

# PsychoSocial Profile

Audience Analysis

# ECUADOR

## Psychoanalytical Anthropology

Ecuador

2025-2026

VALKA MIR

Psychoanalysis of Conflict Participants





## Appendix A Psychosocial Profile of Country Conditions in Ecuador

### §A1 Civil War in the Republic of Ecuador. 2023-2026

Ecuador began 2026 with a record homicide rate of 51 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, surpassing the previous peak of 46 in 2023 and representing a dramatic rise from just 5.8 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017. Since his election in late 2023, President Daniel Noboa has responded with a policy of militarization, but this has only deepened the human rights crisis and



Figure 2 Presidential candidate Villavicencio assassination; injured aid is rushed from the scene.

triggered widespread reports of human rights violations. Since November 2025, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has issued two precautionary measures concerning Ecuador: one addressing the military's alleged forced disappearance of 26 individuals and another related to a growing health crisis within the country's prison system. 2025 has been the most violent year in the history of Ecuador, according to its own Ministry of the Interior, averaging 25 homicides a day, or one murder every hour of every day.<sup>1</sup> According to a recent report by the UN Sustainable Development Group: "Driven by drug trafficking and organized crime, Ecuador, a formerly peaceful country, has been transformed into the most violent in Latin America. Crime affects all sectors of society. Businesses are being robbed or extorted to pay for vaccines in exchange for protection, hospitals have been attacked and children are dropping out of school because they are no longer considered safe spaces."<sup>2</sup> The report goes on to add that young people are especially at risk, particularly children, who are recruited by gangs to act as informants or 'bells,' to sell drugs, collect extortion money, or even committing violent crimes. Moreover, young girls

are also at risk of becoming sex slaves of these groups.<sup>3</sup> Further, a recent report sponsored by the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement unit at the US Department of State indicates that the homicide rate has significantly increased nationwide in Ecuador, with young people between 10 and 30 years of age being disproportionately affected by this trend. The city of Guayaquil is portrayed as particularly dangerous for people between the ages of 10 and 19.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the UN has recently opened a new branch of the Office on Drugs.<sup>5</sup> In May 2023, former Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso dissolved the national parliament as it was preparing to impeach him from office.<sup>6</sup> The following June, Lasso announced his withdrawal from the election, scheduled for August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023.<sup>7</sup> On 13 June 2023, political candidate Luisa González was en-route to register her presidential candidacy with the National Electoral Council with her supporters and president of the Citizen Revolution movement, Marcela Aguiñaga, when they were attacked with pepper spray and tear gas by the National Police.<sup>8</sup> She was treated at a Quito medical centre after flushing her eyes from the pepper spray. The National Police claimed to have used chemical agents to protect security and public order because of the hostile behaviour of González's supporters.<sup>9</sup> On 9 August 2023, candidate Fernando Villavicencio was assassinated after a campaign rally in Quito at the age of 59.<sup>10</sup> He is the first presidential candidate to have been assassinated in the country since Abdon Calderon Muñoz's assassination in 1978. The six Colombian men accused of murdering the Ecuadorean presidential candidate were found dead in a prison in the port city of Guayaquil on October 9<sup>th</sup> following their arrest, Ecuador's prison authority said in a



Figure 1: 23-year-old Landy Parraga Goyburo Ecuadorian Beauty Queen & small business owner assassinated by hit squad

<sup>1</sup> (Paucar, 2025)

<sup>2</sup> (UNODC (s/d), 2026)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> (Observatorio Ecuatoriano de Crimen Organizado, 2026)

<sup>5</sup> (UN-DCO, 2025)

<sup>6</sup> (Fevrier, 2022; Staff Reporter, 2024; Whitney Jr., 2024)

<sup>7</sup> (Isaacs, 1991)

<sup>8</sup> (Correal, 2024; Young, 2024)

<sup>9</sup> (Fevrier, 2022)

<sup>10</sup> (España, 2023; Farinas, 2023; Staff, 2023)



statement.<sup>11</sup> The newly elected president of Ecuador is Daniel Noboa, and he is finishing the remainder of the 18 months term of office vacated by former president Guillermo Lasso who stepped down before he could be impeached. Former President Lasso was a centre-right businessman/banker whose CREO21 party's ideology is liberal conservatism or classical liberalism, depending on who is speaking.<sup>12</sup> President Lasso was elected with the highest vote percentage, ~22%, amidst extreme levels of violence, dissent, protest, and repression. The next election is in August 2025. In early 2024, the new president has already publicly declared that an internal armed conflict was underway in Ecuador. In 2022, Ecuador was the tenth most violent country in Latin America and the Caribbean, after an astonishing 82% rise in murders compared to the previous year. In 2023, Ecuador became the fourth most violent country, behind Honduras, Venezuela, and Colombia. In 2024, Ecuador may become the deadliest country in the Americas. Ecuador's elected and appointed public officials such as mayors, prosecutors, members of parliament, defense attorneys, and presidential candidates are murdered with regularity in Ecuador. Television stations are taken over by armed gunmen during live broadcasts. Professional assassination squads operate with impunity, killing targeted patients in hospitals and national beauty queens in restaurants.<sup>13</sup> Ecuador has 36 prisons. 25% of them are under the control of the organised criminal gangs which use them as their operational headquarters and recruitment centres. The financial flows from narcotics trafficking from Ecuador to Europe and North America has surpassed the legal gross domestic product of Ecuador and criminal organisations now vie for control of the population against the nominally legal portions of the state.<sup>14</sup> The distinction between the legal portions of the state and the rapidly growing national and international criminal organisations is diminishing as public servants at all levels of municipal, state, and national governments opt for physical survival through cooperation and collaboration with organised criminal societies. This past January 2024, after the new president tried to transfer the top leaders of the notorious Los Choneros, they were freed by unknown public-private support teams that have been constructed within and without of the government over the past decade at least.<sup>15</sup> The nation's military has been ordered into the streets to "neutralise" the violent criminal organisations within Ecuador after over 75% of Ecuador's population expressed no confidence in the ability of the local or national police services to protect them with equally high percentages indicating that those police services were fully corrupted.<sup>16</sup> All the above is occurring against the backdrop of an even deeper conflict between the part of Ecuadorian people/families who identify as European in psychosocial-economic origination against Indigenous origination, a distinction that divides Ecuador's population both overtly and covertly. The social discontinuity between Ecuador's Indigenous and European parts, allows for the growth of criminal social organisations to flourish more like cancer than hierarchical and parasitic organised crime found in Europe or North America. The criminal societies in Ecuador and the Northern Triangle of Central America, are cancerous in that they will eventually kill the host because of the profound psychosocial motivations that drive their growth. The principal population segment that has been fleeing into exile from Ecuador and the Northern Triangle States are the European oriented mestizo families that do not identify as indigenous Runasimi (Andes Mountain Range) nor as Quechuan of the Northern Triangle. These mestizo persons and families lack the financial capacity to pay for public and private protection that keep the upper quadrant of the capital cities secure from public (corrupt state) and private (criminal societies) predators. Now, the Euro-mestizo persons/families fleeing into exile are being joined by members of the upper-class societies who have refused to cooperate/collaborate with either the corrupted state or the criminal societies and have become targeted for discipline, liquidation, or fleecing of licit or illicit wealth. The claimants in this case, clearly belong to the upper quadrant of Ecuadorian society. They are not indigenous in their phenotype nor in archetype. By their own admission, they are products of the Ecuadorian post-colonial population segment and operate within a Euro-centric psychosocial identity of egocentric

<sup>11</sup> (Correal et al., 2024; Valencia, 2021)

<sup>12</sup> CREO21 stands for Creadndo oportunidades and was founded by Guillermo Lasso in 2012.

<sup>13</sup> (Badcock, 2024)

<sup>14</sup> (Mella, 2023c)

<sup>15</sup> (Correal & Glatsky, 2024; IFRC, 2024; Mella, 2024c)

<sup>16</sup> (API Staff, 2024; CGTN Staff, 2024; Quesada, 2024)



individual agency. Their targeting by organised criminal societies linked to government agencies suggests that, despite their patrimonial inheritance from father and brother, they were and are, unprotected from the dwindling state protective apparatus that cooperates and collaborates with the oppositional growing criminal social organisations.

## §A2 Ecuador's Clash of Civilisations

Ecuadorian citizens who flee into exile are, in the majority, from the mestizo or mixed blood segment of the population. This segment is approximately 50% of the country by census. The remainder of the population is divided between indigenous and Eurocentric. Maria Gabriela is an example a member of Ecuador's Eurocentric elite who found herself and her husband fleeing into exile. She and her husband, both lawyers, rejected the automatic class patrimony of their race and culture and joined legal efforts to try and reform Ecuador's malformed society from within. They were quickly targeted by criminal societies as their fellow Eurocentric inhabitants rescinded their security protection. She and her husband quickly learned how exposed they were as a "socially distinct," "socially visible," segment of Ecuador's population, having "particularity" and that she and her husband belonged to a population segment that "constitutes a discrete class of persons...heirs in Ecuador... as viewed in my society." This specific population segment that Maria Gabriela attempted to describe is the Eurocentric criollo (plus those who want to be criollo) that does not identify as or with indigenous and is a part of the post-colonial Ecuadorian elite that have historically ruled Ecuador as a colonial patrimony.

