróleo en la Amazon por el Presidente Correa es una contradicción del “Buen Vivir”. La idea de buen vivir es una idea de la frase en
Quechua que es *sumak kawsay*. Las dos frases tienen la misma definición. La idea es que la gente vive con la naturaleza y las animales; la relación entre los tres grupos es una relación de equilibrio. Es decir, la gente no explota los recursos naturales. La gente puede tomar o usar la tierra, pero con cuidado. La definición de esta idea es en Artículo 14 del Capítulo II y Título II en la Constitución. Cuando Petroamazonas o cualquier compañía de petróleo busca y toma el petróleo, hay una contradicción con “Buen Vivir”. Las calles y los sitios de extracción son enormes y destruyen la naturaleza. Los ecosistemas son grandes pero, a destrucción de kilómetros del bosque tropical es catastrófica por los animales. La protección de Parque Nacional Yasuní es imperativo por la salud del mundo.  

La relación entre las compañías de petróleo y la naturaleza no están en congruencia con *buen vivir*. Entonces el Presidente permite la extracción de petróleo contra la idea fundamental del *buen vivir*. Presidente Correa ignoró las leyes de la Constitución cuando permitió la extracción de petróleo en la Amazonia. 

En cuatro artículos de Capítulo VII en la Constitución de 2008 hay las leyes de la naturaleza. Aquí la naturaleza tiene los mismos derechos que la gente de Ecuador. “Buen Vivir” tiene aspectos diferentes que muchas regulaciones internacionales de otros países, pero sin duda las frases que permiten los mismos derechos a la naturaleza como a la gente son únicas. Las frases específicas en la constitución dicen, “Se reconoce el derecho de la población a vivir en un ambiente sano y ecológicamente equilibrado, que garantice la sostenibilidad y el buen vivir, sumak kawsay” (Legislativo, 2008). Sin embargo, presidente Correa no respetó las leyes en su discurso de la cancelación de la Iniciativa Yasuní ITT. En la novena página del discurso de la cancelación de Yasuní ITT el Presidente dijo, “El mayor atentado a los Derechos Humanos es la miseria, y el mayor error es subordinar esos Derechos Humanos a supuestos derechos de la naturaleza: no importa que haya hambre, falta de servicios... ¡lo importante es el conservacionismo a ultranza” (Correa, 2013, pg. 9). Mientras esta tesis es una crítica del presidente y las acciones del gobierno, es importante para entender el otro lado del argumento. 

El discurso del presidente Correa sobre la extracción de petróleo en Parque Nacional Yasuní presentó el plan para las ganancias de petróleo. El presidente dijo que las ganancias irán a las comunidades en la Amazonia. Las escuelas y las casas modernas se construirán con las ganancias. También más acceso a hospitales y electricidad estarán disponible para todos las comunidades. Presidente Correa usó *comunidades milenios* para describir los proyectos. En Pañacocha hay un ejemplo de esta comunidad milenio. Cuando visité la comunidad Pañacocha había aspectos muy positivas sobre los edificios en la superficie.

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Por ejemplo, la facilidad de deportes fue enorme con muchas opciones para jugar fútbol, básketbol, ecuavoley, y otras actividades. Había protección del sol y lluvia y luces para jugar durante el noche. También había calles entre las casas, los tienditas, y la escuela. Porque la Amazonia recibe mucha lluvia, es difícil caminar en el lodo, entonces las calles son útiles para la gente. En comunidades milenios, como Pañacocha, los residentes tienen acceso a electricidad, el internet y a veces el aire acondicionado. Muchas veces los servicios son mejor que las casas privados que los residentes tenían antes de la extracción de petróleo. Esas expansiones de las infraestructuras en la Amazonia fueron el plan de presidente Correa. Pañacocha fue un proyecto de $21 millones (Ross, 2015). Durante los años de su presidencia, Correa aumentó gasto público de 20% a 52% (Oppenheimer, 2017). Muchas veces estas gastos públicos fueron la infraestructuras en las áreas pobrezas. Las ganancias de petróleo no iban a las ciudades en Ecuador o el mundo, pero iban a las comunidades que tenían pobreza (Ross, 2015; Zema, 2015). Las acciones por el gobierno fueron las promesas de ciudadano revolución que presidente Correa usó en su campaña por la presidencia.

