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Social Mobilisation and Government Response



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**Patricio Haro Ayerve
César Ulloa
Mauro Baquero**



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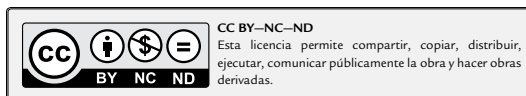


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Introduction

Two mobilisations, one state

It would seem obvious that a problem's recurrence would allow people to prepare pertinent and accurate answers; nonetheless, the incidence of social mobilisations in Ecuador suggests either that the problem is unapproachable or that public policies have not analysed the circumstance thoroughly. It would be unwise to be content with labelling a problem as unsolvable, nor would it be fair to say that no attempt tried reasonable alternatives. In line with this premise, *Mirada Pública* proposes a two-entry approach: the first is theoretical and suggest the possibility —or risk— of Ecuador becoming a “failed state”; the second is a comparative, causal and detailed approach to the mobilisations.

Amid multiple sources of information and the coexistence of a myriad of opinions (briefly and intensely expressed), this working paper offers a detailed academic entry that illustrates various aspects of the problem. In addition, this research suggests what points should be worked on to strengthen equitable and democratic forms of coexistence and warns of possible scenarios if adjustments are not significant. The documents analyse two events: the social mobilisations of October 2019 and June 2022; for each case, the authors review who the protagonists were and their repertoires of protest and containment. Both specificities and similarities show that, historically, the State has not been able to address the needs of every population. In the most heated moments of protest, the points of view about the strike and routes to solutions were considerably diverse, which anticipated the struggles of reaching even minimal agreements.

October and June: the failed State theory —written by Patricio Haro— proposes a conceptual approach that underlines that a condition of instability does not only affect people taking streets; it also

compromises the welfare of every citizen, weakens institutions, and undermines the government's legitimacy. Thus, the *failed state* theory proposes that causes and effects cannot be examined in one direction. If a state is unable to administrate its territory; does not warranty justice, health, food, free movement to its citizens; and cannot carry out economic activities, the implications are wide-ranging. In the case of the events analysed here, Haro suggest that the ones affected are not solely the indigenous movement or the government; the effects can be spotted within the country (production and consume) and in the international context (commerce and tourism).

The author echoes the classic Rousseauian social contract when he notes an agreement among individuals that observe a legal framework that protects but also constrains them; that offers rights and obligations. As it is well known, individual freedom is exchanged for communal freedom and the body regulating these freedoms—through the Weberian “legitimate use of force”—is the state. However, if individuals enjoy fluctuating levels of freedom, some will consider the use of force excessive and disproportionate. Consequently, the understanding of the dispute and the antagonists is ambivalent: the claims are fair for the demonstrators, while the government sees them as vandalism. Admittedly, people demonstrating in the streets do not necessarily recognise institutions which, it is true, do not represent them. In 2019, demonstrators raided the National Assembly building and considered a gathering in the main chamber a symbolic act; on the other hand, the government interpreted that this action broke the law. Both in 2019 and 2022, there were road blockages and damages to public property. The costs amounted to millions, but while demonstrators considered these acts of legitimate resistance, the government labelled them harmful actions that put society in crisis.

The references to the Fragile States Index, as well as the comparative tables showing (among other things) the origin of founts and relevant actions have didactic value. For Haro, the moments of the national revolt in 2019 and 2022 put Ecuador under high risk becoming a failed state and only the possibility of spaces for dialogue and negotiation can ward off that danger. Lastly, the state is responsible of preventing an escalation of violence through a rational and

progressive use of force and the timely formulation of public policies that reduce social gaps.

The second article, “Ecuador, June 2022: indigenous outbreak and dialogue”, written by César Ulloa and Mauro Baquero, shows that tensions had been building before the June 2022 outbreak. The outcome, although foreseen, could not be avoided because the parties did not find common ground. The pragmatism of weak institutions clashed with the urgent needs of the population, especially the rural and indigenous people, and this disagreement caused all branches of government to lose legitimacy. In addition, there were problems such as insecurity (related to organised crime), unemployment and economic recession. The authors rightly note that, despite each moment’s specificities, social problems in Ecuador steadily worsened 2015 onwards. Social unrest grew, and the regime’s economic policy did not find a balance point between fiscal requirements and the population capabilities to make a living.

In 2019, for example, a trigger for the protest was a presidential decree that affected the price of fuels. The review is justifiable from a technical point of view because the subsidy is inefficient since it does not address the needs of the most vulnerable people and is costly for the treasury. Reviewing the subsidy scheme would free resources for more adequate and urgent causes, but a sudden adjustment implies severe consequences. As a result of the protests, the president revoked the decree. In 2022, international market costs referenced fuel prices locally. This mechanism allowed fewer resources spent on subsidies, although no significant changes implied increasing investments in the education, health, employment, and environment areas.

Ulloa and Baquero cite UNICEF data to indicate that “the strike refreshed the population’s memory of the state’s historical neglect of the rural sector”. Four of every ten chronically malnourished children are indigenous, and the lowest access to essential services is found in the Amazon region (where the oil wells are located). The harshness of this situation is undeniable but reading into every outcome is more complex because the nationwide demonstrations cause significant economic losses. Thus, the conditions for a dialogue that could offer

solutions are far from ideal; nevertheless, this paper suggests that an innovative agenda that would address rural problems is a possible solution. Improving the processes that would allow the Executive to identify and prioritise social needs is a reasonable starting point. Addressing the needs of people taking the streets first would improve governability.

The content of this working paper is a proposal to recognise problems that trigger violent social outbreaks. It is also the beginning of a necessary discussion on the resources that would enable a dialogue that includes all voices and requirements. The next step implies recognising that adequate inputs are available to unblock the irreconcilable relationship between the economic model and the needs of vulnerable populations. We are confident that is possible to suggest mechanisms to adjust the administration of the state, strengthen and legitimise its institutions to ensure equitable coexistence and observance of collective rights.

Bolívar Lucio
Editor in chief

October and June: The Failed State Theory

Patricio Haro Ayerve

1. Abstract

The conditions and characteristics of a state administration and how each component reacts to the context, conditions how a state is qualified. A “failed State” is a qualification given to a politically and juridically organised nation that, at a given moment, finds significantly challenged its capacity to address responsibilities. This circumstance causes the government to lose legitimacy and damages the population's welfare. To reach this diagnostic theory proposes some indicators built for that purpose. Based on an examination of existing failed state theory, this study compares the events that took place on October 2019 and June 2022. Both incidents challenged Ecuadorean democracy and security. This research analyses the risk of Ecuador becoming a failed state.