*"Ecuadorians with the possibility to travel to the US, Ecuadorians with family members living abroad the country and Ecuadorians with family members running successful companies that are subject of threats later on. I cannot change this characteristic about me." "My persecutors consider that those of us who are well off should pay for them. I think that they believe that we must pay for the opportunities that they did not receive and that we should amend the inequities that Ecuador has been through. They see us as guilty of having had greater possibilities than them and they want to punish us for that. They believe they have the right to extort money from us and take away everything we have, including our peace of mind." - former Ecuadorian civil rights lawyer Maria Gabriela.*

As members of Ecuador's Euro-centric 'elite' society, they were identifiable by both phenotype and archetype. This section attempts to illustrate the characteristics and degree of Ecuador's malformed society that drives ever increasing violence into an open civil war. As **figure 4** depicts, the peoples of the highland regions of the Andean (Sierra) Mountain Range of South America are Amerindian, and specifically as shown in **Figure 3**, they are members of the large Quechuas de las Andean. An attractive and handsome people, aspects of their phenotype include silky thick black hair, olive skin tones with little melanin deficiency and varying degrees of dorsal hump over the nasal bridge. The tip of the nose is broad and downward facing. Some members of the Amerindian ethnicity have used rhinoplasty surgery to ease the degree of the dorsal hump, most Quechuas that I have interviewed and engaged with find it to be a pleasing aesthetic in their culture. The criollo or near criollo members of Ecuadorian society, normatively feature classical southwest European features in facial topography, hair, and body type.<sup>17</sup> The point made here is that Ecuador's population segments are well attuned to the distinctive criollo or near criollo phenotypes that mark them as distinctive. With this phenotype comes a set of stereotypes about Criollo's likely socioeconomic and political status and views that are not accurate for all members. While Maria Gabriela and her family received a patrimony inheritance (the 'heir' part of her statement) from their late father, many such members of this population segment did not. The former president of Ecuador, Guillermo Lasso, for example, did not. He was born into middle-class criollo (white European) family, but his parents had eleven children, and the family lived with financial hardships for their population segment. At age 15, Lasso worked to earn sufficient money to pay for his private high school and was unable to fully complete his university degree at the Pontifical Catholic University in Quito. His status within this 'socially distinct' population segment however, enabled him to enter the work force in the

<sup>17</sup> This subject is extensive and for the sake of clarity, I have not focused much of the report on this. The subject of skin lightening or *Blanqueamiento* however, is an issue that is explored later in this section.



Figure 3 The 3 states of Ecuador in a Civil War separated by ethnic phenotypes, archetypes, & social constructions of reality

Guayaquil Stock Exchange, followed by increasingly well-paid positions financial companies, the head of operations for Coca-Cola – Ecuador, chairman of the Guayas Transit Commission, the Development Bank of Latin America, and the Caribbean, and the CEO of Banco Guayaquil via his family and social connections that would never be available to indigenous peoples or population segments not visibly, recognizably Euro-centric elite. **Figure 3** offers an imperfect comparison between the ‘socially distinct’ ‘particularity’ of Ecuador’s Eurocentric state versus its Quechua Pacha state, and against the backdrop of the mestizo Ecuadorians in the middle who belong to neither state’s inner society, economics, or politics.<sup>18</sup> The new president, Daniel Noboa, is himself, the 35-year-old heir of a Banana plantation from one of Ecuador’s wealthy families in Guayaquil, the centre of narcotics exports to Europe. §A3 (*Opaque Drivers of Social Chaos*), below, explores the dynamic between the various population segments and describes how and why Ecuador’s ‘socially distinct’ Eurocentric population group is under attack and disintegrating from within. The example of Maria Gabriela above, illustrates the consequences of Ecuador’s elites’ choices to not become involved in the protective envelope of their Euro-centric community (*which often involves active or passive cooperation and collaboration with organised criminal exploitation*). This choice, while noble, leaves them exposed to organised crime backed by the state, and or organised criminal societies that are in competition with the state, and or the growing majority indigenous movements that seek to overturn the Euro-centric Ecuadorian social order. They become a persecuted part of Ecuadorian society because of their rejection of the ongoing criminal exploitation and control of the Ecuadorian state by the collaborative cooperation of the remnants of the colonial state. The growth of criminal societies within the state and in competition with the state, will eventually eliminate neutrality within civil society, forcing individual and family to choose. The Runasimi indigenous communities are even now, organising for the coming struggle. **Figure 4** is a graphic aid to use in understanding the complexity of Ecuador’s descent into chaos as a failing state. There are two principal ongoing conflicts in Ecuador that are interrelated. The first is **between** the post-colonial state and its majority non-European identifying (indigenous) population. The second is **within** the post-colonial criollo and mestizo populations that do identify as European and who are in competition for control of the state’s population and wealth. The left half of **figure 4** illustrates the past three presidents of the Ecuadorian State, the leaders of two of the criminal society organisations that are contesting for control of Ecuador’s population and resources – the leader of Los Choneros, Adolfo Macias (call sign ‘Fito’), and the leader of the Los Lobos, Fabricio Colon Pico (call sign ‘Savage’). Also included on the left side of this graphic are three of the many senior public officials indicted for collaborating with ‘Fito’ and ‘Savage’ and leaders of the other 17 criminal societies. The

<sup>18</sup> Asylum claimant’s statements.  
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Most of the criminal societies and state's violence is directed against each other, and secondarily against the population that neither identifies with indigenous nor Euro-centric elite, as they are the least protected.

three identified are a former president, a former vice president, and a current supervisor of the national judicial appointment and accreditation system. None of the men on the left half are indigenous. All of them are criollo, or nearly so. Criollo is a Spanish term for European Caucasian whose family bloodlines are not contaminated with indigenous peoples. From the

perspective of the indigenous peoples on the right side of **figure 4**, the more that the criollos or near-criollos fight each other, the likelier they will dissolve and become extinct, making way for the return of the indigenous social order which has not been in existence for the past 500 years.<sup>19</sup> Returning to **figure 4**, there are several complex inter-relationships between the two conflicts. The indigenous awakening in Ecuador was triggered by the increase of natural resource exploitation of indigenous lands and watersheds and their increase in sociopolitical assistance by NGO organisations of member states of the OAS. The resultant resistance of the indigenous movements and their supporters to the state ongoing exploitation of natural resources was not well received in Quito. Public and private entities worked in collaboration with the state justice department and parliament to limit indigenous capacity to resist the merger of Ecuador's society and economy into the globalised order of trade, travel, technology, communication, transportation, resource extraction, tourism, farming, animal husbandry, and so on. While Ecuador's indigenous peoples are not opposed to all forms of globalisation, they believe in managed mergers based on their own indigenous world views, rather than those of the Euro-centric elites. One of the most important inter-relationships between the indigenous communities of Ecuador and the ongoing descent into chaos of the non-indigenous community is around corruption. The elites and the state they control, have long been funded by access to indigenous lands and resources that were claimed through legal mechanisms like eminent domain, practices that came to a head during the indigenous seizure of the National Assembly in 2019 (see **figure 5**). As the indigenous populations began receiving legal and political support to interfere with or even halt the ongoing consumption of their natural resources, Ecuador's state and elites resorted to extrajudicial use of violence and prosecution via an obliging criminal system to continue economic exploitation. Without commenting on the ethics of this, one of the net results was to establish acceptable lines of effort to obtain resources, power, and recognition. The criminal social organisations, formed for self-protection, belonging, and identity, quickly learned how to obtain what they needed when the state could not or would not provide. Instead of targeting the indigenous population's resources as the



Figure 4 Ecuador's post-colonial disintegration in a clash of civilizations

<sup>19</sup> This point is personal observation, and in the below sections, I illustrate the acute anxiety that Ecuador's indigenous communities are suffering from as violence replaces the rule of law for Ecuador's besieged state and its controlling elites.



government and elites were doing, they went after the more liquid and desirable wealth of the state and its elites. Now, the Ecuadorian state is faced by sociopolitical and economic rebellion from the newly awakened Indigenous activist collectivists (external to the Euro-centric post-colonial states and elites), and an internal threat (criminal societies) of its own making. Returning to **figure 4**, we are unable to separate the growing indigenous sociopolitical-economic indigenous rebellion from the violent internal criminal insurgency that is destroying the structure of the state. The latter begat the former and both are, at this juncture, unstoppable until the Westphalian state dissolves or is remade into a form that most Ecuadorians can find ownership of and are willing to defend. Where the state's ability to secure its population and resources is weakening, the criminal societies capacity to inflict damage to the population and extract its resources is growing. This criminal capacity is expanding because of the sustained levels of traumatising violence that breaks families and mentally extremises young people after extended exposure to violent trauma. While the indigenous communities of Ecuador are not immune to this violent contest between the state and criminal societies, indigenous collectives have been mobilising and militarising their members to defend themselves against the state's attempts to physically force them into political, social, and economic submission. The next most vulnerable are those persons and families of the elite tier population segment that are unwilling to collaborate and cooperate with the public-private corruption of the postcolonial Ecuadorian state. Where the legal state structure and its supporting elite are in open contest with the organised criminal societies for control of the state's population and resources, the indigenous population have the most to gain by the complete collapse of the European Westphalian State of Ecuador and the flight of the remnants of post-colonial European oriented criollos and mestizos to countries more European in orientation.



The Guardian

Ecuador moves government out of capital as violent protests rage

The Telegraph

Indigenous protesters storm parliament in Ecuador as government forced to decamp



Figure 5 Over the past decade, the indigenous populations of Ecuador and Peru have begun to contest control of their political states using their majorities and willingness to face violent pushback from the Euro-centric base of government.

### §A3 Opaque Drivers of Social Chaos – Making sense of Ecuador's population.

The underlying drivers of Ecuador's conflicts (psychosocial, political, structural, economic, environmental, etc.) only begin to make sense when the population segments at odds with each other are illustrated phenomenologically and heuristically compared. For most of Ecuador's national history, the successors of Spanish colonization have largely ignored the indigenous population and left them to manage themselves if they remained in their rural habitats. In my work with the security services of Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia, I found it difficult to interest my advisees of the necessity to research, engage, and positively influence their indigenous populations. I found that census taking in Ecuador did not even begin until 1950 and the effort was planned and executed by the mostly white Spanish governing class at that time. The census was driven by a desire within the Spanish Ecuadorian government to understand the indigenous population of Ecuador in terms of its size, social orientations and aspirations, and potential future political behaviour. The early census efforts



