

How Ecuador's US-backed, Coup-supporting 'Ecosocialist' Candidate Yaku Pérez Aids the Right-wing

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Ecuador's presidential candidate Yaku Pérez supported coups in Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. His US-backed party Pachakutik and supposedly “left-wing” environmentalist campaign is being promoted by right-wing corporate lobbyists.

[Ecuador's February 7 presidential election](#) concluded in a surprise: The quick count published by the country's [National Electoral Council](#) appeared to show a little-known candidate named Yaku Pérez Guartambel in second place, securing a narrow victory over right-wing candidate Guillermo Lasso, a banker with significant influence in the country.

Most polls had predicted that the presidential race would boil down to two presidential candidates, who could hardly have been more different: On one side was the conservative banker Lasso, who had the backing of Ecuadorian elites and the United States, and had unsuccessfully run for president twice before; while on the other was a youthful left-wing economist, Andrés Arauz, who follows in the footsteps of socialist former President Rafael Correa and wants to return to his Citizens' Revolution.

But while polling consistently showed him coming in third place, Yaku Pérez stayed in the race until the end. And unlike Lasso, Pérez didn't claim fidelity to the right-wing; he ran what was marketed as a progressive environmentalist campaign.

Pérez, an Indigenous leader from Ecuador's party Pachakutik, purported to be the true left-wing option in the election, condemning Arauz and the socialist Correista movement he represents for being insufficiently pure. But Pérez's political record suggests he is a Trojan horse for the left's most bitter enemies.

The support Pérez apparently has from the US embassy reflects his dubious role. Immediately after the election, when Ecuador's National Electoral Council (CNE) had still not officially published results determining who would go to the presidential run-off in April, Pérez said the US embassy called him and assured he would be the second-place candidate.

📧 La Embajada de [#EEUU](#) llamó a [@yakuperezg](#) a darle los resultados y confirmar que pasaba a segunda vuelta! [@CarlosVerareal](#) lo confirma! ¿Ese

es el rol de [@JoeBiden](#) en [#DecideEcuador](#) y asumió como información oficial el candidato de [@PKnacional18](#) ? pic.twitter.com/wvSWGmqeCH

— Ruta Crítica (@RutaKritica) [February 9, 2021](#)

Pérez has viciously attacked other progressive movements in Latin America, supporting right-wing US-backed coups targeting Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, and demonizing those countries' leftist governments as “racist.”

His political views fuse ultra-leftist, anarchistic critiques of existing left-wing states with an objectively right-wing political agenda. And his opposition to state power is deeply opportunistic. While Pérez harshly criticizes China, he has simultaneously pronounced he “will not think twice” about signing a [trade deal with the United States](#).

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

And while Pérez has criticized the current government of Ecuador and protested against its right-wing, US-backed President Lenín Moreno — who has an [approval rating of just 8 percent](#), and is thus politically poisonous for all of the country's electoral candidates — Pérez previously praised the [corrupt and authoritarian leader](#) as “a good man.”

Another Indigenous leader in Ecuador, Leonidas Iza, publicly warned that right-wing activists and members of the banker Guillermo Lasso's conservative CREO party are in [Pérez's inner circle](#) and are advising him.

[#ATENCIÓN](#) | [@LeonidasIzaSal1](#) advierte que hay gente cercana a CREO y a la derecha, que están dentro del círculo de Yaku Pérez: “Ya he sido claro con qué propuestas no estamos de acuerdo y que apuntalan a ciertos sectores alrededor del Dr. Yaku Pérez”.

Vía: [@UnCafeConJj](#) pic.twitter.com/GARs7WmV3i

— Pichincha Comunicaciones (@pichinchauniver) [February 8, 2021](#)

The party of Yaku Pérez, Pachakutik, identifies as “ecosocialist” and claims to represent Ecuador's Indigenous communities. But like the candidate that represents it, the party employs left-wing rhetoric to paper over regressive goals.

Pachakutik is closely linked to NGOs funded by Washington and EU member states. The party's leaders have been trained by the US government-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI), a CIA cutout that operates under the auspices of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

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

Pachakutik is the political arm of the Indigenous confederation CONAIE, which helped lead

protests against Ecuador's former President Correa, forming an unspoken alliance with the country's right-wing oligarchs in a bid to destabilize and overthrow the socialist president.

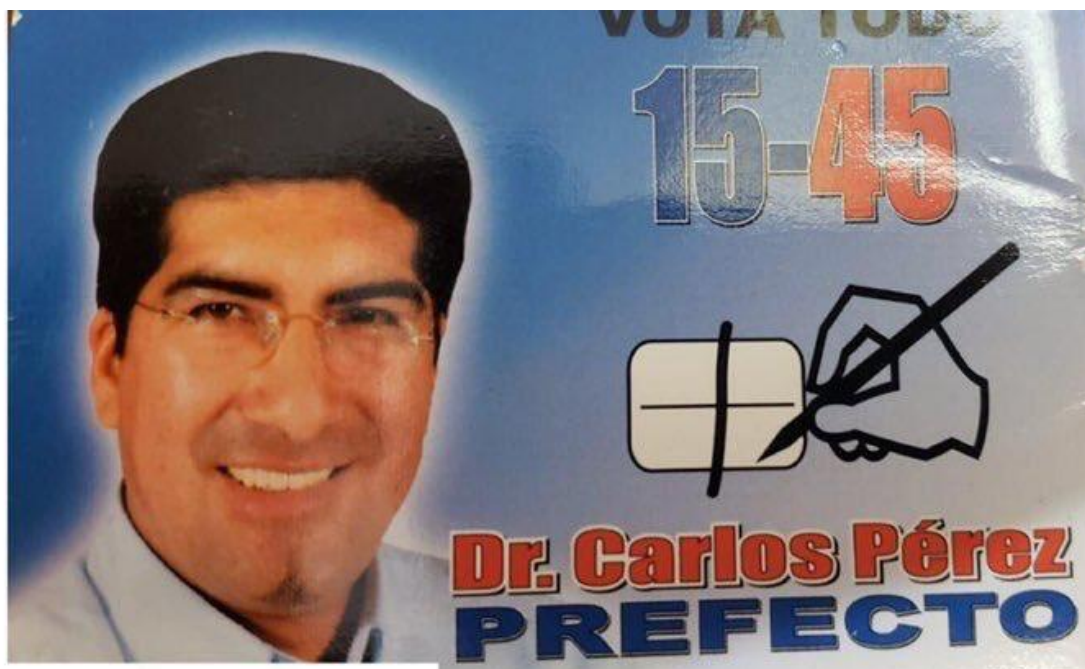
In fact, CONAIE and Pachakutik played a significant role in a violent US-backed 2010 coup attempt, supporting treasonous police that turned against the elected Correista government, kidnapped the president, and came close to undemocratically removing Correa from power.

