

### Indigenous Movements in Latin America

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Subject: Groups and Identities Online Publication Date: Aug 2019

DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1719

### Summary and Keywords

Political developments in Latin America have driven academic interest in Indigenous movements. This phenomenon emerged most clearly in the aftermath of massive uprisings that led to a flood of publications framed as “the return of the Indian” to the public consciousness. Much of our understanding of the history and trajectory of social movement organizing is a result of publications in response to these protests. Contemporary political concerns continue to inform much of the cutting-edge research on Indigenous movements. These issues include relations between social movements and elected officials (often framed as debates over horizontalism versus authoritarianism) and whether the extraction of natural resources can lead to economic development, including intense discussions over neoextractivism and the *sumak kawsay*, the Quechua term for living well (with equivalent phrases in other Indigenous languages, often translated in Spanish as *buen vivir*).

Keywords: Indigenous, Indian, autonomy, buen vivir, sumak kawsay, Latin American politics

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### Introduction

The phrase “Indigenous peoples” refers to the descendants of the thousands of different ethnolinguistic groups that inhabited the American continents before the arrival of the Europeans in 1492. Defining who is “native” is complicated, particularly given the degree of cultural and biological mixing that have occurred over the past 500 years. Previous notions of indigeneity were based on external static identifiers including language, clothing, residency, occupation, and religious practices that determined ethnic affiliation. More recent scholarship, however, shows that identities can be much more fluid. Individuals slide back and forth between categories based on varying criteria, definitions, and the political expediencies of the moment. Furthermore, Indigenous groups ranged from small and isolated communities to large and vibrant groups with a significant social, economic, and political presence in the life of a country (Vanden & Prevost, 2017). According to World Bank estimates, Mexico has the largest absolute number of Indigenous peoples (16.8 million, or 15% of the population), while the highest percentages are in Bolivia and Guatemala (41% each), followed by Peru (26%) (World Bank, 2015; see also Vanden &

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Prevost, 2017). Even so, these numbers were the subject of intense debate given the changing natures of how people chose to self-identify, particularly on censuses.

Scholars, activists, and community members have long engaged in extended debates about what the appropriate terminology might be to refer to the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas. Seeking a blanket term for widely divergent populations is an inherently political and colonizing exercise. Identity remained overwhelmingly local, and many Indigenous peoples identified with their own group rather than with a pan-ethnic construction. Instead, some argued, it would be more appropriate to refer to each group by their own name for themselves. While outsiders had also imposed names for individual groups, commonly groups would refer to themselves as “the people” (or a variation of that) in their own language.

An equally thorny semantic minefield was whether to speak of Indigenous peoples or ethnic groups. While the term “tribe” had legal standing in North America, most rejected it because of its derogatory connotations as well as early anthropological inaccuracies in describing stages of sociocultural evolution. Some militants argued that instead it was more proper to speak of Indigenous nationalities, given that each group had its own unique history, language, religion, and cultural traits. While colonial officials spoke of Indian nations and on occasion administered populations as such, the term “nation” gained renewed interest in the 1920s when the Communist International advocated for the creation of an independent Indigenous republic in the Andes. In the 1980s, Indigenous ethnonational militants began to embrace this term as their own.

Indigenous peoples, with populations based in rural areas, had long been geographically separated from those who maintained control over political and economic affairs with their center located in urban areas. The ruling class descended from European conquerors awarded themselves control over land and Indigenous labor through the colonial *encomienda* system, in which the Crown “entrusted” their agents with these prerogatives in exchange for the obligation of converting the natives to Catholicism. Long after independence (which occurred mainly in the early 19th century), a Euro-descendant landholding class controlled most of the profitable arable land, with Indigenous peoples crowded onto small and degraded plots. They suffered from malnutrition and a lack of healthcare, resulting in high infant mortality rates and short life expectancies. Most Indigenous peoples did not have access to education, and governments used their illiteracy as a mechanism to deny them the vote. They were first allowed to vote in Peru in 1978, in Ecuador in 1979, and not until 1991 in Colombia.

For centuries Indigenous peoples used state structures to petition for redress, and finally gained notable successes in the closing decades of the 20th century. In 1987 Miskitu Indians on Nicaragua’s Atlantic coast signed an autonomy agreement with the leftist Sandinista government. Even though Colombia has one of the smallest Indigenous populations in the Americas, well-organized social movements gained significant concessions in the 1991 constitution including recognition for their territory and cultures and representation in congress. Similarly, in Venezuela, many Indigenous rights were codified in the

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1999 constitution, including recognition of their languages, organizations, and lands. Political openings ensured rights for Indigenous peoples, facilitated their survival, and even helped them to flourish in the early 21st century.