attempted to classify people by asking for certain physical markers of identity-belonging, such as Spanish language facility, positive occurrence of Spanish ethnicity in parents or grandparents, and race, with choices of Negro or Caucasian.<sup>20</sup> The most recent census was in 2010, and according to the results, the population projection for 2019 was an estimated 17.268 million Ecuadorians, living in 24 provinces distributed in 4 different regions: the Coast, the Highlands or the Andes, Amazonia, and the insular region. The Ecuadorian citizens in 1950 who were literate enough to fill out their census form were limited to a small percentage of upper-class mestizos and the ruling class of criollos.<sup>21</sup> The latter category of South and Central American identity, criollo (see **figure 3**), means that the individual and their family can trace all their bloodlines back to original Spanish and or Caucasian European ancestry in publicly available documentation. Upper-class mestizos, on the other hand, either could not factually ascertain their bloodlines or whose phenotype (face, skin, hair, body composition) observably contained some evidence of Mesoamerica ANDID ethnicity illustrated in **figure 3**. In the 2010 census, 72% of Ecuadorians self-identified as having some level of Spanish ethnicity and accepted their status as “*mestizo*.”<sup>22</sup> A further 7.5% identified as a form of coastal mestizo called “*montubio*,” 7.2% identified as Afro-Ecuadorians, 7% as pure “*Indigenas*” and 6.1% as criollo “*blancos*.”<sup>23</sup> Ecuador’s criollo and upper-class mestizo communities have always maintained that only pure indigenous peoples should be allowed to claim that status and any amount of Spanish ancestral blood required citizens to self-identify as mestizo.<sup>24</sup> Under this ethnic identity scheme, former President León Febres Cordero, insisted that the indigenous population of Ecuador consists of not more than two million people, while historian Enrique Ayala Mora, estimated that the indigenous population is no more than sixteen percent.<sup>25</sup> The net goal of defining Ecuador’s population as majority ‘*Mestizo*’ was intended to maintain its national identity as being of European origin rather than allowing this narrative of origination to be challenged by an emerging indigenous narrative of origination. During my field work with the Highland Quechuas in the valleys of the Sierra region of the Andean Mountain Range, our qualitative interviews revealed that many, if not most of the residents that we engaged described themselves and their families as part of an Andean Indigenous world. When we asked them about their responses to census questionnaires, our interviewees responded by asking if their ability to conduct business in Spanish; or if one of their ancestors had the blood of a Spaniard; or if any of their family members displayed the physical characteristics of a European; then did any of those questions mean that they were Mestizos?<sup>26</sup> I found during my field research that most indigenous people whom we interviewed believed that they lived in two worlds. The first was the world of the Spanish Colonial administration that perpetuated their rule long after they achieved separation from Europe. The second was their own Andean Indian world that we learned was called *Tawantinsuya*, or ‘Realm of the Four Parts’. This inner world of

Page 22] The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

Civil Parish (or Township) of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town or Village or Hamlet of	Urban Sanitary District of	Rural Sanitary District of	Electoral Parish or District of		
Holy Trinity	Kingston-upon-Hull	South-Upper	Kingston-upon-Hull		Hull		A. B. B. B.		
No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, do. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES (No. built (A) or (B))	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday of (in Years)	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Insane or Idiot (4) Lunatic
1136	1	1	JAMES WHEAT	Lodge	Married	27	Engine driver Marine	Lincolnshire Wigan	
			WILLIAM BROWN	Head	Married	34	Bookbinder unemployed	Yorkshire Hull	
			JANE BROWN	Wife	Married	34		Yorkshire Hull	
			EDWARD BROWN	Son	Single	16	Boatman	Yorkshire Hull	
			ALICE B. B.	Daughter	Single	13		Do Do	
			ELIZABETH B.	Daughter	Single	9		Do Do	
			WILLIAM B.	Son	Single	7		Do Do	
115	5	1	WILLIAM WHEAT	Head	Married	26	Fireman	Lincolnshire Peterborough	
			JANE W.	Wife	Married	25	Domestic	Yorkshire Sheffield	
			EDWARD W.	Son	Single	13		Do Hull	
			ALICE W.	Daughter	Single	11		Do Do	

Figure 6 Ecuadorian Census Form from the 19th century.

<sup>20</sup> (Sue, 2013; Telles & Garcia, 2013)  
<sup>21</sup> (Rahier, 1999; Silva & Saldivar, 2018; Sue, 2013; Telles & Garcia, 2013)  
<sup>22</sup> (Silva & Saldivar, 2018; Sue, 2013; Telles & Garcia, 2013)  
<sup>23</sup> (Silva & Saldivar, 2018; Telles & Garcia, 2013)  
<sup>24</sup> (Sue, 2013)  
<sup>25</sup> (Isaacs, 1991; Rahier, 1999; Silva & Saldivar, 2018; Sue, 2013; Telles & Garcia, 2013)  
<sup>26</sup> Author’s field research into Quechuan ethnic and cultural identity.



Figure 7 Quechua perceptions of the Eurocentric state and its supporters - conquest in the face of hospitality

indigenous life shaped and harboured their collective identities, historical narrative, and memorialisation of their lives through songs, stories, artifacts, clothing, architecture, food, social construction, and psychological organisation. My research found that approximately 95% of Ecuador's Indigenous population are Highland Quechuas living in the valleys of the Sierra region of the Andean Mountain Range. These people are Quechua/Runasimi speakers, and their family-clan-tribe names include the Caranqui, the Otavaleños, the Cayambi, the Pichincha, the Panzaleo, the Chimbuelo, the Salasacan, the Tungurahua, the Tugua, the Waranka, the Puruhá, the Cañari, and the Saraguro, to name the most prominent. An electorally significant number of Ecuadorian citizens who have historically been classified by government administrations as Spanish mixed blood, or mestizo, have always identified as indigenous. We found that this large segment spoke some or all their most intimate conversations at home in their individual indigenous languages or in the Runasimi bridge language.<sup>27</sup> We found that few families in this category

possessed oral stories, poems, songs, and carvings in the colonial language of the Spanish. We found that their normalised use of Spanish was minimally sufficient as a language to bridge their lives with the Spanish governing administration. As one moves beyond the paved roads and other markers of European civilizations in Quito and Lima, you emerge into a vastly different world than what is often envisioned by people who have never lived there. Within the Spanish speaking capitals of Colombia, Peru, or Ecuador, Spanish Mestizo elites maintain a pattern of European life and psychological symbolic objects that seem distinctly ethnic yet possess a surprising familiarity to the European *Peninsulares* visiting from Spain. To the millions of non-Spanish speaking inhabitants of these countries, these capital cities are mental symbolic objects of a familiar but foreign occupation, and for some or many, a subjugation of indigenous collective identity.

#### §A4 Emergent Ideology of National Life – Quechua Pacha Figure 8.

The Quechua word *sumak* literally translates roughly into 'ideal purpose' and *kawsay* roughly translates into 'life'. These two Quechuan words have been used by the indigenous peoples of pre-Columbian society to create a diffuse neo-logical conceptualisation of psychosocial-emotional construction of life that is based on ancestral indigenous ideas. These ancestral ideological concepts predate the Incan Empire by as much as 1,000 years and were incorporated by the Inca rulers into their conceptualisation of their empire. European oriented Spanish intellectuals and scholars in Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru, have translated *Sumak-kawsay* into Spanish as *Buen vivir*, or 'Good life' focused on collective wellbeing, social responsibility, and an alternative to traditional development and capital accumulation.<sup>28</sup> Indigenous leaders were quick to appreciate this initial acceptance by the Spanish elite, until the concepts became 're-imagined' as modifications of the existing socio-political-economic order that kept most of the western based Westphalian state model intact. Agreements on the translation of indigenous psychosocial-emotional reality (collective and individual) would quickly fracture leaving growing chaos and confusion about the real intentions of the indigenous communities. This chaos and confusion translated, in turn, to the loss of common ground on which to base winning electoral coalitions that could achieve sufficient unity to govern. Both Euro-centric Spanish and Indigenous-Centric political organisations are discovering that

<sup>27</sup> The indigenous peoples of the Andean Mountain Regions speak a variety of languages illustrated by the graphic above. Most of these languages are derivatives of a broader common ancestral language of the Quechuan peoples called Runasimi, or the people's language.<sup>27</sup> Runasimi Quechua is the most widely spoken pre-Columbian language family of the Americas, with an estimated 8–10 million speakers as of 2004.

<sup>28</sup> There is no life without knowledge or wisdom (Tucu Yachay). We all come from Mother Earth (Pacha Mama). Life is healthy (hambi kawsay). Life is collective (sumak kamaña). We all have an aspiration or a dream (Hatun Muskuy).



the emerging indigenous translations of ancient cosmology may be incompatible with existing European social constructions. As described in §A3 figure 6, this possibility of incompatibility has always been a concern of the Spanish inheritors of post-colonial Ecuador and Peru, hence the structuring of national censuses that ‘guided’ the populations’ responses towards a more unified version of cultural assimilation. Unfortunately for those who dream of keeping Ecuador a Spanish state, most full and partial blood indigenous people remained deep within their own cosmological reality and simply co-existed with their rulers. Until the present day. Since my earliest days operating within the indigenous societies of the Amazon and Andean Mountains, I’ve observed and researched this diffuse conceptualisation as it crystallised into political thought, followed by political activities of electoral organisation, representation, negotiation, and finally, legislation. The conceptualisation of indigenous *Sumak-Kawsay* in its purest form, would if allowed, transform Ecuador and Peru from nation-states that are European-orientations to ones that are remade into modern versions of social communities modelled after the *Tawantinsuyu* civilisations of the Incan Empire.<sup>29</sup> The sprawl of tribes, clans, families of the Andean Mountain Ranges have, until recently, constituted an invisible world that operates beyond the control of the Spanish-oriented governing administrations.