In 2012, a co-founder of Pachakutik and former leader of CONAIE, Auki Tituaña, went so far as to form an open alliance with right-wing presidential candidate Guillermo Lasso, announcing that he would run as the [banker's vice president](#). In response, CONAIE expelled him.

CONAIE has internal divisions, some more right-wing and some more left-wing. The CONAIE leaders Leonidas Iza and Jaime Vargas helped lead October 2019 protests against neoliberal reforms imposed by sitting President Lenín Moreno. Pérez was noticeably [not a leader](#) of these anti-neoliberal demonstrations. But in general CONAIE has been a significant voice of opposition to Correismo.

Lasso is not threatened by the "ecosocialist" rhetoric of Pérez and Pachakutik; he seems keenly aware that the label is a marketing plot. The banker publicly declared before the February 7, 2021 vote that, if Pérez made it to a second round, [Lasso would gladly support Pérez](#) to defeat the Correistas.

The banker's endorsement is unsurprising when one considers that, back in 2017, before he changed his name from Carlos to Yaku, [Pérez himself supported Lasso's presidential bid](#).



Carlos Pérez Guartambel, before he changed his name to Yaku in August 2017

Pachakutik's ties to Washington are extensive. One of its most prominent former members is Fernando Villavicencio, an Ecuadorian journalist who spearheaded a disinformation campaign targeting journalist Julian Assange, peddling discredited but deeply damaging claims about the Wikileaks publisher through the major British newspaper The Guardian.

Villavicencio's anti-Correa activism also appears to have been funded by the US government's National Endowment for Democracy.

Villavicencio served as an advisor for Pachakutik National Assembly member Cléver Jiménez, who helped lead the 2010 coup attempt against Correa.

Yaku Pérez held a public demonstration in support of Villavicencio and Jiménez when Correa sued them for defamation for spreading blatant fake news about him.

Pachakutik even has links to Ecuador's National Electoral Council (CNE), which runs the elections, and which was taken over and deeply politicized by the US-backed Moreno government. After purging all pro-Correista officials from the CNE, Moreno selected a former Pachakutik member of the National Assembly, Diana Atamaint, to serve as president of the electoral council.

Under Atamaint's leadership, the CNE put up many obstacles to prevent the leftist Correista movement from being able to freely participate in the election, blocking Correa's attempt to run as vice president and even banning Andrés Arauz's political party.

Before joining Pachakutik and being appointed head of Ecuador's top electoral body, Atamaint [worked with the World Bank](#), a notorious US government-backed institution that has imposed devastating neoliberal shock therapy across Latin America. Atamaint oversaw the World Bank's initiatives in her country, including its so-called "Development Project for Indigenous and Black Peoples of Ecuador."

Pachakutik's tactics echo those of [Nicaragua's Sandinista Renovation Movement \(MRS\)](#), another fringe US-backed party that played a leading role in a [violent 2018 coup attempt](#) against the Central American nation's democratically [elected Sandinista government](#). Like Pachakutik, the MRS is supported by the US government and works closely with Western-funded NGOs. Both groups act as though they are principled left-wing critics of popular leftist movements, when in reality they form de facto political alliances with right-wing oligarchs.

Then there is Pérez's wife Manuela Picq, a French-Brazilian academic, herself a prominent anti-Correista activist and opponent of leftist governments in Latin America who was deported by Correa in 2015. Her opposition work in Ecuador has been funded by NGOs bankrolled by Western governments.

Although she is today a liberal specialist on sexuality and gender studies, Picq previously worked for Florida's Republican government and was involved in unsuccessful negotiations of a neoliberal US trade agreement in Latin America, which leftist leaders condemned as "colonial."



A January poll of Ecuador's presidential candidates, showing Andrés Arauz with 43.22%, Guillermo Lasso with 25.54%, and Yaku Pérez with 19.87%

The tactics of Pérez, his partner Picq, and his party Pachakutik mirror another campaign in South America that exploited ostensibly left-wing forces on behalf of right-wing ends.

During the lead-up to the US-backed coup against Bolivia's democratically elected socialist government in 2019, NGOs that claimed to support environmentalist causes participated in a [disinformation operation to demonize then-President Evo Morales](#), the first Indigenous president in Bolivia's history, himself a strong supporter of environmental protections.

Regime-change activists from organizations funded by the US and European governments accused the Morales administration of fueling fires in the Amazon rainforest that were most concentrated in Brazil, where far-right President Jair Bolsonaro proudly branded himself "captain chainsaw."

