POLI 332. Politics and Governments of Latin America

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Session 8. Social Movements and Indigenous Politics

Plan of the lecture

1. The democratic regimes after 1990s

2. The landscape of indigenous peoples in Latin America today

3. Social Movements

   1. Ecuador
   2. Bolivia
   3. Mexico

Democracy in Latin America after 1990s

- **Dual Transitions: Democratization + Liberalization**

  - Neoliberalism: Breakdown of populist social pacts

- **Pacted Transitions:**

  - Exclusion of certain issues from the political agenda (i.e., redistribution)
  - Survival of pre-existing power structures: oligarchies, military

- **Lack of Horizontal Accountability → Delegative Democracies**

  - Concentration of power in strong presidents
  - Importance of galvanizing national projects (e.g., fight against terrorism, reconstruction of the country, etc.)

- **Competitive authoritarian regimes:**

  - Formal democratic institutions but uneven playing field due to informal undemocratic practices:

    - Harassment against opposition
    - Concentration of ownership of media outlets
    - Human rights abuses

Estimated Indigenous Populations (from Van Cott 2007:128)

TABLE—ESTIMATED INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	INDIGENOUS POPULATION	PERCENT OF TOTAL
Bolivia	5,914,000	71
Guatemala	8,342,000	66
Peru	12,696,000	47
Ecuador	5,556,000	43
Belize	47,000	19
Honduras	938,000	15
Mexico	14,049,000	14
Chile	1,217,000	8
Guyana	56,000	8
El Salvador	429,000	7
Panama	168,000	6
Suriname	26,000	6
Nicaragua	241,000	5
Paraguay	168,000	3
Colombia	794,000	2
Venezuela	471,000	2
Costa Rica	36,000	1
Argentina	370,000	1
Brazil	332,000	0
Uruguay	1,000	0

Source: "Operational Policy on Indigenous Peoples and Strategy for Indigenous Development," Inter-American Development Bank, 22 February 2006, 47, *http://idbdocs.iadb.org/wsdocs/getdocument.aspx?docnum=691261*.

Indigenous Peoples and State Formation

- **Colonial period**: source of labour (non-wage & repressive), connected to politics through networks of patronage (*caciques*)

- **Independence and 19th century**: source of labour (non-wage & repressive), connected to politics through clientelistic networks or excluded.

- **National-populist projects (20th Century)**:
  - *Indigenismo* as the cultural politics of nation-building;
  - incorporation into politics as subordinate actors in exchange for corporate rights: e.g., communal land, state-sponsored peasant organizations;
  - citizenship as the transformation of ethnic identities into class identities.

- **Dual transitions (1990s)**:
  - Indigenous groups are excluded from the negotiations of the transition.
  - Market reforms undermine corporate rights, challenge traditional economies, and threaten natural resources.
  - Opening of political space creates the possibility for autonomous organizations to emerge, although not necessarily provides the resources to do so.

What Are Social Movements?

- **Tilly (1984: 306):**

A social movement is a sustained series of interactions between power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support.

From Caramani, Daniele. 2014. *Comparative Politics* (2nd edition). OUP

Ecuador

- CONAIE: National Confederation of Indigenous Organizations from the Amazon and the Andes, with an electoral arm: Pachakutik

- Ran candidates in the 1996 elections

- Organized protests in 1997 and 2000 that toppled governments (Ecuador had 8 presidents between 1997 and 2007!)

- Were a junior partner of the military-indigenous coup of 2000; supported Lucio Gutiérrez in 2002 elections

- Did not support Rafael Correa's project in 2005 but were crucial in pushing for indigenous and environmental causes in the constitutional process of 2007.

Bolivia

- Katarista indigenous peasants (coca farmers) take over control of a powerful peasant union in the 1970s (CSUTCB).

- Indigenous peoples from the Amazon also organize in the 1990s (CIDOB).

- In order to present candidates in 1999 municipal elections, one of the leaders of the alliance between CSUTCB, CIDOB and worker unions, Evo Morales, adopts the name and registry of an old party (Movimiento al Socialismo, MAS) to present candidates.

- Between 1999-2000, indigenous organizations fight on two fronts: social movements on the streets (Water War, Aymara protests, Gas War) and electorally (presenting candidates)

- In 2005, Evo Morales wins the presidential election.

Mexico

- Under PRI regime, indigenous peoples are incorporated through peasant federations.

- PRI nation-building project was based on mestizaje: Mexicans are a mixed race of Spanish and Indigenous blood.

- Recognition of communal property (ejidos) and local autonomy (usos y costumbres→customary law).

- Market reforms from 1982 to 1994 weaken indigenous peoples access to property (land) and reduce access to public resources.

- In 1994, EZLN (Zapatistas) takes up arms in the southern state of Chiapas. They demand land redistribution, recognition of indigenous identities, and respect to local autonomy.

- After a few weeks of armed struggle, they change strategy to only use symbolic resources. International commentators call them "the first postmodern social movement", although they have only marginal success in pushing forward their cause.

Deborah Yashar's argument about the rise of indigenous social movements

RQ:

"Why indigenous identity has become a more salient basis of political organizing and source of political claims in Latin America"? (23)

Cases:

Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru

Deborah Yashar's argument about the rise of indigenous social movements

Previous explanations:

Primordialism; Instrumentalism; Post-structuralism

Argument:

- **Political liberalization** provides **opportunity** for organizing.
- **State reforms** leave indigenous peoples "marginalized as individual citizens, disempowered as corporatist peasant actors, and confronted with a challenge to local, political, and material autonomy", providing **incentives** to organize around indigenous identities.
- **Pre-existing networks** (peasant unions & church) provide organizational **capacity.**