**§A4.1 Indigenous Political Movements in Ecuador.**

By the early 1990s when I began working with the Quechua in the Andean Mountains, several confederations of Quechua had merged with those of the Amazon Basin tribes to form a united indigenous front called CONAIE, which over the years appears to be one of the best-organized and most influential Indigenous movement in Latin America.<sup>30</sup> It was CONAIE’s grassroots organisational work that incited a rural uprising of indigenous communities on a national scale. Thousands of people blocked roads, paralyzed the transport system, and shut down the country for a week while making demands for

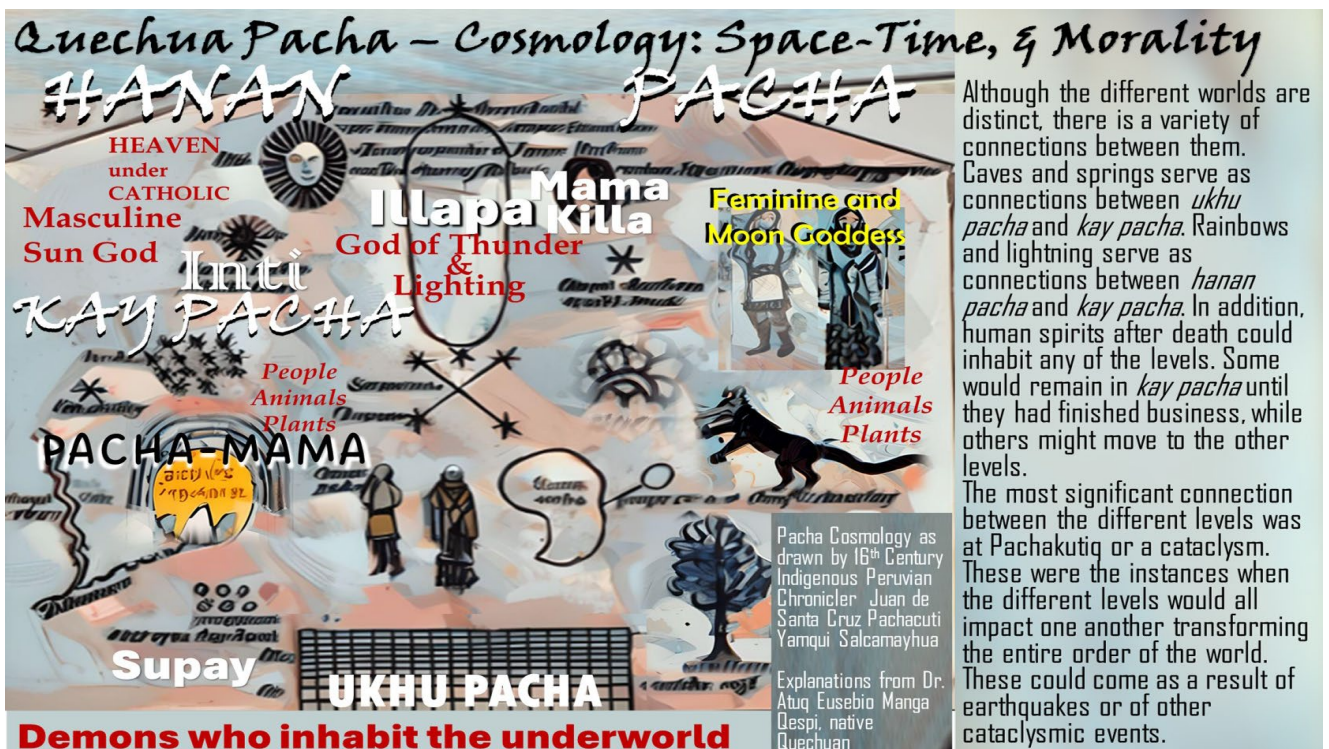


Figure 8 Quechuan People’s phenomenological reality of physical-metaphysical interrelationship, similar to western conceptualization of religion, codes and modes of behaviour, as well as divine human purpose.

bilingual education, agrarian reform, and recognition of the plurinational state of Ecuador. This was the largest uprising in Ecuador’s history and ushered in the awareness of the potential social power of Ecuador’s indigenous community – both to themselves and to the existing establishment. This uprising served to partly reorient my Special Forces missions in

<sup>29</sup> The Incan empire was a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse federalist system of state, cobbled together mostly by non-violent agreement, but with some use of violent force or threat of force towards the preexisting Andean tribes.  
<sup>30</sup> CONAIE represents the following indigenous peoples: Shuar, Achuar, Siona, Secoya, Cofán, Huaorani, Záparo, Chachi, Tsáchila, Awá, Epera, Manta, Wancavilca and Quichua.



Ecuador and Peru from pure counter-narcotics advisory and training support to Ecuador's 19<sup>th</sup> Jungle Brigade, towards a civic engagement and research effort to better understand the complex intricacies of the power behind these growing movements. In hindsight, the emergence of these organisations and their early social and political activist organising was only the beginning of an entirely new political and social contest that would upend Ecuador's development trajectory in a string of later uprisings. Follow on CONAIE-led uprisings played a role in the fall of president Abdalá Bucaram and subsequent drafting of a new constitution in 1998. CONAIE leaders also participated in the 2000 coup d'état that deposed President Jamil Mahuad. CONAIE's political agenda has always been focused on positive strengthening and socially adapting Indigenous identity as a basis for reclaiming their long denied social role in Ecuadorian society. The central tenant of this effort was the recuperation of land rights with a corresponding change in the socio-political structure that would be needed to allow for alternative uses and means of production related to land. This, in turn, required major changes in the state's conceptualisation of land as a capital resource for mass extraction of wealth from precious metals and energy sources. Where the existing Spanish-Euro society of Quito and Guayaquil understood this to mean versions of environmental preservation and perhaps restoration, they would later realise that the Quechuan cosmological ideology meant something else entirely; a complete change to the relationship between man and nature that is not easily compatible with western society in developed urban spaces.<sup>31</sup> During my deployments to Ecuador in the early 1990s, the Indigenous movement in Ecuador consolidated a large number of often competing agendas, and issued 16 demands the first of which was the declaration of Ecuador as a plurinational state.<sup>32</sup> The return of lands to Indigenous people and control over territory have been consistent central demands for the Indigenous movement in Ecuador. In addition to these central concerns, CONAIE's 16-point platform broadly addressed cultural issues such as bilingual education and control of archaeological sites; economic concerns such as development programs; and political demands such as local autonomy. See **figure 5**.

#### §A4.2 From Political Movements of Divergeant Ideologies to a Clash of Civilisations.

Even as I found that we were making positive headway in transformational change within the Colombian structure of society, participation, and governance under Plan Colombia, I found and reported that we were losing ground in Ecuador. Most all the initiatives that my team and I developed in conjunction with Colombia's indigenous communities and our host nation partner, Colombian Government's *Accion Social*, were ultimately accepted by the civilian governance, the COLAR and lastly, the COLPOL.<sup>33</sup> This acceptance by the security and administrative services of those Colombian states that I was advising allowed us to turn the aspirations of the indigenous and marginalised mestizo communities inwards towards a social construction of a multi-world cosmology that did not necessitate the destruction of the pre-existing society. The likelihood of a similar success being replicated in Ecuador between indigenous and Euro-centric population segments does not seem plausible, unfortunately, based simply on the ongoing record of reporting. The reasons for the difference may be the level of violence that Colombia experienced over its half-century struggle with the FARC, leading to conditions for what USIP calls 'conflict ripeness'. The population potential for a much larger demand for Ecuador's national identity to turn sharply towards indigenous versus euro-centric segments is also likely, an important difference from Colombia's experiences. The threatened depth of the national identity change that Ecuador's euro-centric community will ultimately face may lead to conflict that is existential in nature, leaving them with only 'fight or flight' options much like similar communities of Tegucigalpa and San Salvador. There are similarities in the psychological pathologies in evidence within

<sup>31</sup> CONAIE's demands also rejected the very U.S. military involvement in South America that I was routinely deployed on, especially Plan Colombia.

<sup>32</sup> By 2006, under Plan Colombia, the US had worked with President Alvarez Uribe and the Bogota Parliament to adopt Colombia's new constitution which declared the Republic to be a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic state with equality provided to all segments of the population. Two years later, Ecuador followed suit passing their new constitution that declared the Republic to be a plurinational state based on equality of all population segments. Convincing host nation military, police, and governing bodies to recognize and practically implement changes that their new constitutions called for, on the other hand, was far more difficult than getting those constitutions passed. I would normatively carry several miniature copies of the new text with me and pass them out to senior military, police, and government leaders who claimed not to have been able to secure a copy to read.

<sup>33</sup> A number of the developments that I had been able to push through the Colombian regional governments such as a series of Gran Committees (public-private-NGO partnerships) de Desarrollo are available at



Quito's ruling mestizo class to those of Tegucigalpa, Guatemala City, and San Salvador. Our understanding of these psychopathologies is critical to our ability to predict how the participants to the conflict will likely react to current and future events as they unfold. Now, the collectives of ethnically related upper-class mestizos harbour the vestiges of post-colonial cultural identity. These collectives populate most of the parliament, courts, leadership of security services, banks, corporate governance, and most of the upper-level positions of government administration and academia. Individually and collectively, they create, sustain, and enforce national social cohesion and order according to what they believe to be a national standard that is not subject to wholesale abandonment. Their willingness or capacity to evolve (non-violently) their inherited national Euro-centric identity, towards one that is markedly different – alien even – in its indigenous nature, would likely require them to be free from inferiority complexes that might cause them to react in extreme uses of national power to stave off such change.

### §A5 Cultural Pathologies of Alienation, Shame, and Rage, in Latin America's Ruling Mestizo Classes.

Within the socioeconomic upper quartile of ethnic mestizo families of Ecuador's urban centres (and several other Latin American nations), there exists a pathological psychosocial dynamic that has accompanied the deterioration of society.<sup>34</sup> This psychosocial pathology is based on trauma that has been transmitted generationally over the course of colonial and post-colonial social construction and involves a powerful condition of racial inferiority within the inheritors of Post-Colombian society. The trauma, or broken reality transmitted was that physical beauty and psychological value-as-love was encapsulated within the phenotype and archetype (prototype) of the *Peninsulares-Criollos* of Caucasian Europeans. This racial-inferiority cultural dynamic presents itself in a social, political, and economic practice of *Blanqueamiento* (whitening) to *mejorar la raza* (improve the race). During my research in Ecuador (and other countries), I found there to be a commonly accepted cultural imperative where each family felt 'called upon' to achieve a supposed ideal of biological and symbolic 'whiteness' or Europeaness.<sup>35</sup> My field research found several markers of this pathology such as parents sending their children to the United States or Europe to find a marriage partner. Parents of the affected cultural pathology demonstrated a strong preference for books, movies, and stories that depicted positive-heroic-beauty phenotypes and archetypes quite dissimilar to their own. During my research in Quito and Lima, I interviewed phenotypical mestizo women about their preferences for love interests and heroic ideas in romance novellas and telenovelas. A significant majority of



Figure 9 Cognitive Dissonance within the mestizo elite: Emotional drivers of Blanqueamiento

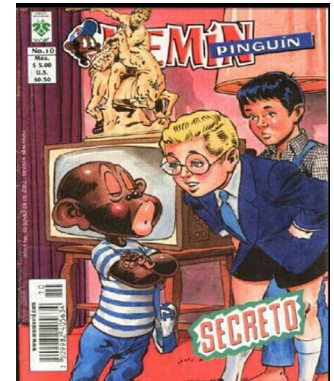
responses demonstrated preferences for blond haired, blue- or green-eyed men and women with fair Caucasian complexions. These same phenotypes and archetypes were and are still, disproportionately represented in telenovelas, books, and magazines, especially in households closer to the upper echelons of the socioeconomic elite in the capital cities of Latin America. The most popular heroes and heroines in film and literature are blond haired, blue/green-eyed

<sup>34</sup> We are still researching whether this existing dynamic is a causation or correlation, but much of my research into the intractable conflicts of Latin America have focused on this dynamic as a likely culprit.