Indigenous peoples emerged at the end of the 20th century as powerful and well-organized political actors in Latin America (Jackson & Warren, 2005). They led protests against neoliberal economic policies that often weighed most heavily on Indigenous peoples. Indigenous organizations increasingly formed political parties that competed for state power, and they joined coalitions that threw out unpopular presidents in Ecuador and Bolivia. Far from being static, Indigenous people continually embraced new strategies and technologies such as the Internet to advance their struggles. Some spoke of the “return of the Indian” (Wearne, 1996). Indigenous peoples, however, had never left and were always present in Latin America as they agitated for their concerns in a variety of ways.

Depending on definitions, at the beginning of the 21st century about 40 million people, or about 10% of the population, identified as Indigenous, with the majority concentrated in southern Mexico, Central America, and the Andes. Numerically speaking, the largest surviving Indigenous groups in the Americas were the Maya and the Quechua (descendants of the Inca), as well as the Náhuatl-speaking descendants of the Aztec or Mexica. All three were language families that included diverse cultures and traditions spread over a broad geographic area. Quechua peoples thrived along the spine of the Andean mountains on South America’s Pacific coast. The Maya peoples lived mainly in the Yucatán peninsula and southeastern state of Chiapas in Mexico as well as Guatemala and elsewhere in northern Central America. Náhuatl speakers were concentrated in central Mexico. Identity remained overwhelmingly local, and many Indigenous peoples identified with their own group rather than with a pan-ethnic construction. Although past observers had predicted the disappearance of Indigenous peoples, at the beginning of the 21st century their cultures remained strong and vibrant. Native communities remained very much alive and vital throughout the continent.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Anthropologists and political scientists have published most of the work on Indigenous movements, with sociologists and historians also making contributions. Anthropological studies tend to emphasize the ethnographic roots of social mobilization, whereas political scientists often examine relations with government structures and political movements. Many studies are highly interdisciplinary, and often these academic lines blur.

The interaction between class consciousness and ethnic identities in social movement organizing practices garnered a significant amount of attention. After a long debate on whether class or ethnicity was of primary importance, much of the literature reached a consensus that it is more important to understand how various forms of identity (including class, ethnicity, and gender) interact with one another in specific contexts.

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Earlier cultural anthropologists, working in the ethnographic mode that assumed an isolated existence of “closed corporate peasant communities” (Wolf, 1957), studied local customs of Indigenous villages as windows into a supposedly static ancestral tradition of the “authentic” Indian. This paradigm of closed and unchanging communities, which had a major impact on a generation of mid-20th-century anthropologists working particularly in Mesoamerica (Vogt, 1994), proved insufficient to account for the growing political mobilization of Indigenous peoples in the late 20th century (Stavenhagen, 1997). It gradually gave way to newer approaches to Indigenous and peasant studies by political anthropologists and others, who acknowledged the impact of globalization on Indigenous peoples since their forced integration into the world system of production and exchange going back to colonial times (Alvarado, Chew Plascencia, & Rus, 2018). Dependency, world systems, and Marxist theories added a political economy dimension to the study of class formation, labor migration, and transnational processes affecting indigenous communities (Otero, 2003). Postcolonial theory, as well as theories of Indigenous feminism, contributed to decentering and decolonizing the study of social and political movements in Latin America in ways that recognized the diversity and the agency of Indigenous peoples (Hernández Castillo, 2016; Mora, 2018; Postero & Zamosc, 2006).

## “New Social Movement” Emphasis on Culture and Identity

In the early 1990s, sociologists and other scholars attempted to distinguish between “old” movements, which assumed the form of labor unions and political parties and were primarily concerned with economic issues, and “new” movements, which emphasized identity issues and often targeted narrow and specific demands (Escobar & Alvarez, 1992). Examples of these new social movements included ones focused on gender issues, human rights, environmental concerns, and Indigenous rights. Scholars in this school often presented contemporary Indigenous movements that were primarily concerned with legal (including constitutional) reforms, struggles over territory and resource use, and identity politics as “new” and “transformational.” New social movements were seen to differ from traditional political parties or labor unions in that they responded to a specific crisis rather than engaging in a project of historical transformation (such as taking over state structures). Some critics argue, however, that “new social movements” are neither new nor isolated from broader class and partisan struggles. Rather, these movements’ fundamental goals, strategies, and tactics (demonstrations, sit-ins, marches, petitions, letter-writing campaigns) are often similar to those of parties and unions.

Moving beyond the dichotomy of old versus new movements, Alvarez, Baiocchi, Laó-Montes, Rubin and Thayer (2017) locate the diverse 21st-century struggles of Indigenous and Afro-descendant groups in the context of the inequalities intensified by neoliberalism (in some ways only aggravated by “targeted social compensation” programs such as conditional cash transfers to groups most harmed by market opening, often creating new forms of clientelism); and the growing extractive-export model, papered over by a dis-

course of multiculturalism designed to coopt the dispossessed. These scholars argue that more unruly repertoires of protest are emerging to evade cooptation and “decolonize the Civil Society Agenda” of international financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (de la Cadena & Starn, 2007).