Yaku Pérez and Pachakutik play a similar role in Ecuador, attacking popular leftist forces from the left, thereby opening up space for the right-wing to advance.

As in Bolivia, where Western environmental groups like Extinction Rebellion helped support the 2019 coup on the grounds of green concerns, self-declared anarchists from the ostensibly progressive organization are [heaping praise on Pérez](#).

Extinction Rebellion is joined in its praise for the marginal pseudo-left figure by right-wing corporate lobby groups like the Americas Society and Council of the Americas (AS/COA), which is funded by planet-destroying fossil fuel corporations, weapons manufacturers, and banks that have a vested interest in trying to stop the Correistas from returning to power.

"Left-wing" support for right-wing coups in Latin America

Yaku Pérez Guartambel says he wants Ecuadorians to use fewer cars and [plant more trees](#). With campaign photos often showing him riding a bicycle at rallies, Pérez's image seems custom tailored to appeal to the sensibility of Western green activists.

Pérez is especially critical of the Correista movement for its reliance on extraction. He has proposed an end to mining in Ecuador and a restriction of oil extraction.

Ecuador is a developing, formerly colonized country and thus relatively poor compared to Global North imperialist nations. But it has an advantage: large oil and mineral reserves.

These resources have been key to the political and economic program of Correa and his followers, who used them to turbocharge development of Ecuador, fund popular social programs, and invest billions of dollars in universal healthcare, high-quality education, and advanced infrastructure.

Yet the supposed progressive appearance of Pérez's political program ends with his environmental policies. When it comes to international politics, he has shown himself to be deeply right-wing.

And while Pérez uses his Indigenous Kañari heritage to claim to represent Ecuador's Native communities, many are in fact strongly against him and his party.

Indigenous outrage against Pérez especially grew when he supported the US-backed military coup in Bolivia in November 2019.

In October 2020, Evo Morales' Indigenous-majority [Movement Toward Socialism \(MAS\) party won the election](#) in a landslide, defeating the US-backed coup regime. Numerous Ecuadorian Indigenous leaders were invited to the inauguration of MAS President Luis Arce, but Pérez was not. When asked why, it was made clear that [Pérez was shunned](#) because he had supported the coup.

Even before the violent regime-change operation, Pérez was a harsh critic of Morales, accusing him and Correa of "[authoritarianism](#), machismo, extractivism, and populism." Pérez flatly refused to recognize the legitimacy of [Evo's government](#).

In 2017, Pérez attacked Evo again, tweeting, "His ignorance is encyclopedic. Evo is biologically Indigenous; in terms of his identity he whitewashed and colonized himself and doesn't feel or understand the Native cosmovision."

Enciclopédica su ignorancia Evo biológicamente es indígena, identitariamente se blancó colonizó no siente ni comprende la cosmovivencia runa
<https://t.co/19WujAico0>

— Yaku Pérez Guartambel (@yakuperezg) [May 27, 2017](#)

After backing the coup, Pérez went silent about Bolivia, saying nothing as the junta, led by racist Christian extremists, [massacred Indigenous protesters](#) they dehumanized as "satanic."

But the coup in Bolivia is not the only US-led regime-change campaign in Latin America that Yaku Pérez has supported.

In November 2016, Pérez praised the US-backed soft coup that removed Brazil's left-wing Workers' Party government from power, while endorsing a right-wing "lawfare" (legal

warfare) campaign that had targeted Argentina's progressive President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

Pérez also openly called for Ecuador's leftist President Correa and Venezuela's socialist President Nicolás Maduro to be overthrown.

"Corruption ended the governments of Dilma [Rousseff] and Cristina," Pérez tweeted approvingly. "Now all that's missing is for Rafael Correa and Maduro to fall. It is just a matter of time."

La [#Corrupción](#) acabó al gob d Dilma y Cristina; ahora falta q caigan [@MashiRafael](#) y Maduro. Solo es cuestión d tiempo <https://t.co/6JPpgBicZM>

— Yaku Pérez Guartambel (@yakuperezg) [November 15, 2016](#)

Pérez condemned the socialist governments of Correa in Ecuador and Maduro in Venezuela as "colonial, ethnocidal, and racist." And he denounced the elected left-wing governments in Venezuela and Argentina as "[authoritarian, extractivist, and corrupt.](#)"

No habido gobierno en Ecuador tan colonial etnocida y racista q [@MashiRafael](#) y será algo parecido su sucesor [@Lenin](#) como Maduro en Venezuela <https://t.co/jxS4BvxcOD>

— Yaku Pérez Guartambel (@yakuperezg) [December 2, 2016](#)

Pérez resorted to the kind of superficial anti-Venezuela rhetoric favored by the Latin American right-wing once again on the day of the February 7 election. In a friendly interview with a conservative media outlet, Pérez denounced the leading leftist presidential candidate, stating, "Rafael Correa, as Chávez did giving power to Maduro, today he is trying to give power to Andrés Arauz. [Arauz is the Maduro of Ecuador.](#)"

[#EcuadorElige](#) | "Rafael Correa, como hizo Chávez de entregar el poder a Maduro, hoy él pretende entregar el poder a Andrés Arauz. Arauz es el Maduro del Ecuador": [@yakuperezg](#) candidato a la Presidencia de Ecuador <https://t.co/CRHZkuP4FN> [pic.twitter.com/TjNCPmM2I](https://t.co/TjNCPmM2I)

— NTN24 (@NTN24) [February 7, 2021](#)

In 2017, when Brazil was ruled by the unelected neoliberal coup government of Michel Temer, Pérez publicly expressed hope that former left-wing Presidents [Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff would be arrested](#), alongside Correa and his former Vice President Jorge Glas. (Ecuador's US-backed Lenín Moreno government did arrest Glas and throw him in prison on bogus charges, as part of an authoritarian crackdown on leftist Correista politicians.)