2. Introduction

Following the Thirty Years' War the representatives of the contending nations¹ signed the treaties of Osnabrück and Münster on the 24th of October of 1648 (Toscano, 2006, p. 92). This agreement sealed the Peace of Westphalia and ended this long European conflict. Scholars consider this development the origin of the modern nation-state (Fonseca, 1996, p. 316) because the treaties take into consideration

¹ House of Habsburg (Holy Roman Empire), delegates of the Spanish monarchy, the kingdoms France, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

elements such as territory, sovereignty, and population. From that moment, the institution of judicially constituted nations gives rights and obligations to rulers and ruled. Hobbes and Rousseau collect these rights and obligations in their philosophical works *Leviathan* and *The Social Contract*.

With the spread of this philosophical thought, a person had to give up part of his individual freedom to obtain collective benefits in return. Rousseau states in *The Social Contract*: “What man loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to everything he tries to get and succeeds in getting; what he gains is civil liberty and the proprietorship of all he possesses” (Rousseau, 1985, p. 27), which implies the creation of a communitarian individual that administers what he has effectively achieved. Kant also sees it necessary to maintain a social contract according to which “everyone in the township renounce their external freedom, to recover it immediately as members of a community, that is, as members of

the people considered as State” (Kant, 1994, p. 146). Thus:

The social contract assumes that individuals agree to live together under a legal framework that grants them rights and obligations [...] the authority of the State-institution is what enforces these rules [...] In capitalist states, these rules focus on the protection of individuals and their property against other individuals, other states, and themselves (Santos, 2009, p. 35).

The influence of a state on the life of individuals and communities can be assessed by their degree of autonomy and freedom. Likewise, the categorization of a state’s sovereignty is linked to its role in relation with the freedom it grants. After Westphalia, the monarchic State was the first legal figure of a nation-state and the replacement of the feudal state. Later the absolutist, totalitarian, liberal, democratic states came. Nonetheless, it was only by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of asymmetric threats that new qualifications for the state appear, among them failed state.

3. Failed state

After the end of the Cold War and the bipolar world order, Caribbean, African and European countries were labelled failed states (Helman and Ratner).² They share traits such as governability crisis, internecine warfare, severe economic downfall, systematic violation of human rights, and government instability. Helman and Ratner (1992) considered failed states a threat not only to their citizens but to people of neighbouring countries due to, for example, war-induced migration and poor human rights records. These authors argue that failed states deserve attention as their problems can overflow boundaries. The evolution of conflicts within failed states transformed the concepts, and new arguments emerged to define them. Scholars proposed classifications, categories, and characteristics that organisations (such as the Fund for Peace) replicated in indicators such as the ones shown in Table 1.

² Gerald Helman was a United States foreign Service Officer from 1979 until 1981. Steven Ratner is a professor of law at the University of Michigan.

Table 1

Indicators to assess State Fragility

• Civil wars and ongoing violence
• Lack of harmony among communities.
• Loss of control in peripheral regions occupied by groups outside the law.
• Growth of criminal violence (including gangs, arms and drug trafficking).
• Defective institutions: legislative and the judiciary are non-existent, challenged, or struggle against executive. Absence of democratic debate.
• Decline or destruction of infrastructure.
• Informally privatized educational, medical, and social systems
• Corruption.
• Decline in GDP, rise in inflation and substitution of the national currency for a foreign one.
• Loss of legitimacy.

Note: FFP (2022)

There are different conceptualizations for the notion of failed state. Under diverse characterizations the responsibility might be assigned to the government, irregular/criminal groups, foreign organisations, adverse factors the undermine State’s capacity

to achieve goals. For many analysts, the concept itself is ambiguous, vague, frustratingly imprecise, confuse, even tautological (Chomsky 2006, Spanger 2000, Woodward, 2005). Some definitions are presented below.

Noam Chomsky (2017, p. 5) considers a primary characteristic “their inability or unwillingness to protect their citizens from violence or perhaps even destruction. Another is their tendency to regard themselves as beyond the reach of domestic or international law, and hence free to carry out aggression and violence. And if they have democratic forms, they suffer from a severe *democratic deficit* that deprives their formal democratic institutions from real substance”.

Italian-Canadian political scientist³ Kaveli Holsti (1996, p. 82), defines failed states as:

The state that lacks the capacity of generating loyalty and right to govern, to secure the necessary resources to govern and provide services, assure essential elements of sovereignty, consistent monopoly on use of force within territorial limits, act according to

a consensus based on a political community.

Trajan Shipley (2017), Spanish American political scientist argues that failed states are unable of:

[...] performing standard functions normally, have become a haven of organised crime, and due to prevailing terrorism represent a threat to the international community.

In an analysis carried out by Mexican researcher and member of parliament Gabriel Santos (2009, p. 43) a failed states represent:

[...] a breakdown of the social contract and the supporting legal framework [...] implies going back to the existing situation before the social contract. It means recurring conflict and absence of consensus in regards of a social contract.

4. Metrics and methodology to assess states fragility

A social contract is arguably broken when a state does not secure justice, health, security, access to food, free movement, essential services to its citizens and

³ Professor at Universidad of Columbia and president of Canadian Political Science Association.

does not meet economic goals nor perform other essential functions. As a result, chaos takes over the community, violence extends to all sectors, and social order and cohesion are severely affected. This governability crisis state loses control over its constituent elements: population, sovereignty, and territory.

Weber defined the state as “a human community that successfully and institutionally claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 2000, p. 15). If this monopoly is challenged, adverse factors will hinder the state’s ability of meeting its objectives. If those factors are stronger than the state’s resources to face them, then it is likely that further conditions would lead to a failed state situation.

The Foundation for the Development of Guatemala has determined, based in data from the FFP, the indicators that would determine what a failed state is in the region.

Table 2

Indicators to assess failed states in the region

- Demographic pressure.
- Massive refugees displacement.
- Backlog if unattended group’s demands.
- Chronic and sustained geographic brain drain.
- Uneven economic development.
- Severe economic decline.
- Criminalization or delegitimization of the state.
- Progressive deterioration of public services.
- Suspension or arbitrary application of the rule of law.
- Presence of illegal bodies and clandestine security structures.
- Rise of de facto elites.
- Intervention of foreign states or political actors.