<sup>35</sup> (Rahier, 1999)



light-skinned European looking actors, even though those phenotypes have not been present in this region for decades. Racial preferences became clear as I researched into the desired cultural prototypes of social and business interaction between the economic groups. My research with post-pubescent teenagers confirmed the transmission of this phenotype/archetype preference of Euro-Centric Caucasian over their own mixed heritage mestizo typology, with accompanying emotional displays of 'learned-shame' and guilt. While the practice of *Blanqueamiento* works to affirmatively change racial identity of the dominant segment of mestizo society, other practices work to defend against subconscious threats of racial identity disintegration such as demonizing darker-skinned segments of society.<sup>36</sup> The president of Guatemala from 2016 to 2021, for instance, was Jimmy Morales, a stand-up comedian who came to local fame portraying a blackface character<sup>37</sup> that denigrated Afro-Latinos, which account for around .02% of the population.<sup>38</sup> <sup>39</sup> The graphic in **figure 10** offers some context into this aspect of psychopathology of the upper-class ruling community of Quito. The psychological and emotional relief that the audience and comedians are constructing through comedic relief emanates from the racial disparagement and subsequent demonization of a tiny Afro-Latino minority group.<sup>40</sup> The release they seek is from cognitive dissonance, anxiety, and stress caused by their own negative inner self-estimation of value compared to their preferred prototypes (phenotypes and archetypes combined) of personhood and family identity.<sup>41</sup> The targeted African-Latino populations feel only loathing towards this type of show, and the indigenous Amerindians express confusion and disdain. Those social members whose bloodlines are impure variations of *Peninsulares-Criollo* and *indigenous Quechuan* can fight against their impurity by resorting to the practice of *Blanqueamiento*. Or they can resort to ethnic-defection (abandoning their Euro-bloodline) to the one side (of the social contest) that will allow them to join without negative stereotyping and embrace, highlight, support their indigenous phenotype and archetype over their Spanish side. The research interest in this aspect of Ecuadorian social conflict is in how the Mestizo ruling class sees themselves, portrays themselves, cares about themselves, and ultimately, loves themselves as their own real phenotypes, rather than the phenotypes they wish to be. Subconscious self-denigration of one's own phenotype can have devastating social ramifications as we have researched in many violent conflict zones. At this time, more research is required to be conducted to understand the linkages between social dysfunction in Latin America and the rise and sustainment of extremely violent criminal organizations and intractable conflict between



Mexican comic book character Memin Pinguin is a little black boy with the face of a monkey, charming, sympathetic, but also inferior and in constant need of discipline & education.



Rodrigo Sant'anna Zora Total Program



Negro Mama, played by Jorge Benevisez, is a popular blackface television personality who wears a prosthetic nose, lips and black hairy gloves on his hands. The character is loathed by the Andes Afro-Negro community and is portrayed as drug trafficking, sexually transmitted diseases, cannibalism, delinquency, and violence. Despite fines and protests, the popularity of the racist Negro Mama personality remains.



Former comedienne-turned Guatemalan president turned narco-trafficker Jimmy Morales' stage character is called "Black Pitaya", or Black Dragon fruit.

**Figure 10** Comedic relief indicators of psychosocial anxiety over race, ethnicity, and cultural identity

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/>.

<sup>37</sup> Called 'Black-Pitaya' or 'Black-Dragonfruit'

<sup>38</sup> [Guatemala prosecutors pursue ex-president Jimmy Morales \(yahoo.com\)](https://www.psychologytoday.com/)

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/>.

<sup>40</sup> Psychopathologies Revealed by Comedy The neuroscience behind comedic relief is thought to be the relief of anxiety tension and a corresponding increase in creative insight potential within the brain's anterior cingulate cortex. Psychologically, this anxiety relief and increase in creative insight occurs when comedic insights mutate social fear and anxiety into genuine heartfelt "Group-Laughter." A great deal of cultural object-symbolism is found in a society's comedic structure because group-laughter is such an important function across all cultural communities. The structure of a culture's comedic relief can reveal health or dysfunction through analysis of its psychological employment. The emphasis is on group laughter because comedic insight points out cognitive dissonance and behavioural inconsistencies in people, places, and situations that are internal to the comedian and his/her audience. This means that only an internally accepted member of the cultural identity group can point out "the ridiculous-inconsistencies" within that group. To say this differently, the internal comic helps relieve anxiety and stress by helping his/her fellow cultural identity members to participate in "heartfelt Group-Laughter" at themselves and their own vulnerabilities.

<sup>41</sup> This psychological dynamic is called Trait Dissociation (psychological projection) of unwanted thoughts or ideas ("Am I really an Amerindian?") onto another group where they can be safely condemned and laughed at to ease the inner subconscious anxiety. See DSM-5 for deeper explanations.



Eurocentric and Indigenous-Centric national identities. However, a central part of psychological warfare is the inculcation of alienation and shame, often from self-loathing that is borne out of an idea that the targeted persons are ugly. Unlovable. Untouchable. Uneducated. Worthless. Outcasts. Dirty. Impotent. The most immediately assuaging and instinctual response to self-loathing is the sort of violent rejection that we are seeing play out in Quito and Lima specifically, and Ecuador and Peru generally. The only question remains is how destructive this action-reaction over Ecuadorian collective and individual identity will become.<sup>42</sup>

### §A5.1 Heroic Cultural Identities: Indigenous versus Eurocentric.

US Army Special Forces counterinsurgency efforts in South America were often oriented towards security services (military & police) reform to stop and change the patterns of human rights abuses and their engagement with civilian populations as though they were occupied territories. We found during our advisory and training missions in Panama, Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia that many, if not most, of the Latin American countries possess(ed) a culture within their security services of toxic paternal masculinity. Changing these toxic cultures was far more difficult a task than simply teaching the basic mechanics of military and or police operations. The growing levels of violence that the security services of Ecuador levelled against their own populations in vain attempts to dispel the rise of indigenous political activism over the past 40+ years has been matched by a rise in countering government violence by both violence and non-violent negotiation. Leonidas Iza, the indigenous leader of Ecuador's Confederation of Indigenous Peoples (CONAIE), urges his formerly passive co-ethnic Quechuan communities to "resort to resistance... [because Lasso government was] putting in place more and more policies of death, which don't allow us to sustain our small economies."<sup>43</sup> Iza's vision of resistance has been to defy government curfews and engage in direct action such as blocking roads, occupying the capital of Quito and its parliament buildings, and demanding an alternative form of society modelled after indigenous identity rather than that of Europe. Iza's indigenous protesters have been blocking highways, and in some cases, puncturing the wheels of buses, forcing passengers to walk. In the protests of 2015, 2019, 2020, and 2022, Ecuador's government followed a pattern of reaction, declaring a series of state emergencies and deployed its military security services with broad powers to participate in security operations at demonstrations and meetings, and to use lethal force. The Quechuan communities of the Andean regions at the centre of resistance to the governments in Quito and Lima, have begun to re-emulate the aggressive confrontational stances of Ecuador and Peru's security services by remembering and reactivating long



sleeping heroic indigenous prototypes within their cultural identities. The principal story of the Quechua Incan people is brought to life in an amazing larger than life mural that details a major historical interruption of the Incan Nation by the Spanish invasion and colonization in the 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The image in **figure 11** is one of a series of murals in Cusco, Peru that was painted by indigenous artist Juan Bravo in 1992. As you enter the city of Cusco, it is nearly impossible to miss this gigantic work of historical art that stretches hundreds of feet along the Avenida El Sol. The mural begins with the birth of the Inca civilization, where you can see the Incan god Viracocha who sends a

**Figure 11** Famous Quechuan Mural at Cusco by indigenous artist Juan Bravo. Cusco, located in the Andean highlands was the Incan Empire capital.

<sup>42</sup> (Black Brazil Today, 2012; Carrillo, 2013)

<sup>43</sup> (Valencia, 2022a)



man and a woman, Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo to start a civilization. Manco Capac was given a golden staff and was ordered to travel around. Wherever the staff sank firmly into the ground, they would start the Inca civilization. The golden staff sunk firmly in Cusco, and the civilization began in full swing. Much of the mural involves an emotional depiction of the brutal Spanish conquest and destruction of the Inca civilization.<sup>44</sup> If you look closely at the humans in the mural and compare them with the Peruvian and Ecuadorian citizens of the Andean Mountain



Figure 12 Quechuan peoples protesting and seizing the Parliament Building in Quito.

regions (see figure 12) where the capitals of Lima and Quito are located (respectively), you will notice a phenotypical commonality. Andean Mountain Range citizens share physical characteristics with the people portrayed in the Cusco Mural: Dark, smooth skin, straight jet-black hair, a similar pattern of facial features, and the use of colours, clothing type, and even mannerisms allow the viewer to discern that the population pictured in the gigantic mural are the same cultural identity group that still inhabits most of the highlands of these two countries. The current and future symbolic objects of political contestation and militant weaponization will almost certainly continue to be based on race, cultural origin, and a clash of social organization. The clash over psychological social organization will pit ethnic sociocentric-collectivist indigenous ideas of mutual obligation against European based egocentric-individual agency rights in a free market society. You can already imagine the symbolic objects that will become weaponized on both sides of that looming conflict. Against the backdrop of this growing contest between the Eurocentric Columbian world rooted in western chauvinism and the pre-Columbian indigenous world rooted in Quechua Pacha, the plight of the dwindling criollo remnants of postcolonial inheritance is becoming untenable and dangerous.

§A6 Ecuador as Failed State.