En [#Brasil](#) están peces gordos Lula y Dilma curioso en [#Ecuador](#) todavía nada

[#juicio](#) a [@MashiRafael](#) y [@JorgeGlas](#). La justicia tarda pero llega <https://t.co/RIUjVx033O>

— Yaku Pérez Guartambel (@yakuperezg) [June 9, 2017](#)

In the same vein, Pérez supported a brutal [US-backed coup attempt in Nicaragua in 2018](#).

After right-wing extremists, with support from Washington, spent months [murdering, torturing, and terrorizing supporters of the socialist Sandinista Front](#), Pérez responded by blaming all of the violence on Nicaragua's elected left-wing government.

"Who would have thought that the Sandinistas that before fought against the dictatorship are now shooting their people," Pérez wrote in October 2018.

Nicaragua es singular desde el 19 abril cerca d 500 muertos, 558 presos políticos, pueblo vigilado por paramilitares a Rosen d OrtegaMurillo. Quien pensaría q los Sandinistas q antes luchaban contra la dictadura ahora estos disparan a su pueblo pic.twitter.com/LHtl7DKqYv

— Yaku Pérez Guartambel (@yakuperezg) [October 30, 2018](#)

Everything Pérez has said about Ecuador's neighbors shows that, if he were to take power, he would help Washington and the region's right-wing oligarchs wage war against the so-called Pink Tide, the wave of leftist governments that won power in Latin America starting in the early 2000s.

Friendly ties with the US government

While Yaku Pérez Guartambel has no problem demonizing revolutionary left-wing governments in Latin America as "colonial, ethnocidal, and racist," he is curiously silent about the US government's massive human rights violations.

That is because Pérez has fostered cozy ties with Washington, while advancing its agenda in his country.

Before running for president, Pérez served as the prefect for Ecuador's Azuay province, whose capital, Cuenca, has become a major hub for US expats.

Entire communities of North Americans exist in Cuenca, speaking only English and paying for everything in US dollars (which have been the official currency of Ecuador since 2000 dollarization, following a 1999 economic crash overseen by former Economic Minister Guillermo Lasso, now the major right-wing candidate in the 2021 election).

In June 2019, just as the Donald Trump administration's new representative in Ecuador, [Michael J. Fitzpatrick](#), was sworn in, Pérez publicized his [meeting with the US ambassador](#) in Cuenca.



Yaku Pérez Guartambel ✓

June 26, 2019 · 🌐

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

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



Yaku Pérez with US Ambassador to Ecuador Michael J. Fitzpatrick in June 2019

A month later, Pérez attended a celebration marking Independence Day in the United States, again welcoming the new US ambassador. He posed for a photo smiling in front of an illuminated US flag.



Yaku Perez celebrating United States Independence Day and the swearing in of the new US ambassador in July 2019 in Cuenca, Ecuador

During his presidential campaign, despite garnering little support from the Ecuadorian public, Pérez has found an eager audience from the ambassadors of France and Germany.

Hoy en [#Quito](#), nos reunimos con Jean Baptiate Chauvin Embajador de [#Francia](#) y Philipp Schaver Embajador de [#Alemania](#) en [#Ecuador](#), hablamos de como generar trabajo y desarrollo para nuestra gente del [#Azuay](#) y el país, disminuyendo afectaciones al medio ambiente. pic.twitter.com/TSs2agJVIB

— Yaku Pérez Guartambel (@yakuperezg) [September 10, 2020](#)

US-backed “ecosocialists” ally with right-wing in coup attempt against Rafael Correa

The deployment of ostensibly progressive “environmentalist” talking points to destabilize left-wing governments in Bolivia, Venezuela, Mexico, and beyond was developed over a decade ago, to weaken the democratically elected government of Ecuador’s former socialist President Rafael Correa.

To undercut Correa, the United States and Western European governments funded civil society groups in Ecuador that claimed to support environmental causes and indigenous rights, but ended up serving as tentacles of the right-wing opposition.

Throughout their tenures in office, Ecuador’s Correa and Bolivia’s Evo Morales faced heavy opposition to their ambitious infrastructure initiatives. Environmentalist and indigenous groups, many supported by the United States, initiated widespread protests in 2011 to try to

stop the construction of a large highway in Bolivia, with similar demonstrations to obstruct mining projects in Ecuador in 2012.

Cables from the intelligence firm Stratfor, known as the "[shadow CIA](#)," that were published by WikiLeaks show that the US government contractor was carefully monitoring anti-Correa protests, and specifically [named Pérez Guartambel](#), then known as [Carlos Pérez](#), in 2011.

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

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

One of the main organizations involved in this coup attempt was the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE). CONAIE is an indigenous organization that advances an ultra-leftist, anarchist-inspired politics that is deeply suspicious of the state and industrial development, even if the government is led by a democratically elected socialist.

CONAIE took a hardline position against Correa, hammering him constantly and demanding his removal. This undercut Correa's support from leftists abroad and drove criticism of his Citizens' Revolution movement.

What CONAIE did not acknowledge in its constant attacks on Correa was that its political wing was heavily supported by the US government.

Indeed, CONAIE's de facto political arm is the party Pachakutik, whose 2021 presidential candidate is Yaku Pérez.

During the September 2010 coup attempt, [Pachakutik published an open call](#) for Correa to be removed from power, expressing public support for the police and soldiers who had defected. Pachakutik sent out a press release accusing Correa of a "dictatorial attitude," and Pachakutik leader and National Assembly member Cléver Jiménez "called on the indigenous movement, social movements and democratic political organizations to form a single national front to demand the exit of President Correa."