Note: Fundesa (2009)

The FFP⁴ establishes twelve categories to determine the level of state control over its population, sovereignty, and territory. According to this fragility index, states are classified as sustainable if they control their territory through the monopoly of

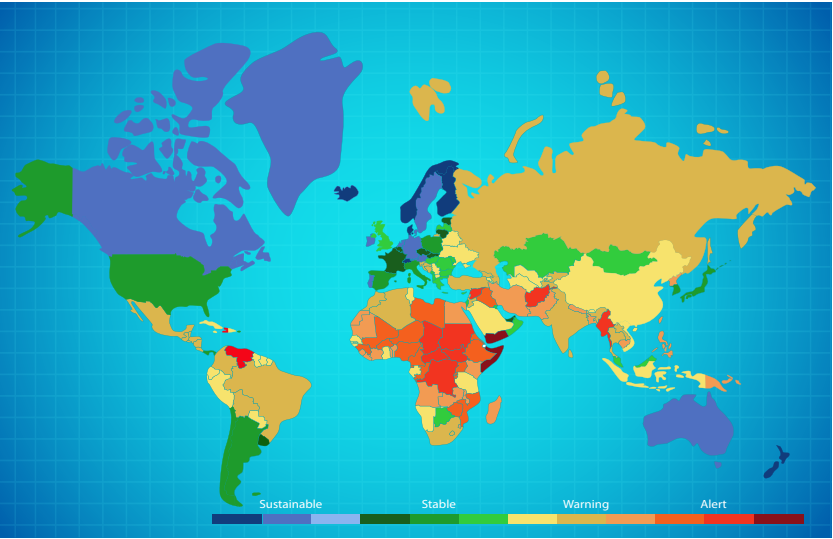
4 Further information about Fragile States Index: <http://fragilestatesindex.org/frequently-asked-questions/what-are-our-twelve-indicators-of-state-fragility/>

the legitimate use of force, enjoy legitimacy to make collective decisions, provide public services, and interact with other states of the international community. On the contrary, a state endures a very high alert situation if the territory is not controlled, does not have the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, has lost legitimacy, does not provide essential services, and is isolated from the international community.

Map 1 shows that the Nordic countries, Canada, and Australia

(blue) are the most sustainable, while countries in Central Africa and the Arabic Peninsula (red) have the highest levels of alert. This classification shows that Yemen is in the first place and experiences the highest sustainability alert. Myanmar, Afghanistan, Syria, and Venezuela also show high alert levels. Ecuador (yellow) is in the 89th position; the threat levels are considerable but (according to this classification) still moderate.

Map 1
State Fragility Index



Note: Fragile State Index (2022).

5. October 2019 and June 2022

Ecuador was the stage of social protests lead by different groups that, in legitimate use of their right to resistance,⁵ called for a national strike in October de 2019. Mobilisations lasted eleven days to force the government to repeal Decree 883 that had increased the price of fuels. In June 2022, the powerful Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador [Conaie]) carried out similar actions to demand the Government the approval of a list of ten proposals that included, among other things, reducing and freezing fuel prices, as well as a public, private, and cooperative

bank debt moratorium if favour of indigenous sectors. The strike lasted for eighteen days and came to an end thanks to the mediation of the Catholic Church, which allowed the establishment of negotiation tables between the government and the indigenous leadership. The agreement was that, within a period of ninety days, they would agree on how to address the proposals.

In both national strikes, organisations displayed strength and violence. They used (according to official information) homemade and conventional weapons which contested the Police and Armed Forces' monopoly of the legitimate use of force. In certain stages, the state lost control of its territory and population. Although law enforcement did not use firearms, riot control gear and weapons were used extensively.

5 As stated in article 98 of the Ecuadorian Constitution. The article reads: "[i]ndividuals and groups may exercise the right to resist actions or omissions of public power" (CRE, 2008, art. 98).

Figure 1
2019-2020 Indicators



Note: by author from data gathered for this research.

Violence created a democracy deficit and caused a governability crisis. During both episodes, state powers clashed, specifically the Executive and Legislative branches; the latter, in 2022, attempted to impeach the president. During these mobilisations

the state did not guarantee the citizens' welfare nor controlled its territory, and the distribution of goods was compromised. Legitimate authorities were not recognised, and ad hoc illegal authorities tried to grasp instances of power.

Figure 2
Indicators of antagonistic groups actions (2019-2022)



Note: by author from data gathered for this research.

The government successfully prevented further acts of violence, but signs of concern (similar to those of failed states) persisted. Regaining control over territory and population through negotiation was a key accomplishment; however, the outcome suggested a degree of imposition on the part of mobilised actors that recurred to chaos and violence to intimidate the State. It can be agreed that a securitisation of conflict⁶ was unavoidable in as much the antagonist's strength overwhelmed the State's capacities.

According to FFP, Ecuador faces significant level of threats of becoming a failed state and the accumulation of some conditions would suggest a path leading to a more compromising situation. As López (2021, p. 3) has stated:

The main sign that a State is on the last stages to become a failed State is giving up control of part of the national territory in favour of political or criminal groups. This concession is also usually made in favour of communities that, for ethnic or historical reasons, claim full control of the places where they live and resist State intervention.

6. Conclusions

The definitions and indicators discussed above would signal that, during both strikes, Ecuador was under considerable threat of becoming a failed state. The Ecuadorian state lost control of its population and territory, legitimate authorities were not recognised and there was a general government ineffectiveness to guarantee private property, justice, security, transport, and distribution of goods. These circumstances conditioned social peace and the well-being of Ecuadoreans.

The Legislative power sided with the popular revolt and intended to impeach the president in 2022; this endangered the democratic system and pushed the country's institution to the brink of a failed state. The government had to attempt a securitisation of the conflict that implied considering the actions of protesters -both in 2019 (11 days) and 2022 (18 days)- a threat to the state. The high level of conflict in the protests exposed the state's vulnerability in realms of security and made clear the necessity of enhancing the capacity of the state to resolve this kind of situation.

6 Buzan & Hansen (2014, p. 214) define it as "as the process of exposing a particular issue as a security problem or a threat".