Sin embargo, los servicios básicos que los comunidades milenios proveían no fueran gratis. Después de cinco años los residentes pagan los servicios, y el internet es tan mala que no utilizan. Si hay problemas con la casa los residentes pagan las reparaciones (Ross, 2015). También hay impuestos más altos porque el nivel de vida es mayor. Entonces, los comunidades milenios no siempre están bien. El movimiento por el presidente creado más problemas no menos. Presidente Correa, con ideas como esos, pone el país en una situación peor durante su diez años en la oficina (Oppenheimer, 2017).

Es posible que este ejemplo describa la gran indiferencia del Presidente hacia las leyes que su gobierno creó y cómo crear un futuro mejor por el país. Es posible que el presidente Correa creó la Constitución y “Buen Vivir” en una manera perfecta para explotar los recursos naturales de Ecuador con una mano, mientras con la otra está presentando una historia linda a la gente sobre el “Buen Vivir”.

En el anuncio de la cancelación de la Yasuní ITT, Presidente Correa mencionó de la constitución del 2008 el Artículo 407 de “Buen Vivir”. El Artículo dio el poder al presidente para la extracción de los recursos naturales de un área protegida. El Parque Nacional Yasuní es un área protegida, y a causa de la recesión global de la economía, Presidente Correa tenía precedente para promulgar este Artículo. Exploro en el Capítulo II cómo el lenguaje sobre la protección del ambiente y la gente indígena es extensiva. Sin embargo, hay partes pequeñas que permiten el poder absoluto al presidente, y el presidente usaba las oraciones para continuar la agenda de extractivismo. Presidente Correa es inteligente y no hay duda que quiere un futuro mejor para
Ecuador. Pero cómo hacer un futuro mejor es en debate entre el presidente y grupos como los Yasunidos. La constitución presentó la idea de “Buen Vivir”, que es increíble en la protección del ambiente y los indígenas, y pero el presidente seguó con política contra sumak kawsay; es irresponsable.

Dentro las leyes del “Buen Vivir” hay ocho artículos en Capítulo IV en Título II. Aquí las cláusulas explican la importancia de los indígenas y los derechos que cada persona tiene en Ecuador. También hay lenguaje que apoya a los grupos que viven en la Amazonia en aislamiento. Los grupos no hablan con el mundo o el gobierno, entonces no pueden luchar por sus derechos. La explotación de petróleo destruye la tierra que los grupos usan. Entonces los artículos en esta parte de “Buen Vivir” son importante para la protección y continuación de las comunidades indígenas. Por esas razones, “Buen Vivir” es importante porque en el pasado no había las leyes que dijeron que los grupos que viven en aislamiento son importantes a la cultura y futuro del país. En general, “Buen Vivir” presenta ideas y oraciones muy liberales y a veces ojalá que más acción ocurra para regular las leyes.

A causa de las acciones por Presidente Correa contra los elementos básicos de “Buen Vivir” esta tesina es una crítica de él y su actividad en la protección de la gente y ambiente en la Amazonia. Después de la cancelación de Yasuní ITT había una disputa entre los Yasunidos y el Presidente de Ecuador. Hay muchos ejemplos del que el gobierno estaba usando el poder completo para parar la libertad de expresión. Específicamente, las acciones por Presidente Correa y su gobierno en el ejemplo de este capítulo, crean cómo los activistas lucharán por los derechos humanos y el ambiente a veces contra el gobierno.

Summary of chapter in English:

The fourth chapter begins by examining the speech when President Correa canceled the initiative. It was there that he set a precedent for what the true priorities of the government. He stated, in contrast to Buen Vivir, that Ecuadorians are more important than the environment. He stated that by canceling the Initiative he will allow for greater economic growth that will benefit poor citizens, many of whom live in the Amazon. He also stated in the speech that less than one percent of Parque Nacional Yasuni would be destroyed for the extraction of oil, a fact that was quickly determined to be false. His speech also talked directly to the youth who he knew would be upset with the cancelation of the Initiative. The chapter, further summarized below, then delves into the legal and social battle between President Correa against the social and environmental group known as the Yasunidos.
The battle began with a media campaign by the government that supports the drilling of oil in the rainforest. Hundreds of ad minutes on TV and radio paid for by tax dollars went on for months following the cancelation to detract from the concerns made by the opponents. The Yasunidos began their campaign days after the announcement and applied for a national referendum to overturn the ruling made by the President. Article 407 made the two legal actions, the referendum and drilling in a protected area, possible in the Buen Vivir clauses of the 2008 constitution. Another important aspect of the government’s campaign to gain support for drilling came in the form of weekly Enlaces. In a tradition starting at the onset of his Presidency, Correa spoke every Saturday morning in a new area of the country to discuss the accomplishments and plans for a better Ecuador. In an attempt to discredit the Yasunidos, he would insult and verbally attack the movement as a whole as well as individuals within the referendum campaign. These attacks ended up hurting his political standing while, at times, giving more support to the Yasunidos.