## Historical Overview of Indigenous Mobilization

Class oppression and racial discrimination, often combined with a further sexual repression of women, combined to form systems of domination that for centuries subjugated Indigenous peoples to the interests of a European-descended ruling class in Latin America. This repression took a variety of forms, ranging from labor drafts, tribute and tax payments, and confiscation of land and water to suppression of cultures and even genocide. Indigenous peoples responded in various ways, from everyday forms of resistance that included strategies for cultural and demographic survival, working slowly or breaking tools, legal petitions to challenge harmful policies, rebellions against abusive officials or landholders, strikes and petitions, and full-scale revolts that challenged state power. Although it took different forms and shapes, this resistance continued from the European conquest into the 21st century. Rather than being passive victims, Indigenous peoples significantly influenced and altered historical developments.

More than 100 revolts ripped through the Andes during the 18th century, with the uprisings becoming increasingly large scale, widespread, and violent. This so-called age of Andean insurrections culminated in the powerful Túpac Amaru II uprising that swept through the southern Peruvian and Bolivian highlands from 1780 to 1782. Led by José Gabriel Condorcanqui, a moderately wealthy *kuraka* (local official) who took the name of the last Inka leader (Túpac Amaru), this insurrection threatened to remove the colonial ruling class and establish a neo-Inka utopia (Walker, 2014). In a second, more radical, phase, an Aymara leader known as Túpac Katari (Julián Apasa Nina) led a siege of La Paz with visions of emancipation and self-determination. The desire to either eliminate the Spanish or subordinate them to Andean peoples became a key interest during these anti-colonial revolts. Although the movements failed and Spanish officials executed the leaders, these uprisings placed Indigenous Andeans at the heart of struggles over state formation and demonstrated their political consciousness. Far from traditional images of passivity or disengagement, Indigenous peoples were active agents who imagined an alternative vision of the nation that conflicted with that of the dominant culture. Túpac Katari’s last words before he was executed in 1781 were “I will return and I will be millions,” and this has been interpreted as a prophetic statement that has been fulfilled in subsequent Indigenous mobilizations (Serulnikov, 2013; Thomson, 2002).

In the late 19th century through the early 20th century, a new cycle of Indigenous uprisings raged through Latin America, rising to its highest level since Túpac Amaru’s revolt. These were often reactions to the expansion of haciendas onto Indigenous communal lands, governmental taxes, labor drafts, and abusive officials. One of the most noted uprisings was the Caste War of Yucatán, with the Maya fighting back against the Mexican

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government's threats to their traditional autonomy (Rus, 1983). In 1849 the Maya almost reconquered the Yucatán peninsula. Reflecting their agrarian roots and the demands of an agricultural economy, the Maya combatants returned home to plant their cornfields when they sighted clouds of winged ants that were a sign of the first seasonal rains. Whites eventually retook control of the peninsula, but the underlying racial conflict persisted and the war simmered until 1902 (Dumond, 1997; Reed, 1964; Rugeley, 2009).

In the South American Andes, resistance strategies included litigation and occupation of hacienda lands. In 1886, Pedro Pablo Atusparia led a revolt in Peru against a poll tax on the Indigenous peasantry (Stein, 1988). In 1899, Aymara leader Pablo Zárate Willka raised an army that demanded a restoration of traditional lands and the establishment of an Indigenous government (Condarco Morales, 1965). In 1915, Teodomiro Gutiérrez took the name Rumi Maqui (Quechua for "stone hand") and led a radical separatist revolt that employed the rhetoric of restoring the Inca Empire (Ramos Zambrano, 1985). Expropriation of community lands led to a massive revolt at Jesús de Machaca in the Lake Titicaca district of Bolivia in 1921. Several years later, in one of the largest Indigenous uprisings of the 20th century, 10,000 people attacked haciendas in the Chayanta province in northern Potosí. Ultimately the government's superior firepower and a lack of Indigenous unity led to the failure of these revolts and the massacres of hundreds of people. These uprisings, however, stopped hacienda expansion onto community lands and achieved the replacement of local officials (Hylton and Thomson, 2007; Langer, 1990).

In the 1920s Indigenous peasants began to organize rural syndicates. The syndicates were often allied with urban labor unions or leftist political parties, and their creation represented a shift from focusing on local and narrowly conceptualized issues to agitating for larger and more structural changes. In Bolivia, Aymaras and Quechuas agitated for land reform following the 1952 nationalist revolution. This grew into the Katarista movement that took its name from the late colonial leader Túpac Katari. Bridging a long-perceived division between ethnic identities and class consciousness, Kataristas announced that they would analyze their exploitation with "two eyes" as both Indigenous peoples and peasants (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987).