Table 3
Global risk list indicators

	Country	Year	Range	Total												
	México	2022	84th	70,3	8,6	5,9	6,4	4,5	5,4	4,6	6,0	6,6	5,5	7,2	5,3	4,3
	Maruecos	2022	85th	70,1	4,6	6,6	8,6	5,9	4,9	7,4	6,8	5,4	5,3	4,7	5,0	4,9
	Tailandia	2022	86th	70,0	8,3	9,7	7,0	3,6	4,6	3,8	7,8	3,7	7,6	6,4	5,2	2,3
	Perú	2022	87th	69,8	5,8	7,4	8,3	4,3	6,1	5,9	6,9	7,1	3,7	7,9	4,4	2,0
	Uzbekistan	2022	88th	69,6	5,9	8,8	5,7	5,1	5,6	5,1	9,2	4,3	7,6	4,5	4,1	3,7
	Ecuador	2022	89th	69,1	5,6	8,2	5,8	6,0	5,9	4,3	5,8	6,3	4,1	7,0	5,3	4,8
	Fiji	2022	90th	68,9	6,2	7,9	5,4	7,8	5,0	7,5	5,8	4,2	5,4	4,1	2,7	6,9
	Bielorrusia	2022	91st	68,7	5,3	9,5	5,6	4,8	3,4	4,2	9,3	3,0	8,2	5,1	2,7	7,6
	Ucrania	2022	92nd	68,6	6,4	8,0	5,8	6,5	2,9	5,9	6,5	4,3	5,8	4,8	4,2	7,5
	Túnez	2022	93rd	68,2	7,2	7,2	7,2	7,9	4,4	5,5	6,0	4,7	5,4	4,6	3,2	4,9
	Serbia	2022	94th	67,8	4,2	8,6	6,8	5,8	4,2	6,0	5,8	4,2	3,6	4,4	7,1	7,1

Note: FFP (2022)

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Ecuador, June 2022: Indigenous Upheaval / Outbreak and Dialogue¹

César Ulloa and Mauro Baquero

1. Abstract

This essay explains what the June 2022 outbreak in Ecuador meant. With that aim, this paper examines the political, economic, and social context and keeps track of structural aspects. This approach allows a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, such as historical demands from the rural population, the indigenous leadership reconfiguration since October 2019, and the regional cleavage between regions (highlands and the coast). Furthermore, it analyses the role of digital intermediaries that recreated the outbreak narrative, the role of local authorities, and the role assumed by civil society as a convenor for a pacific resolution and the champion of democracy. This proposal offers a multifaceted perspective of the outbreak and poses further questions for a prospective exercise.

2. The fatality of the institutional crisis

The economic crisis and institutional discredit were the backgrounds of June's demonstrations. A month later, according to *Perfiles de Opinión*² (2022), 24.50% of the population described the President's administration as good, 11.30% answered the same about the National Assembly, and only 2.5% expressed they believed in political parties. These numbers suggest that the protagonists of the political system were going through difficult times, even more in a context

1 This essay main reference is: Ecuador: entre el estallido y el diálogo, published by César Ulloa on July 17th, 2022 in *Latinoamerica21.com* (<https://bit.ly/3JIYCF7>).

2 Survey company based in Quito.

where the population's main concerns (according to the same survey) were crime, economic crisis, and unemployment.³ Months earlier, several social organizations, especially the leadership of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (Conaie), had warned of national demonstrations and strike actions against Guillermo Lasso's government plan that they described as neoliberal.

June 2022 brought a social outbreak in Ecuador. The leadership of the Conaie, along with its communities and allies, went on strike and was later joined by other social sectors. They pressed for the Government's compliance with ten demands unaddressed since October 2019. By 2021, these demands worsened due to three failed meetings and the lack of flexibility of the parties.⁴ The most urgent request to the Executive was a reduction in the price of fuels. Former president Lenín Moreno (Olivares y Medina, 2020) modified the

historical policy of subsidies and petrol stations sold fuel according to market prices. The strike lasted 18 days in the context of political and economic crises and public insecurity.

3. From October 2019 to June 2022

October 2019 ignited the cycle of social protest in Latin America and its epicentre was Quito. The outbreak had multiple causes, diverse morphology, and different typology (Castro, 2020). In all cases, it combined socioeconomic demands, democratic crisis, active participation of youth (Murillo, 2021) and often the insertion of subversive actions in the demonstrations. In Ecuador, the erosion of democracy in people's perception together with the economic crisis that had prevailed since 2015, triggered social protest and unusual outbursts of violence, which was tackled aggressively by the Police and the Armed Forces. "According to *Barómetro de las Américas 2018/2019*, in Ecuador, only 38.7% express satisfaction with the functioning of democracy", in addition,

3 The survey was carried out in Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca y Riobamba and involved 1220 individuals.

4 The list of demands is available at the end of this article.

“the economic debacle was expressed by the Government’s \$10 billion fiscal deficit (El Universo, October 15th, 2019) and the overwhelming destruction of productive employment and the increase of informal jobs” (Ulloa, 2020, p. 13).

In 2019, the outbreak began with public transport strikes countered by the Government with the arrest of social leaders and the compliance of a law that prevents road blockades. Immediately, a renewed and young indigenous leadership took over, appropriated the narrative, and positioned a list of demands that went beyond the reduction in fuel prices. In addition, various social sectors supported shutting down any credit negotiations with multilateral organizations. The reconfiguration of the indigenous movement was evident compared to their last performance in 2015 when they confronted the former President, Rafael Correa. The year 2019 brought a new political scenario for the indigenous movement: a strengthened Pachakutik presidential candidate, Yaku Pérez, came in third in the

2021 presidential election, and Leonidas Iza, a rising indigenous leader, was elected President of Conaie.

Unlike in October 2019, indigenous leaders enabled dialogue with the Government from the moment it took office in May 2021, although conditioned to meeting indigenous interests in this process. Conaie did not allow other partisan organisations or social sectors participation and thus prevented sharing the leadership of this social claim. The indigenous movement receives political support from the Pachakutik legislative bloc (currently the second majority at the National Assembly) and base organisations from communities based in central highland provinces (Bolívar, Chimborazo, Tungurahua, and Cotopaxi), northern highlands region (Imbabura), and the Amazon region (Pastaza, Morona Santiago, Zamora, Napo, Sucumbíos, Orellana). Their presence in the coastal region is not significant. This circumstance corresponds with Ecuador’s historical cleavage: the territorial, cultural and multidimensional rupture

¾according to Rokkan (1970)¾ in the regional, zonal, and ethnic; in other words, highlands and coast regions; urban and rural, indigenous and mestizo.