In the months leading up the cancelation of the Initiative, the President and National Assembly worked to limit the media from reporting anti-government news. Months later, the law was used against those in the media who supported the Yasunidos. La Ley Orgánica de Comunicación has parts that concern journalists and specialists in free speech. The clause mainly focused on in the fourth chapter is a “gag law.” The clause states that a news organization will be punished if they report information that could undermine or tarnish a public figure’s image. Therefore any rhetoric against Correa or his officials could face penalty. First time offenders have been given hefty fines, yet organizations that perpetuate “negative” reporting of the government could be shut down. One example in the chapter discusses Hoy, a group that did not cover President Correa’s trip to Colombia thoroughly and were fined. After multiple violations of the law, the Ecuadorian government shut down the organization. The culmination of centralized power and a lack OF true democratic processes came after months of media oppression.

The Yasunidos collected 757,623 signatures for the referendum. It was 25% more signatures than required by law. The streets of Quito were packed with people celebrating the movement that would save Parque Nacional Yasuni. Many volunteers carried over 55 boxes of signatures to the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), the governing body that would oversee the referendum. However, days later, the CNE released a video stating ambiguously that the criterion for valid signatures is strict and some may not be considered in the overall count. This led the Yasunidos to visit the offices to inspect the boxes and signatures of the referendum. It was at this time that they realized that boxes had been tampered with and identification cards were missing. Soon after the discovery, the CNE took the boxes to a military base inaccessible to the Yasunidos.
and President Correa deemed the referendum a failure. He stated that due to duplicates and problems with many of the forms, there were not enough signatures to reverse his ruling. The announcement not only hurt the pride and work of the Yasunidos and their supporters, but it deterred further democratic strategies by citizens to make change in their communities. While the Yasunidos continued as an organization, the passion and national support died because they felt like the process was no longer just, and that President Correa would do anything for his beliefs and views to be put into action.
Conclusion

Experiencing Ecuador’s environmental problems firsthand made this thesis personal. Since visiting Parque Nacional Yasuní and seeing the vast ecosystems that live in equilibrium there, it has been disheartening to know that oil production has destroyed many of those places. It was evident throughout my stay that oil production was prominent throughout the Amazon already. Our small motorized canoe would regularly sail to the edge of the Napo river to avoid the hundred plus foot barges carrying trucks, excavators, and other materials to drilling sites throughout the maze of tributaries. What became more taxing on my mind were the personal interactions we had with families living in these areas and the hardships they face. Having little to no choice or say in the process, their lands were contaminated by oil and the chemicals used to extract it. In the community of Pañacocha, a $21 million refurbished town built out of oil profits, community members still lived in poverty. They either disliked their new homes due to size constraints, or were forced to move out because repairs and electricity became too costly. These experiences drove me to want to understand why the choices were made that created the current political, social, and environmental landscape in Ecuador today.

The aim of this thesis was to understand how President Correa went from advocate to an adversary to the environment and the indigenous people living in the Amazon. This was done by analyzing his initial years in office and the literature regarding indigenous and environmental protection and comparing it to the actions that he took throughout his tenure at President. There were specific laws and regulations established, and written about in this thesis, that were broken and neglected. This thesis gives evidence to these claims of negligence by President Correa and his administration.

This concluding chapter brings together the findings of each previous chapter in order to understand how the actions of President Correa, his administration, as well as activists shaped the future for Ecuador. Each chapter focused on a certain area of the discussion, yet they are all intertwined in a greater understanding of Ecuador’s protection of the environment and indigenous people.

Political Future of Ecuador:
On February 19, 2017 presidential elections were held in Ecuador for a new President. Rafael Correa, after ten years as president, declined to be named a candidate and stated that he will focus on his family and move to Europe to work on academic projects. Two candidates, Lenín Moreno and Guillermo Lasso, were the major winners in the elections. In a run off election, Moreno, Vice President to Correa, won. This change creates an unknown for the future of Ecuador, yet it is likely that similar strategies will be implemented. It is important to note however that the statutes of Buen Vivir still remain; the new President can drastically change the interpretation of the laws. This could be either beneficial or detrimental depending on which direction the new leader takes. Either way, President Correa’s legacy is evident in Ecuador.