The Republic of Ecuador is now or will soon be, a failed state. Public sectors of the Ecuadorian government have been intricately infiltrated and intentionally corrupted into collaboration with the growing organised criminal societies. This follows a pattern that my research has found in Somalia, Afghanistan, and other intractable violent civil conflicts. In every case, some part of the legal government and its socioeconomic elites seek to minimise their risk by playing on both sides of the competition. The public-government sector, the organised criminal societies, and the indigenous peoples' social structures, are in open contest for control of the state, using instruments of social, political, economic, and violence to advance their goals and



Figure 13 Ecuador's Assassination Game 2023 -

<sup>44</sup> A wide view of the mural. The left-hand portion of this photo shows invasion and Inca resistance to the Spanish. The right portion shows Spanish inquisition and the death of Tupac Amaru.  
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**Attacks against the Judicial Branch in Ecuador January - December 2023**

1. Bomb threat in the North Judicial Complex of Quito (12/19/23)
2. Bomb threat at the House of Justice in Carcelén, Quito (04/12/23)
3. Bomb threat in the North Judicial Complex of Quito (11/22/23)
4. Murder of prosecutor assistant in Pedernales, Manabí (10/31/23)
5. Bomb threat in Albán Borja Judicial Unit, Guayaquil (10/27/23)
6. Bomb threat Provincial Court of Pichincha (10/12/2023)
7. Hitman-style murder of prosecutor Genaro R., from Babahoyo (05/10/23)
8. Hitman-style murder of Chone judicial official (09/24/23)
9. Bomb threat in the North Judicial Complex of Quito (09/14/23)
10. Bomb threats in the La Libertad Judicial Unit and Santa Judicial Complex Elena (08/31/2023)
11. Conviction of the co-author of the hitman of prosecutor Édgar Palacios, which occurred in GYE in September 2022 (08/17/23)
12. Teleworking in Quito judicial units, after the murder of Fernando Villavicencio (08/10/23)
13. Teleworking in Albán Borja judicial units due to bomb threats (08/09/23)
14. Teleworking in 43 offices in Guayas, Manabí and Esmeraldas (08/01/23)
15. Teleworking in criminal jurisdictional agencies in Guayas (07/28/23)
16. Shooting against the Flagrant Unit in Quito (07/15/23)
17. Teleworking in judicial units of Esmeraldas (07/15/23)
18. Bomb threat against the Judiciary Council building in Durán (07/10/23)
19. Murder of those prosecuted for the attack at the UJ of Portoviejo, inside a deprivation of liberty center (07/09/2023)
20. Teleworking for judicial officials of Manabí after attack in Portoviejo (07/09/23)
21. Explosive attack in the Portoviejo Criminal Judicial Unit (07/07/23)
22. Bomb threat at the Santo Domingo Judicial Complex (06/20/23)
23. Teleworking in judicial units in Santo Domingo (06/08/23)
24. Attack on the life of a person deprived of liberty in the Judicial Complex of Santo Domingo (06/06/23)
25. Attack against Judicial Unit in Quevedo (02/06/23)
26. Murder of prosecutor Leonardo Palacios in Durán (06/01/23)
27. Bomb threat against CJ headquarters building in Quito (03/17/23)
28. Simultaneous bomb threats against provincial directorates of the CJ in Pichincha, Manabí and Imbabura (03/11/23)
29. Threats against judges of the Durán canton by the "Chone Killers" (02/10/23)
30. Armed attack against a criminal judge of Manabí and her secretary in a food place (01/30/23)

Figure 14 partial list of violent assaults against Ecuador's judicial system

protect their gains. The three contenders for the state are principally separated by force of arms in a contest that is not weighted in favour of the state. The diminishing state security apparatus is focused on protecting itself and the upper levels of the elite tier population segment that fund it. **Figure 13** illustrates just a few of the ongoing assassinations of elected and appointed public figures in the war between the state and criminal societies challenging it over the past 18 – 24 months. In the city of San Vicente, a part of the Guayaquil metropolis, the newly elected mayor, former nurse and 26-year-old Brigitt Garcia, was assassinated a year into her first term in March 2024.<sup>45</sup> The previous July, In July, the mayor of another city within the Guayaquil metro, this time, the town of Manta, Mayor Agustín Intriago, who had just been re-elected was assassinated.<sup>46</sup> In the town of Salinas, mayoral candidate Julio César Farachio, was assassinated in the days prior to his election<sup>47</sup> and in the town of Puerto López mayoral candidate Omar Menéndez, 41, was assassinated just before his election.<sup>48</sup> This past April 2024, José Sánchez, mayor of Camilo Ponce Enríquez, was assassinated after surviving the first two attempts on his life.<sup>49</sup> In the city of Durán, also a part of the Guayaquil metropolis, the mayor is Luis Chonillo and as of yet, he has not been

assassinated, although he has escaped several attempts. Since his election, he has only been able to enter the city's municipal building twice, and on neither occasion was he able to reach his office: he was evacuated due to threats from people on motorcycles surrounding the premises. On May 15, while the 220 other mayors of Ecuador were starting the first sessions of their municipal councils, Chonillo was fleeing a scene of an assassination attempt. The politician escaped unharmed, but two of his police security detail and a street vendor were killed in the attack. "All our officials have been threatened, they file complaints, but nothing gets done; they have not even been given security and many others have resigned," says Chonillo, from a place of hiding.<sup>50</sup> This is Ecuador's **assassination game**, where white criollo elites who refuse to collaborate with the cancerous criminal social organisations, are murdered while waiting for state protection that never arrives. Their disconnect is between what the national president says in public versus what the state government structure, long corrupted as a survival mechanism, plays a dangerous game attempting to maintain control with ever dwindling support of their population base in full flight into exile. The violence in Ecuador is numbing. Each murder each day in each town and city adds to the violent noise that becomes part of the normal background. For the victims and their families, not so much. While the violence has finally come home to Ecuador's criollo elite, it has been this way for more than a decade for those caught in the middle who are neither indigenous nor criollo elite. This is Ecuador's **'crying game'**

<sup>45</sup> (Buschschluter, 2024; Núñez, 2023)

<sup>46</sup> (Farachio, 2023; Staff, 2024a)

<sup>47</sup> (Agence France Presse, 2024; TN World Desk, 2024)

<sup>48</sup> (Agencia Nova, 2024; Mella, 2024b; Shuldiner, 2022a)

<sup>49</sup> (AFP, 2023; Canizares & Sorto, 2024; Núñez, 2023; Quesada, 2024; Staff, 2023, 2024b; VOA, 2024)

<sup>50</sup> (AFP, 2023; Canizares & Sorto, 2024; Núñez, 2023; Quesada, 2024; Staff, 2023, 2024b; VOA, 2024)



## Ecuador's 'Crying Game'



**Figure 15** The faces and tears of Ecuador's middle majority – neither completely indigenous nor accepted as the people in the barrios call it. Each story is often the beginning of an escape into exile. A five-year-old boy doing his homework in his bedroom when bullets pierce his window and kill him. 90 rounds of machinegun fire rip through the premises of a pharmaceutical company hitting a baby in the head while she was in her mother's arms. Parents looking for their son find him in a ditch near the school, his body mutilated by torture. A city council member trying to rally his neighbourhoods is kidnapped, tortured, and murdered.<sup>51</sup> These are the stories of my research informants in Quito, Guayaquil and the towns in between. One story illustrates the dilemma within the middle population of Ecuador that is doing most of the dying and most of the fleeing into exile – the lower class of Ecuadorians who are distinctly mixed indigenous pueblitos who are not accepted into European criollo society, and unfamiliar with how to transition to or be accepted by, the indigenous communities. This large segment of Ecuadorians exist in a poverty of insufficient individual and large group identity to sustain hope for a better future. §6 below, delves more deeply into this community which has made up most of the refugee caravans claiming asylum in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

### §A6.1 The battle for Comité del Pueblo.

This story is set in the Comité del Pueblo neighbourhood to the north of Ecuador's capital, Quito. This past June, one of the emerging criminal gangs ran afoul of the residents of the barrio that it was based out of. The conflict began in the early evening, when several of the gang members became bored and assaulted a girl who lived in the neighbourhood. Several residents ran to the girl's aid and chased her persecutors away. When the gang members returned with guns and additional members, the residents refused to back down, using rocks and Molotov cocktails against automatic weapons.



**Figure 16** Battle for Comité del Pueblo

“We ran and took cover while they shouted and threatened us, but then we decided to stand up to them and went out with sticks to see them off,” according to one resident.<sup>52</sup> They turned out as a sort of neighbourhood militia and their barrio turned into a war zone on Sunday, June 18, 2024. Removing cobblestones from the sidewalks, they smashed them into small pieces to be used as weapons. Other community members sounded the alarm in the small streets and apartment buildings, calling neighbours to leave their homes and join in the fray. “We all plucked up the courage,” says one resident.<sup>53</sup> The violence culminated in setting fire to the home of the gang's female leader, known as *La Pastora* (the Shepherdess) who has been arrested 13 times between 2002 and 2021. Her house was considered the headquarters for all drug trafficking activities in their barrio. When it went up in flames the police finally arrived, killing one of the alleged criminals and injuring another person. The police and residents battled the gang members until early Monday morning the next day and the gang members temporarily

<sup>51</sup> (Agencia Nova, 2024; Mella, 2024a; Shuldiner, 2022)

<sup>52</sup> (Mella Carolina, 2023)