Over three years, Conaie strengthened its organisation and capacity to assemble and mobilise followers. Grassroots leaders recognised Leonidas Iza's leadership, who comes from the most radical wing of the indigenous movement. His leadership is an ideological mixture of Peruvian Mariateguism, community socialism with glimpses of Rosa Luxemburg's thought (Kowii, 2022), and a Catholic affiliation. This conjunction has perfected the strategy of mobilisation from the provinces to the capital and their resistance capacity to face extended blockages. The second time it lasted 18 days, seven more than in October 2019. The protests occurred two months before political organisations presented candidates for mayors and provincial governments. Pachakutik would dispute the electorate of the Correísmo, left-wing parties and urban populism. The party also moved away from the proposals of parties

such as Izquierda Democrática and Unidad Popular. Finally, Pachakutik maintained an ambiguous stand (convenience alliance) with the Revolución Ciudadana party.

June's outburst occurred in a context where the Government's acceptance barely reached 20%. In one year, the Executive had lost 50% of approval, despite the successful vaccination plan, having achieved macroeconomic stability and being exempt from accusations of corruption. Nevertheless, it faced an onslaught of common crime, organized crime, and massacres in prisons. There was a combination of insecurity, unemployment, and a lack of connection with the average citizen that did not apprehend the Government's plan, all this in the midst of the obstruction at the National Assembly, Correísmo fierce opposition, and the never resolved controversy with his former ally from the right-wing Social Cristiano Party.

4. Other aspects to analyse

This new outburst highlighted a dichotomic political narrative in the social imaginary: a historical

claim on one side and an attempted coup on the other. The crucial confrontation occurred within alternative and digital networks, where the communal, environmental, feminist, and collective rights media championed Conaie's proposal. On the other hand, traditional media covered the events in the National Assembly and on the streets. Paraphrasing Chul Han (2022), these phenomena show a dispute over public emotion rather than public opinion. Correismo legislators presented a motion that Pachakutik and the self-proclaimed rebels of Izquierda Democrática⁵ supported a vote to impeach the President under the Constitution, Article 130, paragraph 2.

While Iza disputed the streets, opposition parties attempted to impeach⁶ President Lasso. The

opposition obtained only 82 out of the 92 required votes.⁷ It was a contested vote; there were allegations of electronic fraud. Allegedly, someone hacked the system because the cast of four assembly members, who voted against the motion, was recorded in the opposite way (*Vistazo*, 2022). An investigation has since started in the Prosecutor's Office. The 18 days of blockage had different intensities and an effective mediation seemed more distant with each attempt. The President of the National Assembly, Virgilio Saquicela, called, unsuccessfully, for a dialogue. He had voted for President's removal, so it seemed as he was playing judge and jury. After the third day of strike, a civil society initiative proposed to form a commission to mediate between the indigenous movement and the Government (*Esquel*, 2022).

The strike refreshed people's memory regarding the historical state neglect of the rural sector. Almost 40% of all children with

5 Art 130, subsection 2 Republic Constitution declares: "National Assembly would discharge the President in the following cases: 1) By arrogate functions which are not constitutional compete, previous Constitutional Court favorable declaration. 2) By severe political crisis and internal commotion" (Constitución de la República de Ecuador, 2008).

6 Under Ecuadorean law an impeachment (*muerte cruzada*) implies that both

President and members of parliament leave office.

7 There are 137 members of parliament in total.

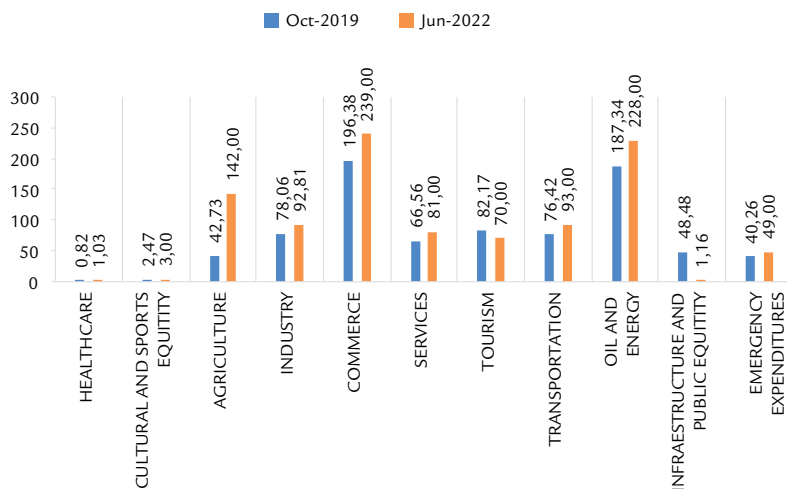
chronic malnutrition are indigenous (Unicef, 2022; Rivera, 2019). Poverty and lack of essential services are predominant in Central Highlands and the Amazon regions, the latter the territory where oil fields, a crucial source of resources, are located. Beyond the ten demands of Conaie, the development model itself is in dispute.

One of the aspects that characterized the outbreak of June 2022 is the presence of indigenous women as agents of mobilization and containment. They arrived in Quito with young children, which would suggest the idea of a family-based community protest. As in the outbreak of October 2019, young protesters clashed with the public force, especially on the days of highest intensity nearby the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana in Quito and also in Puyo. Although the presence of women was relevant, their participation in leadership spaces continues to be subsidiary. The figures with the best results were male and belonged to three leaderships: Conaie, Feine and Fenocin.

5. The Economy's deconstruction before the outbreak

According to the Ecuadorean Central Bank assessments, the country accumulated losses of USD 1,000 million during the 18 days of the strike. USD 775 million corresponds to the private sector and USD 225 million to the State, specifically the oil sector. This value adds to USD 821.68 million lost during the October 2019 strike. Which raises the question: how can Ecuador accumulate USD 1,821.68 million in losses in 30 months amid a pandemic that adds to a still unquantified figure in losses?

Graph 1
Economic losses due to blockage



Note: by author from data gathered at Banco Central del Ecuador, Servicio de Rentas Internas, FEDEX-POR, Cámara de Comercio e Industria, Ministerio de Agricultura, Municipio de Quito (2019,2022).

The economic system of Ecuador is going through an economic deconstruction due to the convergence of four factors: the discontinuity of the economic policy implemented during Correa's government, the absence of a policy to replace it, the turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Discarding the latter, all the economic actors in Ecuador have shown an absolute

lack of strategies and instruments to relieve the adverse effects of the factors mentioned above.