President Correa’s legacy looms large, not only in the election but in the lives of everyday Ecuadoreans. Having been in power for ten years, he brought stability to the nation, and provided many basic services to the people. However, his legacy may be noted mostly by his approach towards oil production. Having much of the Gross Domestic Product reliant on oil, he relied on further exploration funded by the Chinese to fuel exorbitant public spending. Through the establishment of a new constitution that was a proponent of environmental protection, it seemed as if new solutions to economic growth and environmental and indigenous people protection would come to fruition. Yet it was the creation of Yasuní-ITT that propelled Correa into the forefront of international environmental protection. It was through his announcement at the UN General Assembly that payments for ecological services on a national scale could become a reality. By not drilling indefinitely within Parque Nacional Yasuní, Correa was going to develop a clean energy grid and promote the conservation of the most bio-diverse area in the world. This shift would be a positive turn for the country that would owe it all to the charismatic leader. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Yasuní ITT Initiative:

The cancelation of the Initiative meant a failure of protection of Parque Nacional Yasuní. The Huaorani tribes who live within the park will continue to be pushed out. Their claim to land is no longer a priority for the government and, by drilling in these areas, the government is neglecting the very existence of these communities. If drilling, logging, and other mineral extraction practices continue, the rainforest in eastern Ecuador will diminish. The uncontacted people who live there will only be a memory, and their culture will end. However, these uncontacted people are not the only indigenous communities that are being and will continue to be affected. The indigenous groups who live throughout the Amazon basin will no longer have hunting and fishing grounds, clean water, or quality agricultural lands due to oil drilling. Access
roads run through communities and contamination of oil byproducts threatens potable water sources. These changes stem from the failure of the Yasuní ITT Initiative.

The political movement created in the aftermath of the cancelation of the Initiative is also an important aspect of understanding the problems Ecuador faces. The Yasunidos were created to fight against the government's plan to drill within the national park. They were constantly struggling with the government. One aspect that could not be stopped by the government however, were the cultural celebrations known as Zapateadas. These events were more cultural celebrations than anything. Artists, musicians, community leaders would all present the positive aspects of the Amazon and how their indigenous cultures positively interact with nature. The events never discussed the prominence of oil production. Instead, their focus was the benefits of living in sumak kawsay with nature. These events, while only a part of the Yasunidos struggle, can be foreshowing for future protection of lands and cultures. By focusing on culture, the Zapateadas further established the importance of indigenous cultures within Ecuadorean society. Their message was peaceful and demonstrated how communities can be stronger through the acceptance and recognition of such cultures. Having only positive aspects to these celebrations, the government would not stop them. The continuation of these events is important for two reasons. First, they help preserve culture, and second they can take political stances without resistance or pushback from the government. The human struggle, however, is only half of the issue presented in this thesis.

Climate change and the Amazon:

The biodiversity found within the Ecuadorean Amazon is incredible. The thousands of unique species create a hotbed for scientific discovery and innovation. Any destruction of such areas is detrimental to learning and scientific progress. In addition, destruction of nature and the environment threatens more than just one area or species. Ecosystems are living beings, connected by millions of parts. Therefore the exploitation of one oil-block will offset the park, effects will be seen on more than a hyper local area. Regional feeding areas, large-scale population decreases, and extinction are all possible because of drilling. These detrimental changes are preventable though. Buen Vivir allows the president and national assembly to discontinue the drilling and give nature rights. The biodiversity however is only one aspect that the Amazon has to offer.

The Amazon is a carbon sink for the earth, its plethora of trees and greenery store carbon in the leaves, trunks, and roots. As oil companies continue to move into the area, forests are destroyed. On a global scale, this is detrimental to the mitigation of climate change. While the
reduction of CO₂ emissions is important, there is already an exorbitant amount of emissions that need to be stored somewhere. The Amazon, for centuries, done its part in mitigation of climate change through this type of carbon storage.

President Correa presented environmentally friendly laws in Buen Vivir that reduce the amount of CO₂ emitted as well as protected forested areas that are imperative to mitigating climate change. His actions against the Yasunidos that stemmed from the cancelation of the Yasuní ITT Initiative have direct impact on the carbon sequestration ability of the Amazon rainforest. Therefore his actions of media bullying, intimidation, and disregard for open dialogue have direct influence in the Amazon’s ability to fight climate change. These actions are against Buen Vivir and sumak kawsay and only generate further frustration towards environmental stewardship. Ecuador, led by President Correa, failed at protecting its people and environment. It was through the examination of President Correa’s work, words, and actions that give recognition to that sentiment. Hopefully the new administration can be truthful in their governing methods, and protect the indigenous people and lands of the Ecuadorean Amazon.
Works Cited


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