<sup>53</sup> (Correal & Glatky, 2024; Mella Carolina, 2023)



retreated. After the police left the scene, the criminals returned on motorbikes, firing shots into the air and making further threats. “They are going to set off bombs under people’s homes and they said that war had been declared,” says another resident. The female gang leader was not arrested, and instead, claimed that her neighbours burned her house down for no reason, burning any evidence that the police may have been able to use to arrest her. The day after the confrontation, the gang carried out its threats against a handful of businesses. “We can’t live like this,” says one resident. “We can’t even go out. We are terrified.”<sup>54</sup> The purpose of this anecdotal story is to illustrate the phenomenological reality of the mixed blood population caught between Ecuador’s indigenous world and its European world. Their children populate the low rank fighter populations of the state’s police and military security services for pay and their commanding officers are white criollos from the post colonial elite. But their children also populate the ranks of the criminal societies such as Los Lobos and Los Chonilos. The men and women in **figure 15** are the parents of the fighters on both sides of Ecuador’s civil war. This is the issue that so often escapes western diplomats who employ political science and criminal justice lenses to articulate solutions that never work. The criminal social organisations are a symptom, not the cause of the social disintegration of the Ecuadorian state. **Figure 17** attempts to place Ecuador’s dilemma into a caricature of context that compares those being recruited serve in the front lines of the internal war in Ecuador. The state recruits young men and some women to serve as the protectors of its institutions; cultural, social, economic, political, securitisation, and infrastructure. These institutions, mostly benefiting the Eurocentric elite of criollos and mestizos, are essentially ignored and or resisted by the indigenous populations who already self-identify as indigenous. The criminal societies, on the other hand, also recruit young men and women to do just the opposite; sieze and convert these institutions as competitive prizes of wealth, power, recognition, and authority, to be fought over internally with each other and externally with the state which claims ownership. The young men and women who are formally (by the state) and informally (by the criminal societies) recruited by each side, end up fighting each other. The point that is lost on western observers, however, is that these young men and women are from the same families. The state’s upperclass elites do join the police, military, and other infrastructure servcies, but they are the officers. The commanders and administrative staff that make policy, decide and enforce their own behavioural codes and operate their respective institutions at the behest not of the criminal socieites



Figure 17 The foot soldiers of the Eurocentric state of Ecuador and of the Criminal Societies challenging its existence

or the indigenous societies, but of the Eurocentric elite. Valka-Mir Foundation researches the psychosocial construction of these criminal societies internal language, which is often only published on their bodies as tatoos or graffitti within their secure domains. In the images in **Figure 17**, you can see that concepts such as Dios/God, Elegance, Hope, Fortitude, Honor, Fidelity, and Courage are splashed all over themselves and their environment, almost like a recruiting ad for the US Marines. But they are not state soldiers, they are the soldiers for the criminal societies that challenge the existence of the state as a vehicle for a specific, bounded, particular segment of Ecuadorian society. One that is “socially distinct,”

<sup>54</sup> (Mella Carolina, 2023)  
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*“socially visible,” as having “particularity” and that “constitutes a discrete class of persons...heirs [or slaves] in Ecuador....”* This concept is the essence of why Ecuador’s society will continue to devolve and spiral into ever increasing amounts of violence. The young men and women that the state finds available to protect its remaining vestiges of power and control, are more than counterbalanced by the criminal societies’ ability to break, recruit, weaponize, and employ even more members from the same barrios and the same families. Where the state is required to spend large amounts of resources to recruit, train, equip, and care for their soldiers, the criminal societies have a much easier task as their societies are widely decentralised and operate as replacements for families that have been destroyed or damaged by the ongoing conflict between the state and its criminal society challengers. The more the state acts/reacts with kinetic force and coercion, the greater the damage to the networks of families and societies and the greater the ease in recruiting already damaged young soldiers who have far less inclination to use direct violence than their government peers. Ultimately, however, the structural dynamics of Ecuadorian society have already accomplished the task of ensuring the state’s continuing need to continue this violent war against itself until either the elite who support the existing state flee into exile, or enough of the population segments caught between indigenous and elite, either flee into exile or are otherwise killed. Now, this population segment is doing both: dying and fleeing into exile in endless caravans headed northward.

### §A6.2 Population and Resource Control in Ecuador.

Ecuadorians who flee into exile describe to us ever-present fears of being kidnapped, injured, and killed by violent collectives who seek to take from them capital that they may or may not have. Those without liquid financial resources are targeted as expendable labour, usually in the service of violence, by both government and criminal societies. Those who have financial capital, are targeted for extraction if they are not under increasingly expensive physical protection by armed organisations. But even then, they tell us that they are aware that if they offer up this capital, they fear that their persecutors may not accept that they have obtained all of it until they have been tortured, killed, or both. The violence in Ecuador is targeted towards who you are, what you may have in value, and how well protected you are. Some Ecuadorians from the elite portion of Ecuadorian society that controls most of the nation’s wealth also flee into exile. Many are educated as journalists, lawyers, or business owners who are family heirs and who would be presumed to have access to that wealth, if not ownership of it. The criminal societies and their fellow state supporting elites have interest in determining what they have and extracting it from them because they are unprotected. In Ecuador, each person must know two things if they are to survive: **First**, if they have anything of value to be stolen, abducted, used, traded, or sold without mercy, compassion, or compunction. **Second**, are they appropriately protected for the level of value that they may have or be to someone or group interested in them. If you can’t answer both questions, then you should not be living in Ecuador. Most of Ecuador’s exiled community were not able to satisfactorily answer these questions. It is perhaps, easier to understand that Ecuador’s society has become divided into armed camps: Indigenous, Criminal Societies, and the Ecuadorian State and its elites who operate and fund it. Illustrating this aspect of life in Ecuador will provide insight into the risks and dangers that are driving so much of this population into exile.

### §A6.3 Indigenous versus State control over Population and Resources.

The state’s security resources are supposed to be provided equally to all parts of society, but as I illustrated, the state cannot even protect its own elected and appointed officials. Its judges and mayors are assassinated and terrorised constantly. Its police and military leaders are kidnapped and held for ransom. The most protected portion of the Ecuadorian state is the senior leadership of the security services and the office of the president, followed by the portion of Ecuadorian elite whose business, financial, and infrastructure ownership financially pay for the state’s survival. When I visit Quito, organised battalions of Ecuadorian military police augmented by full combat equipped infantry are assigned to key neighbourhoods where these families live and work. Once inside these well-guarded compounds, you feel quite safe from the chaos without. In the graphic figures above, we attempt to illustrate the ongoing three-way conflict between



### *Conversations with young members of a criminal society in Ecuador*

*"You become a gangster just by being born in the territory of a rival gang."  
"You become a target for an enemy you have never even met."  
"Everyone needs to know that if you grass, they'll kill you."  
"Everyone needs to know they should protect their barrio and if you come across the enemy, you have to end their lives whatever."  
"It's kill or be killed." xxx  
"Ever since I was little, I always wanted to learn and be somebody in life."  
"But in a place where there are no opportunities, where you earn more doing bad stuff than studying."*

*"It's what you have to do."  
"Whatever happens, we're ready,"  
"They brand you. They give you a tattoo on the leg or another visible place".<sup>1</sup>  
"You do it for your family."  
"You have to do what's necessary to survive"  
"... we're not all like they say on the TV, killers, or that we throw bombs like terrorists."  
"No. we are a family."  
"They teach you to shoot. Everyone needs to know how to ride a motorbike."  
"They take you to a place where you can shoot in the open."  
"It's for several days."  
"It's like they're teaching you to play on the PlayStation."  
"It's usually a six-month trial in which they send you to complete different missions."  
"They can send you to steal, sell drugs, move a package or kill. It is a test."  
"I'm just another pawn, they send me to do something, and I have to do it."  
"When this month ends, you'll see how many soldiers will die, how many people will suffer because what the military has done, can't be left like that".*



the indigenous peoples and the civil war between the peoples in the Eurocentric state. That conflict has been simmering since 2019 when the Indigenous communities of the Amazon Basin and Andes highlands latterly took over the national capital and its parliament, demonstrating to both the criminal society state and the Eurocentric actual state, the power potential that this community possessed if they were pushed too far. Much of what the indigenous communities of the Andes and Amazon basin are trying to preserve are not of immediate value in that those resources need to be extracted, processed, transported, packaged, and shipped, just like cocaine, but far less profitable. Also, most of the tactics and strategies behind extortion operated by the criminal societies, do not work well in the highly decentralised and sociocentric communities of the indigenous peoples. This is why, after concessions by the state were made to the indigenous communities in 2019 and 2020, the overt confrontation between the two diminished to the backburner of the stove. Those indigenous aspirations and societal goals are still there, but the elevation of extreme violence between the Eurocentric state and the criminal state of Ecuador, need to play out before those communities will be able to assess the damage to their Ecuadorian homelands. The state has been forced to withdraw from open and untethered exploitation of resources they consider to be national, but which the indigenous communities consider to be their historical patrimony. The state's capacity for population and resource control (PRC) has now narrowed to its needs of survival. Everyone within the protected sphere of leading, managing, and resourcing the state belong in this diminishing protected space. The space is diminishing because the available security capacity is shrinking. The space is shrinking because its competitor, the criminal societies, is growing stronger with more soldiers extracting more wealth from its own protected population and from the population caught in the middle. The space is shrinking also because elite state members on the inner protected space, are playing on both sides. Businesses routinely pay off the criminal societies rather than spend the time, effort, and money to build resilient systems of security. The maintenance, management, compensation, etc, make for profit & loss decision that end up favouring the criminal societies' offers of 'vaccuna' or vaccination-against-crime. Ecuador's commercial interests conduct their long-term financial planning and find that the likelihood of Ecuador's survival mitigates against their long-range investments that are likely to be taken over by either the criminal societies or the indigenous communities if the Ecuadorian Euro-state fails.



#### §A6.4 Survival & Disintegration of Ecuador's Euro-centric society.

This final part describes Ecuadorian asylees' possibilities of surviving if they are involuntarily returned to Ecuador. Long before the current Eurocentric elite population segment of Ecuador graduated from high school, the multiple sides of the conflict in Ecuador were already firmly established. Like President Noboa's family, most, if not all, elite criollo families in Ecuador were and are the beneficiaries of their Spanish ethnic colonial patrimony. Many Criollo people and families are unable to trace their family roots to the original conquistadors and their families to prove or disprove that their socioeconomic and political standing were the result of colonial conquest. But they don't need to. The shape of their faces, color of their skin, lineage of family names, quality of their spoken and written Spanish (often Castilian), along with the absence of any family narrative in Runasimi language, marks them with the 'particularity' of the inherited colonial elite. Their ancestors employed measures to control the non-European elements living in their state, but these measures are no longer possible, without being subject to indictment by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. This statement is NOT necessarily to assert any fault against those criollos who flee into exile or remain in Ecuador. The fact that they are fleeing their homeland from a malformed post-colonial criminal society rather than being protected by it, suggests that they are unwilling or unable to answer the two questions posed in §A6.2. A growing number of



Figure 18 A police office released to his family after they paid his ransom. Above, those who don't pay, are returned to their families in pieces dumped into the streets.