The current government follows a strategy from previous administrations that favours macro-fiscal stability and does not sufficiently address investment in the productive or social sectors. After insecurity, unemployment remains the second substantial concern of the population

(Perfiles de Opinión, 2022). The lack of an innovative agenda solves rural problems presented Conaie's demands favourably to the public opinion. According to the General State Budget's data, public investment in infrastructure and the productive apparatus is not a key priority for the administration in the current fiscal year.

The first three categories of the general state budget represent 70% of the total and cover current expenditures (salaries), government social sector cabinets and public debt. It would be necessary to examine further if this budget design and conception, as well as the observations made by the National Assembly, can prevent crisis and provide a minimum of stability in the face of possible social outbreaks. It would also be necessary to identify how the Executive conceives social policy, priorities and the sectors that benefit from these policies. Moreover, it would be relevant to know if principal beneficiaries occupy territories where outbreaks occur, highlands central provinces: Bolívar, Chimborazo, Tungurahua, and Cotopaxi.

While the Executive conceives a course of action, Ecuador faces a middle-income trap, meaning that the middle class can no longer sustain internal demand, employment and unemployment levels expose labour market weakness, the reduction of inequality strands, and poverty increases. This reality is not exclusive to Ecuador; however, it triggers polarization (Casal, 2019; Paramio, 2011). Employment indicators, the Gini coefficient and the extreme poverty index confirm affirmation.

To deepen the analysis of the rural sector's economic situation (especially of the indigenous communities) descriptive statistics are presented below in graphs about employment, inequality, poverty severity and extreme poverty indexes (the urban sector serves as a counterpoint). The National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment (Enemdu) carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses⁸ is the main reference.

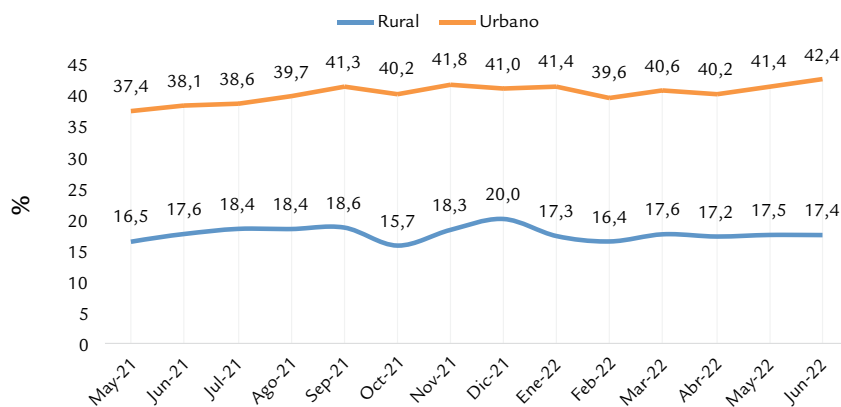
8 Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (INEC).

Table 1
General State Budget 2022

RANKING	CLASIFCATION	AMOUNT	PARTICIPATION
1	SALARIES (Excluding GADs)	9.094.691.922,31	26,83%
2	SOCIAL INVESMENT	8.657.439.616,48	25,54%
3	PUBLIC DEBT	6.260.657.196,36	18,47%
4	DEFENSE AND INTERNAL SECURITY	3.217.910.154,39	9,49%
5	LOCAL GOVERMENTS (Including salaries)	2.900.024.329,89	8,55%
6	UNIVERSITIES AND POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTES	1.169.636.897,22	3,45%
7	INFRAESTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT INVESTMENT	964.594.512,68	2,85%
8	OTHERS STATE FUNCTIONS	840.628.156,68	2,48%
9	ECONOMIC AND PRODUCTIVE INVESMENT	491.260.260,49	1,45%
10	OTHER PRESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS	302.891.713,35	0,89%
		33.899.734.759,85	

Note: by author from data gathered at Registro Oficial Nro. 599. 16th December 2021.

Graph 2
Employment, urban – rural



Note: by author from data gathered at INEC – ENEMDU 2022

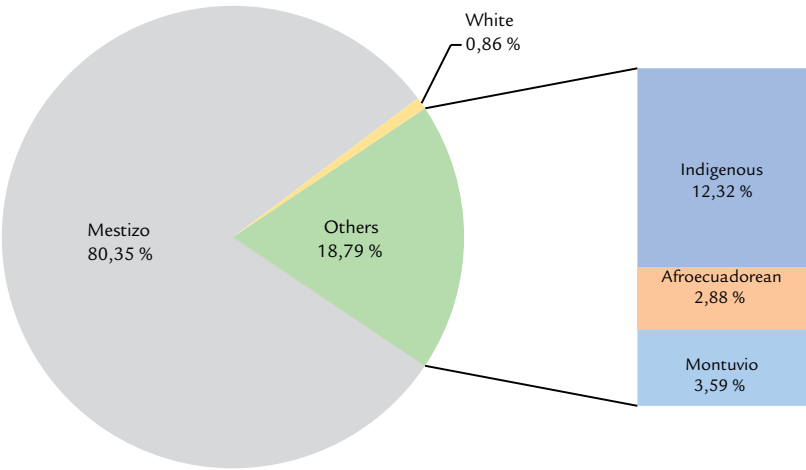
From May 2021 onwards, a recovery in employment is noticeable; however, it has no incidence on the structural problem: by June 2022, only 8 million people were employed (34% full employment). Thus 5.5 million people have other forms of work, and 345,000 unemployed Ecuadorians cannot cover their basic needs fully.

In the rural sector, the Economically Active Population registers 2,862,588 people, of which only 499,017 (17%) have full employment. At the same time, 2,363,571 (83%) have different jobs that do not guarantee

minimum conditions to satisfy needs: 722,091 unemployed people and 631,825 in unpaid employment. Another non-full employment show 960,149 people, and unclassified employments are 1,729. There are 47,776 unemployed persons and the economically inactive population (INEC, 2022) amounts to 1,035,583.