In Guatemala, a Maya nationalist movement emerged that championed cultural pride in traditional lifestyles, dress, religion, language, literature, and education (Warren, 1998). In 1992 the activist Rigoberta Menchú won the Nobel Peace Prize and became a high-profile international symbol of the Indigenous rights movement. Indigenous militancy emerged not only in Bolivia and Guatemala—which have large Indigenous populations—but also in countries like Colombia, which has a small and extremely diverse Indigenous population. Despite composing only 3% of the population, Indians became a significant political force through the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC, National Indigenous Organization of Colombia). Thanks to these efforts, Indigenous peoples gained far-reaching concessions including citizenship and territorial rights, as well as official recognition of ethnic diversity and Indigenous languages in the 1991 constitution.

# Transnational Organizations and Social Movements

In the 1960s and 1970s activists increasingly organized Indigenous movements on an ethnic basis, with the support of nongovernmental organizations and in a transnational framework. The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) grew out of a 1968 meeting of anthropologists who witnessed the abuses that Indigenous peoples faced (Betancur, 2011; Varese, 2007). In 1975, IWGIA helped establish the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and its South American branch Consejo Indio de Sud America (CISA, South American Indian Council) in 1980. CISA, the first regional Indigenous organization in South America, attacked colonial centers of power as it sought to recoup ethnic identities and unify Indigenous organizations into a liberation struggle.

In 1983, Nilo Cayuqueo, a Mapuche from southern Argentina, launched the South American Indian Information Center (SAIIC) in California to provide information on and international support for CISA and the Indigenous rights movement in South America. In 1984, Amazonian Indigenous organizations formed the Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA, Coordinating Body for the Indigenous People's Organization of the Amazon) in order to act internationally to defend their territorial, cultural, economic, and political rights. COICA became best known for its alliances with environmental groups (Wearne, 1996).

With an ethnic consciousness heightened by protests against the quincentennial celebrations of Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage to the Americas, many of these movements began to embrace common demands for recognition of the pluricultural nature of Latin American societies (Hale, 1994). This helped drive a powerful Indigenous uprising in Ecuador in June 1990 that paralyzed the country for a week. The Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) emerged at the forefront of these protests and gained Ecuador a reputation for having the most powerful and well-organized Indigenous movement in Latin America. A month after the June 1990 uprising, CONAIE joined with SAIIC and ONIC to organize the First Continental Conference on Five Hundred Years of Indigenous Resistance in Quito, Ecuador. Representatives from across the Americas gathered to form a united front in the struggle against oppression, discrimination, and exploitation. Throughout the hemisphere, similar protests coalesced around the theme of "500 years of Indigenous, Black and Popular Resistance."

Another transnational force promoting Indigenous consciousness that emerged in the 1990s was the theological current known as *Teología India* (Indian Theology). This ecumenical movement, inspired by the quincentennial protests, developed in parallel to the earlier Liberation Theology movement of social activism in the Catholic Church that began in the 1960s (Brysk, 2000). Indigenous political influence grew tremendously throughout Latin America during the final decades of the 20th century, particularly through the emergence of Indigenous political parties, election of Indigenous representa-

tives to political office, and codification of constitutional provisions for Indigenous peoples. Democratic openings and support from nongovernmental organizations were key factors that facilitated these changes, and transnational Indigenous organizing was also crucial in the 2007 adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). While not legally binding, the UNDRIP became a touchstone for indigenous rights claims in Latin America and around the world (Jacquelin-Andersen, 2018). Nevertheless, Indigenous representation and political power remained far below their proportion of the population, and poverty and discrimination continued to be persistent and systemic problems (see CEPAL, 2014).

## Causes of the Contemporary Upsurge in Indigenous Mobilization

The late 20th century witnessed a heavy migration away from Indigenous rural areas and toward urban areas that were traditionally white spaces, as well as increasing labor migration across international borders. This did not necessarily correspond with an erosion of ethnic identities. Urban areas could be politicizing spaces as Indians who faced common issues and concerns met. For some, gaining a university education provided organizing tools that facilitated a politicized ethnic agenda. New forms of organizing also began to take shape in transnational spaces (Brysk, 2000). These included transnational Indigenous communities such as the Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations), which originated from a coalition of indigenous Oaxacan migrants in California in the early 1990s (Romero-Hernández, Maldonado Vásquez, Domínguez-Santos, Blackwell, & Velasco Ortiz, 2013; Stephen, 2007). Similarly, large numbers of Indigenous communities converted to evangelical Christian religions in the second half of the 20th century (Stoll, 1990). Guatemala, for example, was headed toward a Protestant majority at the beginning of the 21st century. Critics assumed that this would lead to an erosion of ethnic identities, but often the adoption of evangelical Christianity created spaces in which to preserve Indigenous cultures. When missionary groups, for example, translated their Bibles into local languages, it helped to reinforce and valorize ethnic identities, though religious divisions sometimes undermined the unity of Indigenous groups. The Summer Institute of Linguistics, a project of the U.S.-based Wycliffe Bible Translators, stirred controversy in Latin America amid accusations of ties to the CIA (Stoll, 1982).

