

**Dictatorship to Democracy:  
How Indigenous Parties Affect New Republics**

**by**

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## Abstract

International relations scholarship has shown that some new democracies are stronger than others. Therefore, my research question is: what is the relationship between indigenous political movements and the success of democracy in South America? I defined democracy in terms of high citizen participation, high government responsiveness to citizens, and low electoral volatility/party fragmentation. I examined the effects of indigenous movements on democracy in a comparative case study of Bolivia and Chile since 1990. I collected data from *LatinNews* articles, supplemented by secondary sources, in order to analyze the impact of key events in the histories of indigenous movements. Ultimately, the effect on democracy depended on whether the movement gave rise to a viable political party. In Bolivia, the overwhelming success of one indigenous party strengthened all three components of democracy, whereas in Chile, indigenous parties never gained access to the political system and actually weakened democracy by working outside it.

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## Introduction

South America experienced a wave of democratization in the 1980s, and many countries emerged from dictatorial rule and formally established democratic governments. While there is no one definition or singular characteristic of a successful democracy, some countries in the region are ranked higher than others in various measurements of democratic success.<sup>1</sup> What makes democracy stronger in these countries? I sought to help answer this question by focusing on the variable of indigenous political movements in South American countries. My research question is, what is the relationship, if any, between indigenous political movements and the success of democracy? I took a qualitative approach to answer this question by analyzing the effects of indigenous movements on three different aspects of democracy: voter participation, government responsiveness, and electoral volatility and party fragmentation.

This paper uses various theories of democracy to evaluate the effects of indigenous political actions on their states' governments. I did not draw normative conclusions about what these parties should do, or how a successful democracy should look. I aimed to fill a gap in the existing research, which focuses on how and why certain indigenous parties achieve electoral success. This scholarly literature mentions these parties' effects on democracy as an afterthought, if at all, without testing their conjectures through empirical research. My contribution will ultimately help answer the larger question of what makes a successful democracy. My strategy was to develop a comparative case study focusing on two countries, Bolivia and Chile, which allowed me to cover both of their recent indigenous party movements and their results in depth.

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<sup>1</sup> Laza Kekik, "Democracy Index," *The World in 2007*, The Economist (2007); David F. J. Campbell, Georg Pölzlbauer, "The Democracy Ranking 2008/2009 of the Quality of Democracy: Method and Ranking Outcome," Vienna: Democracy Ranking (2009).

## Review of the Literature

### Defining Democracy

Democracy theory literature, a subfield of political science, offers a wide variety of competing definitions of democracy. One of the key theories on the meaning of democracy comes from a study in which Robert Dahl examines who actually governs by taking an in-depth look at politics in New Haven, Connecticut.<sup>2</sup> He examines the interactions of various political and social classes through several decades of elections, basing his research on his definition of a successful democracy as one with high levels of voter turnout and equality of influence among citizens from all strata of society. In short, he defines democracy in terms of citizen input. Dahl argues that few citizens have direct influence on public policy and other choices made by government officials. He devotes most of his book to studying who comprises the elite few who exert direct influence. However, he also argues that many more citizens exert indirect influence on government decisions, and that the greatest way this occurs is through elections.<sup>3</sup> Dahl places the most importance on elections and voter participation as a definition of the success of democracy, providing me with one definition to evaluate the effects of indigenous movements.

Also relevant is Dahl's finding that appealing to members of historically-marginalized ethnic groups and helping them overcome this status is a particularly effective electoral strategy.<sup>4</sup> A sharp divide existed from about 1900 to 1950 in New Haven between the Republican Yankees and the Democratic Italians and Irish, and the Democratic Party appealed to its ethnic constituencies to gain political victories. This signaled a shift in power from an oligarchy based on "cumulative inequalities" to "dispersed inequalities," breaking up the political resources that

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 163.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

had been formerly concentrated in the wealthy upper class.<sup>5</sup> This finding could help me evaluate the tactics of indigenous parties, which also must appeal to members of historically marginalized ethnic groups to gain followers. I used Dahl's research to determine whether their use of this electoral strategy strengthens democracy by increasing voter participation.

In contrast to Dahl's input definition of democracy, John Mueller defines democracy in terms of government output, or the government's responsiveness to citizen demands.<sup>6</sup> He argues that elections are not necessarily an accurate measure of strength of democracy. Some elections are rigged and have no impact on the leaders of the government, and some governments are not democratic in name but are nonetheless responsive to the will of the people. For Mueller, protest, not voting, is the essence of a citizen's role in democracy, and the amount that the government heeds these protests is the best measure of the strength of its democracy. I used Mueller's definition as another lens through which I evaluated the effects of indigenous movements on their countries' democracies. This allowed me to examine these political movements' impact on government responsiveness, in addition to citizen participation. Mueller contrasts his argument with Samuel Huntington's definition of democracy, which requires that the most powerful decision makers in government be elected through "fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote."<sup>7</sup> Because Mueller says that none of the world's democracies would pass this test, I used Dahl's definition of input democracy over Huntington's.