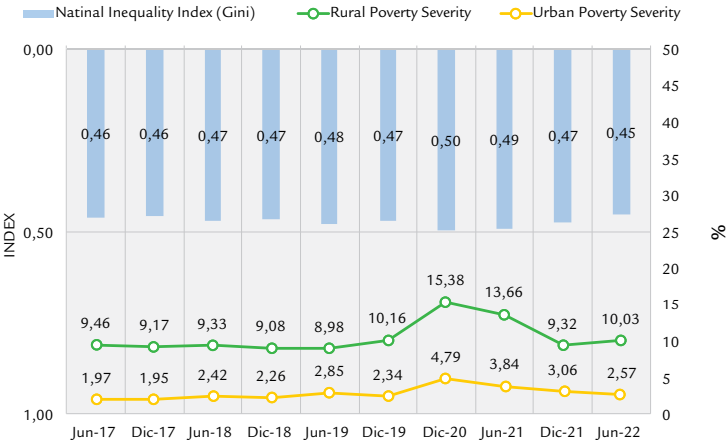
Unemployment impact is greater within the afro, montuvio, and indigenous population. As of June 2022, in the rural sector only 18.79% have access to employment and the majority is under-employed.

Graph 3
Characterization of employed people (8,190,999 people)



Note: by author from data gathered at INEC – ENEMDU 2022. Includes all types of employment (full employment, other forms of employment, unpaid employment and unclassified employment)

Graph 4
Inequality Index and Poverty Severity Index

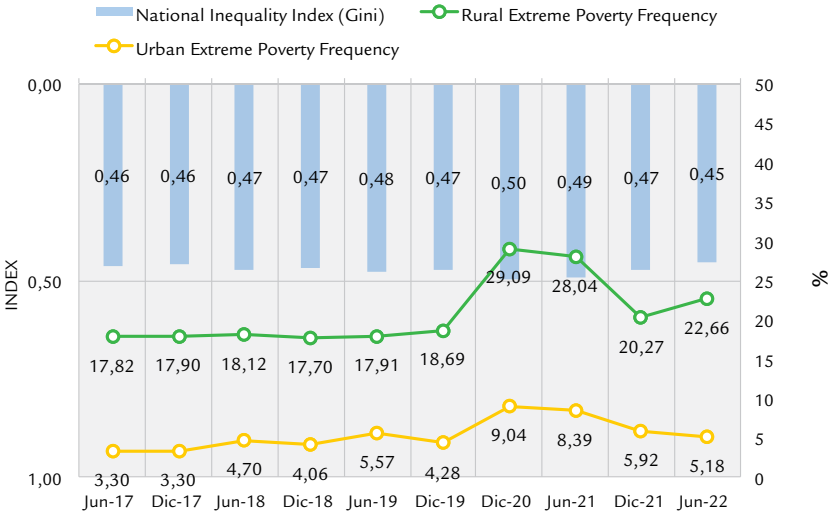


Note: by author from data gathered at INEC – ENEMDU 2022.

Since June 2017, Ecuador has had an average Gini index of 0.47. For 2015, BBVA estimated that emerging and developing economies were expected to reduce the Gini index by at least 0.1 in 10 years, where the middle class would double its income by 2025. This projection will not take place. The poverty severity

in the rural sector (10.03), as of June 2002, is four times greater than the urban sector (2.57). This indicator measures the degree of inequality between households below the poverty line, that is, households whose income is less than USD 2 per day (García-Herrero, 2015).

Graph 5
Inequality Index and Extreme Poverty Index



Note: by author from data at INEC – ENEMDU 2022.

The rural sector shows an incidence of extreme poverty four times higher than the urban sector. These indicators skyrocketed in December 2019, in the aftermath of the October crisis and the eleven-day strike. Ecuador suffered one of the most considerable fiscal deficits in the region, and the pandemic impacted particularly developing countries and rural sectors. In Ecuador, 3,600,000⁹ people, particularly in the rural sector, experience extreme poverty. From 2012 to the present, around 600,000 people have fallen into extreme poverty.

6. The absence of mayors and prefects

Something that distinguished the June 2022 outbreak was the absence of leadership and diminished authority of the mayors and prefects of the cities and provinces where the protest and the paralysation had a considerable impact. The mayors in Quito, Latacunga, Riobamba, Cuenca and Puyo, and the prefects of Pichincha, Cotopaxi, Chimborazo, and Pastaza,

already endured poor acceptance one year before the end of their mandate; consequently, they avoided participating in the mediation. Their response to the crisis could have improved their stance; conversely, their absence exacerbated public rejection.

The case of Quito, the capital and political centre of the State, confirms the absence of leadership from the highest authority, Santiago Guarderas. He had succeeded the former mayor (Jorge Yunda), whom the Council had revoked after an acrimonious dispute. In this sense, there are multiple and simultaneous crises: scant political representation, internal arguments in the *Cabildo* shortly before the elections, unawareness regarding the demands of citizens: insecurity, unemployment, insufficient public works, deterioration of services and a questioned leadership. In the city of Puyo, located in the Amazon region, there were unusual and exacerbated acts of violence compared to previous indigenous protests. Some protesters vandalised the city, shops were looted, a bank agency was set on fire, demonstrators

9 Out of 18 million inhabitants.

disregarded local authorities, threatened whoever did not support the strike and challenged members of the police and the armed forces whom they considered enemies of the people.

Local and sectional authorities could not mediate with the leaders of Conaie, Feine¹⁰ and Fenocin,¹¹ who demanded direct negotiation without intermediaries with the central government. This circumstance diluted the possibility of negotiating at the local level; by all accounts, processes in a province such as Azuay could have offered keys to unblock and mitigate the conflict, but this was not the case. A distinctive situation was the storming of the governor of Cotopaxi office, whose authority was disregarded; the demonstrators appointed an indigenous leader as a *de facto* authority, who even arrogated the functions of granting mobility permits for people, products, and services.

7. Civil society and mediation

Ecuador's most reliable institutions are the Church, universities, and the Armed Forces (FFAA) (Latinobarómetro, 2021), which explains why the Government and Conaie agreed that the first two would play the role of mediators in the dialogue, in addition to lending their facilities and allowing staff to facilitate the process. These are institutions that possess social capital, following Putnam (1993), Coleman (1997) and Fukuyama (1998): they can weave relationships and strengthen them based on trust. The Armed Forces and the National Police did not participate because they were responsible for internal security and clashed with demonstrators. The institutions mentioned above gained relevance in this process because bodies of the political system face a crisis of approval. On the other hand, civil society organizations enhanced their performance against an increasingly weak State incapable of processing structural and contextual demands.