The return of electoral democracy in much of Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, after decades of military rule, presented new opportunities and new dilemmas for Indigenous groups seeking to advance political agendas (Madrid, 2012; Van Cott, 2010). As with other social movements, new democratic spaces came with risks of potential cooptation of leadership and absorption into mainstream political structures.



### Neoliberalism

The resurgence of Indigenous and other social movements in Latin America coincided with neoliberal economic policies that swept the region after the debt crisis of the 1980s. The turn to the market with its individualistic orientation generated a “post-liberal” backlash among Indigenous peoples claiming group rights (Yashar, 2005). Neoliberal states promoted an ideology of “neoliberal multiculturalism” (Hale, 2002) that formally acknowledged ethnic diversity yet failed to recognize Indigenous autonomous control over territory and resources. The neoliberal opening to the unregulated forces of the global market brought aggressive new investment strategies by transnational corporations in extractive industries, often clashing with Indigenous peoples over issues of land and territory (Postero, 2007; Richards, 2013).

In the 1990s, government attempts to implement neoliberal policies that were designed to halt hyperinflation and bank failures but that hit poor and Indigenous peoples particularly hard triggered repeated rounds of political protest. Public sector austerity, market-based pricing free from state protection, and privatization—the pillars of the Structural Adjustment Programs thrust on Latin American governments by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank—fell hardest on the least protected sectors of society. For example, the North American Free Trade Agreement had a devastating impact on Mexican peasants and Indigenous subsistence cultivators, and was one of the triggers of the 1994 Zapatista rebellion (Harvey, 1998; Ross, 1995). Privatization of water in Bolivia fueled the uprisings that saw unprecedented mobilization of Indigenous peoples in direct actions that eventually led to the replacement of the government by the country’s first Indigenous president, Evo Morales (Postero, 2017). Although labor federations in many countries had previously organized general strikes designed to force changes in government policy, by the end of the 20th-century Indigenous movements were much more visible at the head of social protests (Rice, 2012).

Indigenous activists played a leading role in challenges to capitalism and neoliberal economic systems. While occasionally these responses were reactionary in character, advocating a return to premonetary exchange systems, more commonly they allied with other leftist forces with a vision of creating a new and better world that provided space for everyone. In the 1990s, Indigenous organizations participated in protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas and later in the World Social Forum. Indigenous activists also organized a series of continental summits in which they mobilized around issues of common concern, and provided some of the most vocal voices in the debates on climate change.

### Dispossession of Land and Territory

Environmental issues became key to Indigenous struggles for survival. Amazonian Indigenous groups were more diverse and dispersed than those in the core Maya and Andean areas. European conquerors had less success in subduing the Amazon, and some isolated groups still had little or no contact with the dominant culture. In 1993 the Cofáns, Se-

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coyas, and Sionas in the Ecuadorian Amazon sued Texaco in New York for polluting their lands (Kimerling, 1991). In Brazil the Kayapós used modern technology such as video cameras in their struggles against the damming of the Xingu River. They gained an international profile when British rock star Sting rallied to their cause (Turner, 1993).

The neoliberal model “freed” global corporations from many of the constraints that states had previously imposed to protect the common good. In place of the old model of colonial plunder based on forcible extraction of resources from new lands and coerced labor, neoliberalism was rooted in what David Harvey (2005) called “accumulation by dispossession,” or the encroachment of private for-profit operations on land and territory previously considered public or communal. Rising commodity prices, driven by factors such as globalization and the entry of China into world markets, created new incentives to displace the guardians of the commons, including in many cases Indigenous peoples. As Structural Adjustment Programs forced the rollback of the state in exchange for new loans, the stage was set for accelerated penetration of Latin America by megaprojects in extractive industries such as mining (prominently featuring Canadian corporations) and hydrocarbons, as well as hydroelectric and other energy-generating investments (in which Spanish firms were heavily involved).

The result was a sharp increase in social movement protest by Indigenous and other communities (Goodale & Postero, 2013). For Indigenous peoples, one instrument was international law; specifically Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization, which recognized the rights of native peoples to control the use of their ancestral territories, and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which obliged states to seek “free, prior, and informed consent” before granting investment concessions on Indigenous lands. This “judicialization of politics” (Couso, Huneeus, & Sieder, 2010) was a controversial strategy, as it won some legal and even constitutional reforms recognizing Indigenous peoples as part of the nation, but critics noted the flaws in the liberal representative political paradigm that treated all individuals as equal without accepting group rights of Indigenous communities. In the tug-of-war over the meaning of consultation and consent, there were larger struggles over decolonizing identity and representation (Lucero, 2008; Postero & Zamosc, 2006; Sieder, 2002; Warren & Jackson, 2003).