The Pachakutik press release stressed that "Jiménez backed the struggle of the country's public servants, including the police troops who have mobilized against the regime's authoritarian policies."

Journalist [Eva Golinger](#) later showed how Pachakutik had been supported by the US government's National Democratic Institute (NDI), a subsidiary of the NED regime-change umbrella that is loosely affiliated with the Democratic Party and acts as a cutout for the CIA.

A [2007 NDI document](#) showed that Pachakutik had been directly trained by the US government's NDI, along with activists from Venezuela's anti-Chavista opposition parties Acción Democrática and Primero Justicia, as well as Mexico's right-wing National Action Party (PAN).

- **The number of people trained on new party reform methodologies and materials through the expanded PPN virtual activities increases.**

Since the October 2006 training-of-trainers seminar, Political Party Network master trainers continue to practice their training skills on the Triangle of Party Best Practices² and strategic planning methodologies as part of NDI program activities. Twelve seminar participants have reported practicing their training skills on the Triangle of Party Best Practices and strategic planning issues as part of NDI program activities. Participants have also used a private forum to discuss their experiences and share training materials they have developed following the seminar.

The master trainers have provided training for political parties in the following countries: Ecuador - Pachakutik, Ethical and Democratic Network (*Red Ética y Democracia*—RED), Christian Democrat Union (*Unión Demócrata Cristiana*—UDC); Venezuela - Democratic Action (*Acción Democrática*—AD), Justice First (*Primero Justicia*—PJ), and Miranda State Electorate (*Electores de Miranda*); Colombia - (AfroUNINCCA); Mexico - National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional*—PAN); and Peru - Popular Christian Party (*Partido Popular Cristiano*—PPC).

Through the implementation of this program, it has been difficult for NDI to measure this evaluation point, as Network members have not indicated how many people in their parties were exposed to library materials they have downloaded. However, the high number of users downloading NDI's party reform materials³ provides indirect evidence that political parties throughout the region are using the Triangle of Best Practices and related methodologies independently of NDI's programs.

A 2007 document showing how the US government's National Democratic Institute (NDI) trained the Ecuadorean opposition group Pachakutik

CONAIE and Pachakutik do not represent all Indigenous communities in Ecuador. There are major political divisions, and some communal organizations and leaders support Correísmo.

The United States has a history of backing specific Indigenous organizations in order to divide Native communities. This strategy is far from new. During [Washington's terror war on Nicaragua in the 1980s](#), for instance, the CIA supported leaders from Nicaragua's Miskito community in order to undermine the revolutionary Sandinista government.

The New York Times reported in 1986, "Some Indian leaders said they fear that their people could become like the Hmong and Meo tribesmen in Asia - [indigenous people drafted into a war by the C.I.A.](#) and later abandoned."

Today the Miskitos remain politically divided, but there are some Nicaraguan Native organizations and leaders who support Sandinismo, just as there are Ecuadorean Indigenous groups that support Correísmo.

In a 2019 report, Ecuadorean-Canadian writer Joe Emersberger [exposed CONAIE's role as a Trojan horse for the right-wing](#).

Virgilio Hernandez, a leader from Ecuador's left-wing Correista movement who was forced into asylum in Mexico's embassy following a brutal crackdown by the US-backed Lenín Moreno government, explained to Emersberger:

Since about the end of the 1990s and the beginning of this century I would say what is evident in CONAIE is that a current became dominant that we'd call a 'conservative indigenist' current that has put everything into what they call the 'ethnic cause' and left aside the causes of social movements and the left in the

country. That explains ... that in the last presidential campaign they openly supported the candidate of the oligarchy and the banks, Guillermo Lasso. It is very clear for almost two decades they lost course and have been useful to the oligarchic groups that have always rabidly opposed Rafael Correa and the Citizens Revolution.

Non-Indigenous anti-Correa activist from Indigenous party spreads disinformation against Julian Assange

One of the co-founders of Pachakutik, who is not indigenous, Fernando Villavicencio, played a major but under-acknowledged role in the Russiagate conspiracy that consumed official Washington during the Trump era.

Villavicencio is an Ecuadorian opposition activist and journalist who dedicated years of his life to destroying Rafael Correa. Besides his work with Pachakutik, Villavicencio established an anti-Correa media outlet to spread disinformation against the leftist president.

Villavicencio hated Correa so much that he publicly called for the United States to impose sanctions on Ecuador to punish his government, and said he would lobby the US Senate to do so. (This led Correa to dub [Villavicencio a “traitor.”](#))

In 2018, Villavicencio went on to co-author a highly dubious report in the major British newspaper The Guardian, alongside its Russiagate-promoting reporters Luke Harding and Dan Collins, accusing WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange of holding secret meetings with Donald Trump’s former campaign manager Paul Manafort.

Una de mis mayores experiencias periodísticas fue trabajar durante meses la investigación sobre Assange con los colegas del diario británico The Guardian, Luke Harding, Dan Collins y con la joven periodista Cristina Solórzano de [@somos_lafuente pic.twitter.com/IQbZwAkKNx](#)

— Fernando Villavicencio (@VillaFernando_) [December 2, 2018](#)

WikiLeaks strongly denied the report, calling it a complete fabrication and launching a legal fund to [sue The Guardian](#) over the story.

The Guardian removed Villavicencio’s byline from the article, even as the Ecuadorian activist boasted on Twitter that he had been a co-author and the apparent source of the questionable claims.