10 Council of Evangelical Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Ecuador

11 National Confederation of Peasant, Indigenous and Black Organizations

Predictably, not the politicians but an external initiative proposed mechanisms and methodologies for reaching agreements. Civil society led a call for dialogue that gathered the Esquel Foundation, the Assembly of the Ecuadorian Higher Education System, the Open Government Network, the Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference, the Confederation of Civil Society Organisations, and environmentalists. The indigenous leadership and the Government agreed that the Catholic Church could lead the mediation. The agreed period was 90 days. The process was non-linear and along the way, the negotiation of the Conaie's demands had different intensities. It has not been clear the stand of the Justice System regarding the role played by criminal groups that infiltrated the protest.

Civil sectors' participation in the strike is heterogeneous. In the case of Quito, neighbourhoods in the south of the city and in the northern peripheral urban areas provided supplies and shelter to support the indigenous march. Differently, people in the valleys

(Cumbayá, Los Chillos) heavily criticised the protest, and the north and centre neighbourhoods presented themselves as spaces for the defence of peace. Spaces that indigenous people traditionally occupy during protests (Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana and the surrounding area of universities such as PUCE and UPS¹²) registered heavy clashes with the police. These educational institutions (along with Universidad Central of Ecuador) actively participate as mediators of dialogue. The cartography of the protest is heterogeneous; for example, in terms of movements of protesters, the epicentre of claims, spaces of acceptance and countermarch.

Downtown Quito, where strategic state institutions are based, has been exposed to the greatest damage, due to vandalism and damage to public property. Until now, those who burned the State Comptroller General's Office (October 2019) and destroyed patrimonial buildings during both strikes have not been yet

12 Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador and Universidad Politécnica Salesiana.

prosecuted. These violent forms of protest emerged two years ago and developed with the experience of countries like Chile and Colombia, where social protest became spaces of almost military dispute. Some protesters used combat elements such as shields, helmets, homemade weapons and explosives. The indigenous leadership evades responsibility and calls these actors infiltrators.

During the outbursts, civil society called for dialogue and peace, pointed out the necessity of addressing various social demands, and criticised the exacerbated violence that has gone unpunished in these two events. Positive learning is the National Dialogues project: a social pact for Ecuador (Esquel, 2022). The construction of a national agenda with multisectoral, inter-agency and multi-stakeholder intervention is still pending. This scheme should not focus solely on the demands of a segment of the population but rather incorporate agreements around historically unresolved issues: support for agriculture, especially for small and medium producers, rural communities access to

water, access to health services and social security (besides of peasant social security), a State policy for credit, access to education at different levels, the fight against chronic child malnutrition, among the most urgent.

8. Conclusions

June 2022 showed an enhanced capacity of the indigenous population and its allies (led by Conaie, Feine and Confenaie) to call, mobilize and prolong the strike. Although the impact was more visible in the provinces of the central highlands, based on the figures presented here, there were nationwide consequences. Furthermore, the strike occurred during a combined political and economic crisis, which further exacerbated the fragility of democracy and further slowed recovery.

June's strike is the consequence of an accumulation of unresolved demands since October 2019 and several failed attempts to build a shared agenda between Conaie and the governments of both Lenín Moreno and Guillermo Lasso. The scenario showed no evidence of a

political actor, party or leader with enough legitimacy to mediate and deliver peace. The use and exacerbation of violence worsened noticeably due to infiltrators and unlawful activities; the protest was a battleground between the demonstrators and the government (Police and Armed Forces). There is an unresolved dispute over who has the hegemonic narrative and the components of shared opinion to determine who is right and why.

In the realm of economy, the situation in the rural sector shows neglect. It is not only the current government's responsibility but of a historical pattern that is more evident in the context of crisis and governments with a right-wing ideological sign; it is worth mentioning that left-wing governments have not solved the problem either. There has not been national or state agreement regarding the treatment of the rural sector. While considering the social issue, the country goes through a crisis of endemic distrust in the institutions responsible for processing conflicts and promoting different, creative,

and peaceful alternative solutions. Civil society tries to play an increasingly leading role but within clear limitations.

The outbreak of June 2022 revealed a gap in knowledge and recognition between the indigenous population and the mestizo world. The differences in demands, strategies, and discourses reveal how the State (during any government) is conceived and challenged. The notion of power, organization and decision-making in the indigenous world is not well known, and indigenous imaginaries do not correspond seamlessly with mestizo reality. Their culture has been misunderstood both by the citizens and the political and economic powers. The dialogue continued within the 90-day framework agreed by all parties. If, following the negotiations, the government address Conaie's demands adequately, is something that remains to be seen.

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Conaie's 10 demands

1. Lower Price of fuels.
2. Job generation.
3. Do not amplify hydrocarbon exploitation and mining.
4. Respect and guarantee collective rights.
5. Do not privatize strategic sectors.
6. Control price speculation.
7. Health and education.
8. Public safety.
9. A policy for agriculture fair prices.
10. Renegotiation of debts for 4 million families.

Strike: timeline relevant milestones

- June 12th: the indigenous leader from Conaie, Leonidas Iza, announces the strike and their 10 demands.
- June 13th: indigenous mobilization begins from several locations at the Central Highlands region.
- June 14th: the National Police arrests the indigenous leader, Leonidas Iza. The strike intensifies.
- June 15th: protests radicalize and the rejection from indigenous communities against the Government due to Iza's arrest, despite of being freed.
- June 16th: Iza calls on the communities to take over Quito. The protest shows an exacerbated violence. Civil Society creates the Convener Commission that urges dialogue
- June 17th: obstruction for the free movement of people, goods, food.
- June 18th: demonstrators are received by universities: Central del Ecuador and Salesiana in Quito.
- June 20th: the first death of a Protestant is registered. There is no clarity of the event
- June 22nd: the Government accepts the intervention fo the Convener Commission to establish a dialogue with the indigenous leadership.

- June 23rd: the Ecuadorian Episcopal Conference (CEE) asks for a truce and suggests pacification mechanisms.
- June 28th: clashes in Sushufindi, amazon region of Ecuador. A soldier dies.
- June 30th: The Act for Peace is signed between the indigenous leadership and the Government through the mediation of the CEE.

Losses (June 30th, 2022):

- 5.251 events of public disturbances.
- 162 arrested persons.
- 238 harmed policemen and 37 policemen detained by the people.
- 10 Community Police Units destroyed.
- 117 patrol cars and motorcycles destroyed.
- 106 harmed soldiers.
- 1 death soldier.
- 335 harmed demonstrators.
- 6 people died during the strike.
- 77 human rights violations.



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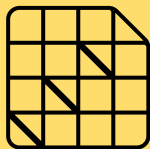
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