These debates were further complicated by the “pink tide” in which the electoral left ascended to the presidency in much of the region in the early 21st century. Supporters of these governments saw the potential for a kind of “post-neoliberal” era, in which left governments could pursue “neoextractivist” policies by nationalizing the key industries and using a larger share of the resources to benefit the poor (García Linera, 2012). Critics saw this as a kind of watered-down neoliberalism in which top-down decision-making disempowered community organizing and the state became merely an intermediary for global capital (Webber, 2016).

### Buen Vivir

An important example of social movement influence was the incorporation of the concept of living well, not just living better (known as *sumak kawsay* in Quechua, *suma qamaña* in Aymara, and *buen vivir* in Spanish). Rather than focusing on material accumulation, the *sumak kawsay* also meant building a sustainable economy. This perspective included an explicit critique of traditional development strategies that increased the use of resources instead of living in harmony with others and with nature. Rather than a neoliberal emphasis on individual and property rights, the *sumak kawsay* emphasized collective community interests. It entailed a new way of thinking about human relations that was not based on exploitation, and instead required a new relationship between the economy and nature. Social movements embraced these ideas as a way to regain control over governments—to use them for the common good rather than for the profits of wealthy capitalists. Scholars in the “post-development” theoretical tradition also supported this reconceptualization of development away from the hegemonic Western construction (Radcliffe, 2015; Zamosc, 2017).

After Evo Morales’s ascendancy to the Bolivian presidency in 2006, Bolivian foreign minister David Choquehuanca emphasized the necessity of pursuing the Andean principle of living well (*vivir bien*) rather than the capitalist, modernist concept of living better (*vivir mejor*). Instead of focusing on material accumulation, this approach sought to build a sustainable economy. This perspective included an explicit critique of traditional development strategies that increased the use of resources rather than seeking to live in harmony with others and with nature. It drew on gender equity, the rights of nature, plurinationality, and Indigenous cosmologies. *Sumak kawsay* called for new visions based on Indigenous knowledge and ancestral concepts that were consistent with ecological, popular, Marxist, feminist, and other alternative ideas for how to structure society that emerged out of marginalized sectors. This necessitated overcoming the divorce between nature and human beings. Instead of sustaining civilization, capitalism puts life itself at risk. The *sumak kawsay* charted one path for moving beyond Western notions of progress, with special attention to the rights of nature. Failure to implement these ideals became a persistent problem.

The *sumak kawsay* led Indigenous movements to come into conflict with progressive governments that they had helped place in power. In 2011, Indigenous organizations in Bolivia marched against government plans to build a highway through the Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-Sécure (TIPNIS, Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park), an ecological preserve. TIPNIS dovetailed with the Brazilian-led Initiative for the Regional Integration of South America. Morales advocated for construction of the road because of its key importance to Bolivia’s economic development. His insistence on pressing forward with a road that would destroy one of the world’s most biodiverse regions led to divisions within social movements, with some members of the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia and the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu becoming increasingly critical of his government (McNeish, 2013).

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In Ecuador, Rafael Correa originally embraced a proposal not to drill for oil in the ecologically sensitive Yasuní National Park in the eastern Amazonian forest in exchange for international development aid. In 2013, Correa reversed that policy, announcing that the government would begin resource extraction from the Ishpingo Tiputini Tambococha oilfields in an attempt to end poverty and fuel economic development. As in Bolivia, this decision ran afoul of what should have been the government's strongest allies on the Indigenous and environmental left. These policies reveal how difficult it is to break from the capitalist logic of an export-driven economy. Meanwhile, leftist governments and social movements continued a complicated dance to realize mutual objectives of sustainable development that would benefit all peoples.

## Armed Uprisings and Postconflict Transitions

### Central America

In Guatemala the country's small *ladino* (non-Indigenous) ruling class held a monopoly on economic and political power. In the 1980s the Guatemalan military launched a genocidal war against the country's majority Maya population. In 1992 Maya leader Rigoberta Menchú, who had become widely renowned for her testimonial *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, won the Nobel Peace Prize for her defense of Indigenous rights in the country. Subsequent questioning of some details of her life story ignited wider debates about the politics of historical memory (Arias, 2001).

Guatemala's 1996 peace accords that ended the 36-year internal armed conflict did not automatically empower the Indigenous majority. A 1999 referendum on constitutional reforms, mandated by the peace accords, included provisions recognizing Indigenous rights, but all the reforms were voted down with less than 19% voter turnout. Scholars continued to analyze the slow emergence of a pan-Maya identity among the country's 23 Maya ethnolinguistic groups (Warren, 1998), as well as the failure of Indigenous peoples to win significant political representation in postconflict Guatemala (Pallister, 2013). To the extent that the legacy of the genocide continued to dampen Indigenous political participation, the 2013 conviction of former dictator General Efraín Ríos Montt for genocide—the first such conviction ever in a national court—was a major milestone. Subsequent mass mobilizations in 2015 that led to the ouster and conviction on corruption charges of the president and vice president were also a turning point, as the largest public protests since the war and notably including both Indigenous and *ladino* marchers.

