

Fatal Extraction: A Comparative Analysis of Environmental Conflicts in Ecuador during the Presidency of Rafael Correa

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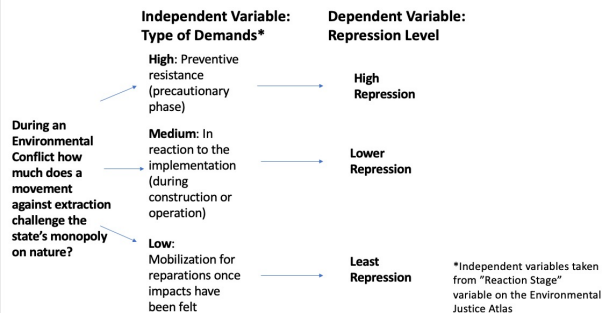
Background

Over the last ten years, more than 1,700 land defenders have been killed across the world. While this represents the most dramatic outcome in environmental conflicts, it is not the only form of repression that land defenders face. This study asks the question of whether the type of demands a local movement makes, leads to higher repression from the state.

Key Theories

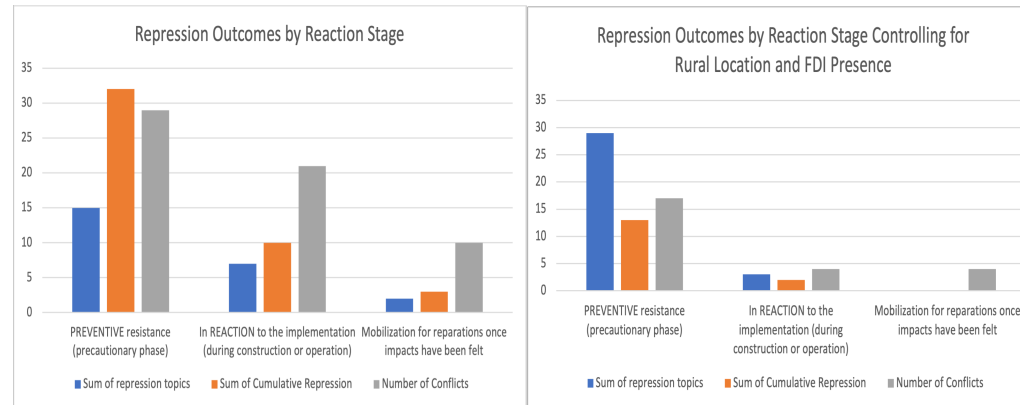
- Extractivism (Acosta 2013; Gudynas 2018).
- Environmentalism of the Poor (Guha and Martinez-Alier 1997).
- Rational Choice in Political Repression (Earl et. al 2003; Davenport 2007).

Hypothesis



Methodology

- Created a dataset using variables from the Environmental Justice Atlas to gain a systematic understanding
- Chose four cases which reflected initial data analysis and utilized a sub-national comparative case study
- Dependent Variable: Level of Repression
- Independent Variable: Type of demands
- Control Variables: FDI presence and Location of Conflict



Findings

- Preventive resistance faces the highest levels of repression.
- Resistance that is in reaction to an ongoing project and resistance that mobilizes for reparations receive less repression.
- Still, this is on a continuum. Resistance to ongoing projects still receives more repression than those mobilizing for reparations.
 - Likely because the former poses a greater threat to the state's ability to extract than the latter.

Case	Resistance Type	Challenger's Goal(s)	To what extent did the demands presented in the case threaten the state's right to extract?	State Response
Oil Proposal on Sápara Territory	Preventive Resistance (Precautionary Phase)	To prevent oil extraction on Sápara land	High	High Repression
The Mirador Mining Project	Preventive Resistance (Precautionary Phase)	To prevent mineral extraction in the Mirador mine	High	High Repression
Oil drilling on Kichwa of Sarayaku Territory	In Reaction to the Implementation (during construction or operation)	Clean up of dynamite; A promise of future prior consultation; An apology from the state	Medium	Low Repression; Expressed Hostility; Some Conciliatory Measures
Chevron-Texaco Oil Extraction in the Northern Amazon	Mobilization for reparations once impacts have been felt	Money for clean up of environmental damage and other reparations	Low	No Repression; State sided with the community

Why Study Ecuador?

- 2007 Rafael Correa, a leftist economist assumes the presidency during Latin America's left-turn.
- 2008 new constitution recognizes the "rights of nature" and the country as a "pluri-national" state.
- Correa's tenure was nevertheless defined by conflicts with both Indigenous and Environmental groups that brought him to power and that he promised to side with.