La reunión entre Lenín Moreno y Paul Manafort y las visitas a Assange del exgerente de campaña de Trump, están en la agenda del fiscal Robert Mueller que investiga una presunta conspiración para filtrar los mails de Hillary Clinton. Aquí la versión impresa del diario The Guardian [pic.twitter.com/etdqeWCRXx](#)

— Fernando Villavicencio (@VillaFernando_) [November 28, 2018](#)

Villavicencio also runs a website that publishes constant questionable materials demonizing Correa and WikiLeaks. He calls it La Fuente - Periodismo de Investigación, or The Source -

Investigative Journalism.

This publication appears to be funded by the US government's National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a CIA front founded by the Ronald Reagan administration to push regime-change in foreign socialist countries.

In its database, the NED has listed annual \$65,000 grants for a media outlet in Ecuador that is "Promoting Investigating Journalism," using a description that is almost identical to the about page on Villavicencio's website La Fuente.

Ecuadorian opposition activist and Guardian contributor Villavicencio runs an "investigative journalism" site that churns out nonstop propaganda against Correa, the left, and [@WikiLeaks](#).

He does not disclose his funding, but this NED (US gov) grant description looks very similar pic.twitter.com/XD0loHNIP5

— Ben Norton (@BenjaminNorton) [December 18, 2018](#)

Villavicencio frequently faced legal troubles when Correa was president. He and Pachakutik National Assembly member Cléver Jiménez, for whom Villavicencio served as an advisor, were accused of helping to [hack Correa's emails](#) and then publishing them to hurt the Ecuadorian president — charges they denied.

Correa took Villavicencio and Jiménez to court for spreading false, defamatory claims about him and accusing the president of "genocide" and "crimes against humanity" for quelling the September 30, 2010 coup attempt.

Yaku Pérez helped organized public demonstrations in support of Villavicencio and Jiménez. Pérez condemned Correa as a "[caudillo](#)" over the case, and in 2017 held a protest outside of the appeals court, which he called a "court of injustice."

Aprestamos a la audiencia d recurso d revisión en corte d injusticia caso cleverjimenez fernando Villavicencio y carlos Figueroa
pic.twitter.com/0eUf5K96Tu

— Yaku Pérez Guartambel (@yakuperezg) [July 6, 2017](#)

Villavicencio went on to leave Pachakutik in 2017. In the 2021 election, he was a National Assembly candidate running with the center-left Socialist Party of Ecuador, another fringe anti-Correa group that officially broke all ties with Marxism, calling itself social democratic, and has often found itself in alliance with the right-wing.

Husband of Western government-linked, NGO-backed anti-Correa academic Manuela Picq

Yaku Pérez's longtime partner is also a prominent opponent of Correísmo who has previously worked for the US government and whose activism has been funded by NGOs bankrolled by Western governments.

In 2013, Pérez married Manuela Picq, a French-Brazilian academic who specializes in Indigenous, sexuality, and gender studies, and who, like her husband, is a staunch critic of leftist governments in Latin America who supported the US-backed coup in Bolivia in 2019.

Picq works closely with regime-change-lobbying NGOs, and is infamous in Ecuador for her anti-Correa activism.



Yaku Pérez with his wife, anti-Correa activist Manuela Picq, in 2015

Picq played a significant role in 2015 protests against President Correa, which were often very violent. She was arrested at a demonstration in August, and her visa was cancelled and she was deported from Ecuador.

With support from the European Union and billionaire-funded NGOs, Picq turned her deportation case into a scandal, portraying herself as a victim and using it to attack Correa and demonize his elected socialist government as a chronic human rights violator.

Picq was allowed to [return in Ecuador](#) in 2018, under the right-wing US-backed government of Lenín Moreno.

And while Yaku Pérez and Picq claim to be critics of Moreno, after he entered power, a video interview shows that Picq called on Ecuadorians to [vote in a referendum](#) that handed Moreno absolute power.

Before she became an academic, Manuela Picq worked with right-wing US government institutions. According to her professional CV, in 2003, Picq served as a “foreign affairs specialist” in the Office of International Relations for Florida’s Republican Governor Jeb Bush.

That same year, Picq served as a Miami-based “co-coordinator for the participation of civil society organizations” for the Trade Ministerial for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), a neoliberal agreement pushed aggressively by the US government.

The left-wing governments in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia opposed the FTAA. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez called it a “tool of imperialism” that would help Washington further exploit and dominate the region.

It was in fact in rejection of the FTAA that Venezuela and Cuba in 2004 founded by the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - Peoples’ Trade Treaty, or ALBA-TCP, to

integrate Latin America's economies together, excluding the United States, and strengthen their sovereignty.

Ecuador joined the ALBA under President Correa in 2009. His membership in the organization was one of the reasons for the US-backed coup attempt targeting him in 2010. Ecuador's right-wing US-backed Moreno government went on to withdraw from the ALBA in 2018.

Professional Experience

- Contributing Editor, [Intercontinental Cry](#), a Publication of the Center for World Indigenous Studies. (2015-)
- Opinion Contributor, [Al Jazeera English](#). (2011-2014)
- Academic Dean, Institute Santiago de Quito – Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Riobamba, Ecuador. (2006/08)
- Director, Center For Andean Freedoms, Universidad San Francisco de Quito. (2005/06)
- Co-coordinator for the participation of civil society organizations, Trade Ministerial for the Free Trade Area of the Americas, Miami. (2003)

5

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- Foreign Affairs Specialist, Office of International Relations, Governor of Florida. (2003)

Manuela Picq's CV, showing her work for the Florida government and Free Trade Area of the Americas

According to her CV, Picq has worked since 2015 with [Front Line Defenders](#), an NGO funded by the European Union, numerous Western European governments, Taiwan, anti-communist billionaire George Soros' Open Society Foundations, and the CIA cutout the Ford Foundation.