In Honduras, social movement organizing by the Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organization of Honduras, COPINH) as well as the Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (Black Honduran Fraternal Organization) took the lead in confronting megaprojects. They also joined with LGBT, women's, and other movements in opposing the 2009 military coup and subsequent repression of popular movements. The 2016 assassination of Lenca Indige-

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nous activist and COPINH leader Berta Cáceres drew international attention to the confluence of Indigenous and environmental activism against social injustice and repression.

### Colombia

Indigenous peoples in Colombia, though only 3% of the population, suffered disproportionately from the region's longest-running internal armed conflict that ended with the 2016 peace accords. Indigenous organizing in Colombia historically included the 1971 formation of the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (Indigenous Regional Council of the Cauca, CRIC) in the southern department where some 40% of the country's Indigenous population lived. The CRIC had a historically testy relation with the left, many of whom criticized them for pursuing an "Indianist" path of narrow identity-based politics. The official end of the armed conflict saw continued assassinations of social movement activists, which suggested that, as in Guatemala, the path to lasting peace and full enfranchisement of marginalized groups would be a long one.

## Party/Electoral Strategies

As Indigenous organizing efforts gained traction, activists debated how and whether to engage the electoral system. An issue that long divided Indigenous organizing efforts was whether they should organize by themselves or in alliance with other sympathetic, often leftist, forces. Some advocated that in countries with a majority Indigenous population, such as Guatemala and Bolivia, they should organize on the basis of their ethnicity, whereas in other countries where they were a minority they would campaign in alliance with others. The difficulties of Indigenous candidates realizing success even in Guatemala and Bolivia, however, indicated that the issue was much larger than one of simple demographics. Instead, political power was significantly skewed toward the interests of the wealthy oligarchy, and overcoming structural barriers would be exceedingly difficult.

Massive social movement protests against neoliberal economic policies in the 1990s led to a dramatic leftward political shift at the beginning of the 21st century. Riding a wave of social discontent, Evo Morales won the presidential election in Bolivia in 2005 and Rafael Correa followed suit a year later in Ecuador. They joined Hugo Chávez in Venezuela as part of a rising "pink tide" of leftwing governments that swept across South America in the early 2000s.

### Ecuador

Indigenous organizations in Ecuador formed one of the continent's best-organized social movements. Beginning in the 1920s they worked together with leftist political parties to agitate for land, education, political recognition, and other rights (Becker, 2008). They gained newfound visibility in 1990 when they launched a peaceful uprising against the government. Led by the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE), militants demanded social, economic, and political changes, including changing the constitution to recognize the pluri-

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national nature of the country. Indigenous activists commonly used marches, strikes, and road blockades to press their demands. Indigenous movements emerged at the head of popular struggles against neoliberal economic reforms that shifted resources away from a country's poorest peoples (Becker, 2011; Sawyer, 2004).

In 1995, activists launched the Pachakutik Movement for Plurinational Unity (commonly called Pachakutik) to campaign for political office. In the pan-Andean Quechua language, "pacha" means time or land and "kutik" a return. Hence, the word signifies change, re-birth, and transformation, both in the sense of a return in time and the coming of a new era. Pachakutik emerged out of years of debate on the roles of Indigenous peoples in electoral politics, including whether Indigenous organizations should put forward their own candidates and issues support sympathetic leftist parties. Pachakutik represented the emergence of a third option in forming a new political movement in which Indigenous peoples and other sectors of Ecuador's popular movements organized together as equals in a joint project to achieve common goals of a new and better world. It was an explicit reversal of a policy that the CONAIE had adopted not to participate in elections because neither the political system nor political parties were functioning in a way that represented the people's interests. Pachakutik opposed neoliberal economic policies that privatized public resources and functions, and favored a more inclusive and participatory political system. Pachakutik's leaders spoke of four revolutions: Ethical, socioeconomic, educational, and ecological.

Pachakutik realized mixed results in electoral contests. In 1996, they allied with journalist Freddy Ehlers who came in third place in the presidential race. Longtime CONAIE leader Luis Macas, however, won a post as a national deputy, becoming the first Indigenous person elected to a countrywide office in Ecuador. The movement achieved important gains in the 1998 constitutional assembly. Most significantly, in January 2000, Indigenous leaders joined lower-ranking military officials in a coup that removed President Jamil Mahuad from power after he had implemented unpopular neoliberal economic policies. In 2002, Pachakutik allied with co-conspirator Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez who won the presidency. In exchange, Macas was named Minister of Agriculture and another longtime leader, Nina Pacari, assumed the role of head of foreign affairs. Once in power, Pachakutik broke from Gutiérrez's government after he implemented the same neoliberal reforms that hurt poor and Indigenous peoples (Zamosc, 2007).