Ecuador's Eurocentric elite are consciously and of-conscience, rejecting their participation in sustaining this structure and enter into opposition against it as lawyers, activists, journalists, and political candidates. The survival rate for the Euro-class of Ecuadorians living in any city in an unprotected status is limited as they become a target of both the criminal societies and the criminal structures within the state.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, this is a contest between the two over control of the population and its resources. The majority of Ecuadorians who are 'neither Indigenous nor European' are caught in the middle as without protection. They pay extortion-taxation to the ever evolving and growing criminal societies. Their children are taken as fighters for the police, army, and criminal societies and for sexual exploitation.<sup>56</sup> Shopkeepers, community leaders, even water providers, trash collectors and schools are forced to pay a tax to criminal groups in exchange for their safety.<sup>57</sup> Large well-resourced commercial entities find it easier to pay the criminal societies rather than engage in armed conflict with criminal societies that have little to lose.<sup>58</sup> Even mid to low level government employees who are too far down the food chain to warrant personal security protection, face '*plata o plomo*' pay with your money or your life.<sup>59</sup> Inside prisons, extortion has been common for years. On a recent morning in Guayaquil, Katarine, 30, a mother of three, sat on a curb outside the country's largest prison. Her husband, a banana farmer, had been taken into custody five days before, she said, following a street fight.<sup>60</sup>

*"He called me from prison, asking that I wire money to a bank account belonging to a gang. If we didn't pay, he explained, he would be beaten, possibly electrocuted. I was able to sell some things and had around \$263 to send them, nearly a month's wage from work. I was more than desperate, and do not understand why the*

<sup>55</sup> (Abd, 2023; Bargent, 2013; Lenin, 2022)

<sup>56</sup> (Shuldiner, 2022b; Valencia, 2022b)

<sup>57</sup> (Associated Press, 2023)

<sup>58</sup> (Austin, 2023; Buschschlüter, 2024; Glatky & Leon Cabrera, 2023; Staff, 2024c)

<sup>59</sup> (Anastasia, 2024)

<sup>60</sup> (Valencia, 2021)



*authorities were not doing more to control this practice. Every person thrown into prison is another taxpayer for the criminal groups.”<sup>61</sup>*



*Figure 19 Children play next to a plastic canvas bag full of dismembered body parts of victims of the violence. Quito in October 2023.*

The levels and types of gratuitous violence in Ecuador has been growing exponentially since 2019. Massacres, kidnappings and extortions multiply annually in Ecuador.<sup>62</sup> At the behest of security institutions, politicians and parliament focus on hunt and kill/capture of leaders and their immediate ‘high-value’ staffs as a measure of progress.<sup>63</sup> As the fight descends, the focus moves to ‘body-counts’ as key-indicators (KI) of success.<sup>64</sup> Many of Valka-Mir Foundation’s social scientists have extensive experience supporting kinetic military operations against criminal social organisations and or insurgencies. Our experiences have taught us that kinetic

operations have never resolved this type of conflict no matter how many ‘high-value’ targets were removed. This is because such high-value targets, like the violence that surrounds them, are symptoms rather than the causes of a condition far more serious than opportunistic criminal sadists. It is true that crime has taken a sadistic turn in Ecuador, where kidnappers now regularly amputate the fingers of their victims and send images to pressure relatives to pay higher ransoms. This type of casual violence – the dismembering of human victims and sending their body parts to their families – is also an important diagnostic symptom of a society in the throes of critical psychosocial pathologies. Much of our understanding of this comes from my research in Northeast Syria researching the human refuse left behind by the Islamic State of Syria and Levant. These types of psychopathologies, like serial murders, are not normal profit driven crimes that can be solved with political science or criminal justice analysis. The brokenness, for lack of a better word, runs much deeper as must the analysis. The intentionality of the actions conducted by relatively low level and young members of the many criminal societies in Ecuador is the key to understanding what is happening and why. In March, the wife of a businessman in the port city of Guayaquil received images of someone snipping two fingers off her husband’s left hand, threatening to mutilate him further unless they were paid \$100,000. Each new president publicly assures national and international observers that security service leaders are trying to protect all Ecuadorians. In practice and regardless of political party in power however, the sociopolitical and economic supporters of the Euro-centric state perceive the success of the indigenous political agenda in stark existential terms that must be dealt with as such.

*“The repression by President Guillermo Lasso’s government of demonstrations called by Indigenous, trade union and social organisations as part of a national strike since 13 June 2022 is causing a human rights crisis with many reports of harassment, excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment, and criminalisation of protesters, journalists, and human rights defenders.”<sup>65</sup>*

To be fair, the levels of social discord, vehemence, the intensity of the political violence combined with the massive violent crime and gang problems, likely overwhelm the security services pushing them into violent overreaction. While my research over the past several decades suggests that the current course of indigenous terraforming of the political system

<sup>61</sup> (HRW Ecuador Staff, 2024; Mella, 2024a; Staff Reporter, 2019, 2023)

<sup>62</sup> (Charles, 2024; Fevrier, 2022; Papadovassilakis, 2021; UK Home Office, 2024)

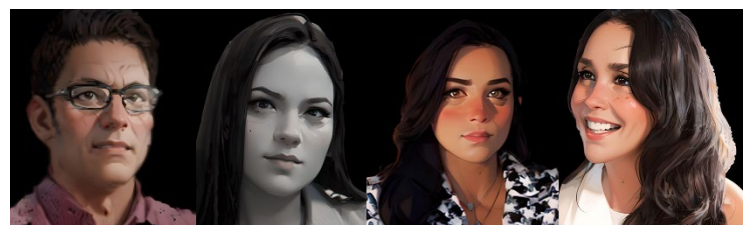
<sup>63</sup> (Agence France-Presse, 2023)

<sup>64</sup> (Agence France-Presse, 2024; Staff, 2024d)

<sup>65</sup> Amnesty International; Relief Web, UNHCR, OHCA 2023



is unlikely to be reversed, in the short-term, the danger to the unprotected middle population of Ecuador should not be underestimated. As social scientists, Valka-Mir can never be certain of any predictive outcome, our experiences researching the political and social violence in the Northern Triangle of Central America, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela, suggest that rapid social changes between communities with vastly different psychological organization and sociological constructions<sup>66</sup> often involve great suffering and loss. An essential aspect of understanding the situation in Ecuador relative to mestizo families is encapsulated by dialogue that we recorded in Quito during one of our field research events: Self-Identifying Indigenous Ecuadorian Mestizo speaking to Self-Identifying Spanish Ecuadorian Mestizo: “How can you call yourself a Spanish person when you look more like an Amerindian than a Caucasian?” The central question of cultural identity appears to be driving the intensity and personalisation of the political violence as the contest of each political race helps determine whether Ecuador remains a Eurocentric cultural state. The political situation over the past three decades has evolved into one of active political instability marked by extreme social and economic insecurity that has activated nearly all the Ecuador’s population segments. The indigenous Quechua and Amazonia peoples have only become politically active over the past four decades of Ecuador’s independent existence, and their electoral numbers; willingness to sacrifice and engage the security services, has forced most of Ecuadorians into choosing sides. The indigenous community of Ecuador in opposition to the Eurocentric government has been highly effective in recruiting mestizo’s who previously thought of themselves as Spanish, to begin focusing on their Amerindian identity instead. The darker skinned mestizos, least likely to be accepted as beneficiaries of a system that rewards ethnic lineage, are the political middle that both sides are contesting. The political violence between the growing indigenous movement in Ecuador and the postcolonial social establishment will only continue to deepen as the stakes become better understood. The entire system of financial and capital investments held by a large minority of Ecuadorians is at stake and they will not willingly surrender their physical and cultural patrimony without a fight. The indigenous forces in Ecuador, meanwhile, have been bolstered by their ability to sell their indigenous narrative to most mestizo families who are being enticed to give up on their Eurocentric half and return to their Quechuan *Raiz* (roots) as an option that is better than what they now face. In recent years, Ecuador has undergone a sharp decline in most measures of development and public wellbeing and has been backsliding towards lawlessness. Poverty and inequality have been on the rise following years of steady improvement, while the country’s security situation has worsened dramatically. Ecuador’s homicide rate has risen from 5.8 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2017 – one of the lowest rates in the Western hemisphere – to 25.5 in 2022 – 45.1 in 2023 and is expected to top 60 in 2024. As of today, two Ecuadorian cities are considered the deadliest in the world – Quito and Guayaquil.<sup>67</sup> The attacks and assassinations of political leaders, prosecutors, activists, lawyers, judges, and journalists has darkened all Ecuadorian’s ability to understand and navigate life under the current system. Between January and October of this year, the NGO Fundamedios registered 219 threats of attacks against journalists and media outlets in Ecuador.<sup>68</sup> In 2023, nine journalists have had to go into exile due to threats against their lives. “This has surprised us, because it had not happened before in Ecuador, and this year it has become systematic, and we have had to learn what to do as we go,” explains Diana Romero, from Periodistas Sin Cadenas (Journalists Without Chains).<sup>69</sup> Most times, the journalists are not sure if their reporting is being targeted by the criminal societies or by corrupt people in national or local governments or by elite’s



**Charly Castillo**      **Karol Noroña**      **Mónica Velásquez**      **Diana Romero**

Figure 20 Journalists fleeing Ecuador from death threats

<sup>66</sup> Psychological organization refers to the sociocentric versus egocentric individual and collective identity. Sociological construction refers to the assembly and ordering of families, clans, and tribes versus constructed, often urbanized-industrialized societies. The former is inherited over thousands of generations and the latter is artificially constructed by modern humans to replace lost or abandoned inherited structures.

<sup>67</sup> (Dalby, 2024; Glatsky, 2024; Mella, 2023a)

<sup>68</sup> (CPJ Staff, 2022)

<sup>69</sup> (Mella, 2023b)



business interests involving expose's on theft of government or indigenous lands and resources.<sup>70</sup> Romero says that the threats are usually clear and explicit, such as leaving bags with blood on them outside their house. My research expectation is that the Eurocentric establishment will find themselves faced with a decision to adapt to their new electoral realities, flee with whatever liquidity they can convert, or fight using every aspect of state power to stave off an indigenous conversion.

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