In 2016, Picq was rewarded for her anti-Correa activism in Ecuador with a "Human Rights Defender" grant from [ProtectDefenders.eu](#), a soft-power instrument funded by the European Union that weaponizes human rights to push regime change in foreign nations and advance the EU's economic interests.

In 2018, the publication Global Americans dubbed Manuela Picq one of the "20 New Public Intellectuals in the Americas." As The Grayzone previously reported, Global Americans is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a regime-change arm of the United States that acts as a CIA cutout, and the website boasted of the [NED's role in "laying the groundwork for insurrection"](#) during a bloody US-backed coup attempt in Nicaragua in 2018.

Today, Picq is a professor of "Latinx and Latin American Studies" at [Amherst College](#) in the United States. She is author of books with titles like "Queering Narratives of Modernity," "Sexualities in World Politics," and "Sex and Tongue in International Politics."

Picq has also taught for years at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, one of Ecuador's most elite schools.

Before establishing her professional academic career, Picq got her start as a postdoctoral fellow in the "Study of Democracy in Latin America" at the [Woodrow Wilson Center](#), a US government-funded think tank that has a revolving door with the State Department and intelligence agencies, and is physically located in the US government's Ronald Reagan Building.

From the United States, Picq continues writing [anti-Correista articles](#) for liberal media outlets and the [regime-change-lobbying](#) NGO [NACLA](#).

And like her partner Yaku Pérez, Manuela Picq has aggressively attacked other leftist governments in Latin America and supported US-backed coup attempts. (In 2019, she also called for Western governments to make a "[no fly zone](#)" in northeastern Syria.)

Before a US-backed soft coup removed Brazil's elected government from power in 2016, Picq published articles criticizing its [developmental projects](#).

Picq has expressed support for the right-wing [opposition in Nicaragua](#), demonizing the elected leftist Sandinista government as a "[patriarchal macho rapist anti-women state](#)." (In reality Nicaragua has the [highest level of gender equality](#) in all of Latin America, and the fifth-best in the entire world.)

In September 2019, in the lead-up to the US-backed coup in Bolivia, Picq published an outlandish article preposterously accusing the country's first and only ever Indigenous President Evo Morales of carrying out an "[ecocide](#)" and "[genocide](#)." This helped fuel a smear campaign against Morales, setting the stage for the violent putsch.

Evo Morales' ecocide is a genocide <https://t.co/glEEwYcaIT>

— Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (@chgsun) [September 26, 2019](#)

Mere days before the coup, Picq then joked on Twitter that she had "[wet dreams](#)" fantasizing about overthrowing Evo Morales.

Wet dreams from midia ninja..... falta o Evo na lista
<pic.twitter.com/49NtMOM4qy>

— Manuela Picq (@manuelapicq) [October 29, 2019](#)

Then when the coup was being carried out in November, Picq spread absurd disinformation, writing, "Sisters from the Indigenous base in Bolivia are denouncing massive violence by groups from the MAS [ruling Movement Toward Socialism party] — not only houses of the opposition being burnt, there is also a network and rapes in the streets. There is fear that [Evo is launching a civil war](#) with his militias."

Hermanas de las bases indígenas en [#Bolivia](#) denuncian violencia masiva por grupos del [#MAS](#) - no solo casas de oposición quemadas, hay más red e violaciones en las calles. Se teme que Evo esté armando una guerra civil con sus milicias

— Manuela Picq (@manuelapicq) [November 11, 2019](#)

The work of Pérez and Picq shows how Western governments can use ostensibly left-liberal activists, academics, and NGOs to push their imperial interests, destabilizing socialist states in Latin America in the guise of purportedly protecting the environment, Indigenous communities, and human rights.

Right-wing corporate lobby group AS/COA promotes Yaku Pérez's campaign

Articles by anarchist-oriented US environmentalist organizations like [Extinction Rebellion](#) leave readers with the impression that Yaku Pérez Guartambel is Ecuador's best choice for the left.

But a look at some of Pérez's most high-profile promoters, including powerful right-wing corporate lobby groups, illustrates an ulterior agenda.

On February 1, the US website Americas Quarterly published a puff piece praising the third-place candidate, titled "Yaku Pérez: The New Face of Ecuador's Left?"

The article spread misleading disinformation demonizing Rafael Correa, trumpeting, "Pérez said he offers such voters an alternative to the 'authoritarian and corrupt left' of Correa."

Americas Quarterly said it conducted a survey of a dozen analysts who "ranked Pérez further to the left than Arauz."

The website also happily pointed out, "On foreign policy, Pérez has said he is open to a trade deal with the United States and has called out China's 'aggressive policies around extractivism and human rights.'"

Author Brendan O'Boyle shared the piece promoting "the anti-Correa, 'ecological left' that he represents."

NEW: I spoke to [@yakuperezg](#) about his unlikely bid to become Ecuador's first indigenous president and the anti-Correa, "ecological left" that he represents.

Hope you'll take a look!<https://t.co/6wz2DdeAmh>

— Brendan O'Boyle (@BrenOBoyle) [February 1, 2021](#)

So what exactly is Americas Quarterly? Is it a left-liberal publication that promotes environmentalism and Indigenous rights?

On the contrary: Americas Quarterly is an arm of the Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA), a right-wing lobby group funded by most major US corporations.

AS/COA has played an important role in backing coups against progressive governments in Latin America and propping up unpopular neoliberal regimes.

[AS/COA's list of corporate members](#) is a Who's Who of the most powerful companies on the planet, many of which profit from destroying the environment and waging war, such as Amazon, Apple, BlackRock, Boeing, Caterpillar, Chevron, Chiquita, Exxon Mobil, Ford, GE, Goldman Sachs, Google, JP Morgan, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Walmart.