The experience with Gutiérrez made Indigenous activists much more cautious of alliances with people from outside of their movement. As a result, four years later Pachakutik largely remained in opposition to the much more sympathetic government of Rafael Correa. His candidacy had raised questions among social movement activists about whether to support someone from inside their movements or to go with someone with broader popular support. Particularly for the strong and well-organized Indigenous movements that had played leading roles in toppling several presidents over the previous decade, Correa was a controversial and divisive choice. A devout Catholic, he had worked for a year in a Salesian mission in Zumbahua, Cotopaxi, and spoke the Kichwa language. But he was not an Indigenous person nor had he been involved in Indigenous movement orga-

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nizing. After Gutiérrez, Indigenous activists were leery of entering into relations with someone outside of their movement.

Leading up to the 2006 elections, Correa and Pachakutik discussed forming an alliance. Some observers dreamed of a shared ticket between Correa and a historic Indigenous leader such as Luis Macas. Indigenous activists wanted to put their leader in the presidential slot, but Correa refused to consider running as vice president. Some activists questioned whether Correa was ideologically committed to Pachakutik's center-left agenda. Despite his leftist credentials and broad popular support, some social movement activists were concerned that the young charismatic Correa was occupying spaces that they had previously held. This was a citizens' revolution, Correa declared, not one built by social movements. His "citizen's revolution" de-emphasized social movements that had led powerful protests against neoliberal economic policies for two decades. Organized social movements often took more radical positions than did Correa, which eventually led to a complete falling out between them. Although largely excluded from national power and averaging about 10% of the vote in congress, Pachakutik realized much more success in local contests in Indigenous communities. Indigenous movements had learned how to bring governments down, but it proved more difficult to construct viable and sustainable alternatives (Becker, 2011; Mijeski and Beck, 2011).

### Bolivia

Bolivia has the highest density of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and has long been home to the cultivation of coca leaves used for medical and ritual purposes. Because coca is also one of the raw ingredients in the production of cocaine, this cultivation was targeted in a so-called war on drugs. Indigenous farmers defended their right to grow coca, the leaves of which were traditionally used for spiritual and medicinal purposes (Farthing and Kohl, 2014; Grisaffi, 2019). Coca leader Evo Morales won the presidency of the country in 2006 as the candidate of the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement to Socialism) party, becoming the first Indigenous person to be chief executive in the country, where Indigenous people make up more than half the population but have been subject to intense discrimination and internal violence (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010).

Morales was born to an impoverished Aymara family in Oruro in 1959. His family moved to the Quechua-dominated El Chapare region, where in 1993 he was elected leader of the coca growers' union. As a social movement leader, Morales condemned what he labeled as the reproduction of savage capitalism that significantly deepened the negative effects of neoliberalism. In 2002, Morales campaigned for the presidency of Bolivia and almost defeated Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. After battles over the nationalization of gas reserves led to the collapse of Sánchez de Lozada's government, Morales won the 2005 election with 54% of the vote, a rarity in an environment in which previous victors had barely polled 20%. This resurgence of a latent revolutionary tradition in Bolivia was triggered in large part by the ravages of neoliberalism (Hylton & Thomson, 2007). In office, Morales implemented policies that shifted resources to education and healthcare, significantly increased wages, and reduced poverty. A new constitution incorporated aspects of

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Indigenous cosmologies, including recognition of the plurinational nature of the country and protection for the environment, both of which had long been part of social movement agendas (Postero, 2017).

Some Indigenous critics of the Morales government saw it as driven by the same electoral and corporate calculations as its predecessors, citing the TIPNIS concession as an example. Others on the left argued that the actual structural transformation of Bolivia fell far short of the revolutionary rhetoric (Webber, 2012).

### De Facto Autonomy: Mexico

In Chiapas, Maya rebels shocked the world on January 1, 1994, with an armed uprising against the Mexican government (Harvey, 1998). Organized into the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), so-named after Mexican revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata, their demands were much broader than Indigenous rights. Led by 12 Maya *comandantes* (commanders) and a charismatic non-Indigenous subcomandante Marcos, who also initially served as spokesperson, the rebels demanded an end to neoliberal economic policies that robbed them of their lands and livelihood.

The Zapatista movement evoked considerable support from national and international civil society, whose solidarity mobilizations forced the government to agree to a ceasefire within 12 days of the uprising. The Zapatistas then focused their attention on developing self-governance structures and self-run social programs in their territories. Negotiations broke down when the government refused to recognize their rights to control their territory and resources, so the movement became an innovative model of de facto autonomy. The concept of autonomy was central to many Indigenous struggles throughout Latin America, and debates continued in Mexico (Velasco Cruz, 2003) and beyond (González, Cal y Mayor, & Ortíz-T., 2010; Gonzales & González, 2015) over the degree to which autonomous movements should engage with the state.

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