COA / COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS

- OUR MEMBERS -

3M
Aeropuertos Argentina 2000
The AES Corporation
 Akerman LLP
 The Albright Stonebridge Group
Allen & Company, Inc.
Amazon Web Services
American Tower Corporation
 Amgen, Inc
 Apple Inc.
 Arca Continental
 Arnold & Porter
 Artisan Partners
 AstraZeneca
AT&T, Inc.
 Banco Bradesco S.A.
 Banco de la Nación Argentina
 Banco do Brasil S.A.
Bank of America
BBVA
 Berkemeyer Attorneys and Counselors
BlackRock
Bloomberg
 Blue Water Advisors
 BMW GROUP
BNY Mellon
 BNP Paribas
The Boeing Company
 Borderplex Alliance
 Boston Consulting Group
Bridas Corporation
Bunge Limited
Cargill, Incorporated
 Caterpillar Inc.
 Celulosa Arauco y Constitución (Arauco)
 CEMEX
 CFA Institute
Chevron Corporation*
 Chiquita Brands
 Chubb
Cisco Systems, Inc.
Citigroup, Inc.
Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP
 Compass Group Holdings Inc.
ConocoPhillips
 Continental Grain Company
 Control Risks
Corporación Multi Inversiones
 Covington & Burling LLP
 Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank
 Credit Suisse
 Delta
 Deutsche Bank
Diageo plc
DiDi/99
Discovery Communications
 DHL Express USA
 Duquesne Family Office
 Eli Lilly and Company
 Elliott Management
 Empresas CMPC S.A.
Estee Lauder Companies
Exxon Mobil Corporation
 EY
 Facebook
FedEx Express
FEMSA
 FERRERE
Financial Times
Finning International
Fintech Advisory, Inc.
 Fitch Group
 FIU College of Business
 Fluor
Ford Motor Company
Freeport-McMoRan Inc.

General Electric Company
General Motors
GeoPark
GIC
 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
 Globant
 Goldman Sachs
Google LLC
Greenberg Traurig, LLP
 Greylock Capital Management
GSK
 Hakluyt & Company
 HBO Latin America
 Hogan Lovells
HSBC Securities (USA) Inc.*
IBM Corporation
 INCAE Business School
Integra Capital
International Finance Corporation (IFC)
InterEnergy
 Intesa Sanpaolo
IRSA Inversiones y Representaciones S.A.
 Japan Bank for International Cooperation
Johnson & Johnson
J.P. Morgan
 JTI
Kellogg Co.
 Kirkland & Ellis LLP
 Kobre & Kim
Latham & Watkins LLP
 Lazard
L Catterton Latin America
 LCA Capital LLC
LLYC (Llorente y Cuenca)
 Linde plc
 Lockheed Martin
 Macquarie Group
Marathon Asset Management
 Marubeni America Corporation
Mason Capital Management LLC
 MasterCard
 Mattos Filho, Veiga Filho, Marrey Jr. e
 Quiroga Advogados
 McLarty Associates
Medtronic, Plc.
 Mercadolibre.com
Mercantil Servicios Financieros, C.A.
Merck & Co., Inc.
MetLife, Inc.
Microsoft Corporation
 Millicom (Tigo)
 Mitsubishi Corporation (Americas)
 Mitsui & Co. (USA), Inc.
Moody's
 Morgan Stanley
 Motion Picture Association (MPA)
MUFG
 Nardello & Co.
NBCUniversal
 New York Life
Newmont
 NEXI
Nike, Inc.
 Nomura Securities
 Novartis
Orbia
 OREL ENERGY GROUP
Panedile
 Partners Group
 PayPal, Inc
PepsiCo
Pfizer Inc
Philip Morris International, Latin America and Canada
Pluspetrol
 Praxair, Inc
The Procter & Gamble Company

Principal Financial Group
 Raytheon Company
 RELX
 Repsol
 Riverstone Holdings
 Riverwood Capital
Rio Tinto
 Roche Pharma Latin America
 Ryder System, Inc.
 Salesforce
 Sanofi
Santander Corporate & Investment Banking
SAP Latin America & Caribbean
SAS
 SBA Communications Corporation
 Schlumberger
Scotiabank
Sempra Energy
Shearman & Sterling LLP
Shell
 Societe Generale Corporate Investment Banking
Softbank Group US, Inc.
 Sojitz Corporation of America
 S&P Global Ratings
Sudameris Bank
Sullivan & Cromwell LLP
 Sumitomo Corporation of Americas
 Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation
Telefónica S.A.
Television Association of Programmers Latin America
Tenaris
 Temasek
 Torino Capital LLC
 Twitter
 Uber
 Union Group
 UnitedHealth Group
 University of Miami
UPS
 VeriTran LLC
ViacomCBS
 Vinci Partners
 Visa International
Vista Oil & Gas
Votorantim S.A.
 VR Capital Group
Walmart Inc.
White & Case LLP
 XP Investimentos
 YPF

*Patron Corporate Member
 Elite Corporate Member
 As of February 3, 2021

So why would an organization funded by these mega-corporations, which normally supports right-wing politicians across Latin America, suddenly promote a left-wing candidate in Ecuador? And why would it have us believe that Yaku Pérez is in fact even more left-wing than Andrés Arauz and the Correista movement?

The answer is that Pérez does not truly represent the left; he is an insidious vehicle for Washington's interests in Ecuador. AS/COA has sought to falsely portray Pérez as the left-wing alternative to Correísmo because it recognizes that he would serve their interests if he somehow managed to win, and is splitting the left by simply staying in the race, making a second round more likely.

It is for the same reason that right-wing banker Guillermo Lasso has said he would support Pérez.

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

*

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