Mueller actually cites Dahl to support his own definition, pointing out that Dahl acknowledges that government responsiveness to the preferences of its citizens is "a key

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>6</sup> John Mueller, *Democracy, Capitalism, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, 138.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

characteristic of democracy.”<sup>8</sup> However, Dahl focuses the majority of his analysis on the actions of citizens who seek to exert influence on the government, not on the extent to which government officials respond to them. While he may acknowledge that the latter is important, it is still a function of the citizens’ attempts to exert influence on the government. Mueller’s definition comes with caveats: he acknowledges that for simplicity’s sake he ignores the fact that the costs of protest are often much higher than the costs of voting for citizens. He also does not offer concrete measurements for government responsiveness, which is a much more nebulous quantity than voter turnout. In my research, I looked for government actions that complied with citizen demands as expressed through protests or other forms of lobbying (outside of voting).

A final definition of democracy offered in the literature focuses more on what democracy is not rather than what it is. Richard Gunther, José Ramón Montero, and Joan Botella see electoral volatility and party fragmentation as inconsistent with successful, stable democracy in their examination of Spain’s history and path toward democratic consolidation.<sup>9</sup> (Democratic consolidation is the process by which the institutions of democracy become more entrenched in a state, to the point where the state has almost no chance of reverting to nondemocratic rule.)<sup>10</sup> Electoral volatility refers to the change in voting behavior between elections, or the number of voters who switch their votes from one party to another. Party fragmentation refers to the presence of many parties with support divided among the electorate. These authors, like Mueller, disagree with Dahl’s participatory definition of democracy, pointing out that in its Restoration Period, Spain’s rigged elections made it only a limited democracy. The following regime, the Second Republic, was characterized as a democracy, but failed to form a lasting foundation, and

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Gunther, José Ramón Montero, and Joan Botella, *Democracy in Modern Spain*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 214.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas Schedler, “What is Democratic Consolidation?,” *Journal of Democracy* 9, no. 2 (1998): 91.

therefore did not achieve democratic consolidation. The authors attribute this failure to the sociopolitical and political cleavages that existed in Spanish society at the time.<sup>11</sup> The reason that Spain ultimately arrived at a state of successful democracy was that changes in society and political culture caused declines in electoral volatility and party fragmentation.

These changes were so significant that the authors regarded them as essential for Spanish democracy, rather than mere variables affecting democratic consolidation. Gunther, Montero, and Botella's work provides me with a third definition of democracy to apply to my study. Using these three lenses – participation, response, and electoral volatility/party fragmentation – allowed me to examine and evaluate these movements more comprehensively, especially because of the wide variation among scholars' definitions of democracy.

### **Indigenous Political Movements in the Literature**

Much of the existing literature on indigenous politics in South America focuses on the movements that began in the 1990s. Constructivist studies found that indigenous identities in this region are uniquely fluid and multi-faceted, owing to the large number of interacting indigenous groups and the fact that many indigenous people self-identified as "mestizo" to avoid persecution throughout most of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> This resulting heterogeneity and fragmented nature makes Latin American indigenous parties different from those elsewhere in the world.<sup>13</sup> The constructivist literature also reveals a conflict between the ideals of the democratic governments established in Latin America in the 1980s and the indigenous movements' conceptions of democracy. Robert Albro argues that the former's goal was order and the latter's goal inclusion,

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Raúl L. Madrid, "The Rise of Ethnopolitics in Latin America," *World Politics* 60, no. 3 (April 1, 2008): 479-480.

<sup>13</sup> Jonas Wolff, "(De-)Mobilising the Marginalised : A Comparison of the Argentine Piqueteros and Ecuador's Indigenous Movement," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39 (2007): 11.



especially by expanding access to the political process.<sup>14</sup> Albro also argues that while indigenous ideals can conflict with traditional liberal democracy's emphasis on the individual, indigenous movements are continually reshaping their identities to include such individualistic ideals as international human rights.<sup>15</sup>

Most positivist literature agrees that indigenous political movements can strengthen the state's democracy. Raúl Madrid identifies five ways: by improving indigenous representation in government; by increasing indigenous political participation; by reducing party fragmentation and electoral volatility; by increasing cultural acceptance of democracy among the indigenous; and by reducing unrest with opportunities to protest within the system.<sup>16</sup> These five factors encompass two of my chosen definitions of democracy, but Madrid does not directly address the factor of government responsiveness to citizen demands. His claim that indigenous party movements can reduce party fragmentation and electoral volatility supports Gunther, Montero, and Botella's argument that these factors inhibit democracy. He counters the intuitive idea that adding new, ethnic parties to a political system would increase fragmentation and volatility.

Donna Lee Van Cott argues that indigenous movements emphasize economic and social justice and increase the influence of subordinate groups. She equates this reduction in inequality with improvement in democracy.<sup>17</sup> This correlation is not as clear cut as she makes it sound. Although inequality can present a barrier to free and fair elections and civil liberties, economically unequal groups are not necessarily unequal at the polls. Greater economic and cultural influence do matter in what Van Cott calls the informal political system – lobbying and

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Albro, "The Culture of Democracy and Bolivia's Indigenous Movements," *Critique of Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (2006): 390.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>16</sup> Raúl Madrid, "Indigenous Parties and Democracy in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 47, no. 4 (December 1, 2005): 166-167

<sup>17</sup> Donna Lee Van Cott, "Latin America's Indigenous Peoples," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 4 (October 2007): 139.

advocacy.<sup>18</sup> Her argument relates to Dahl's study of who governs in New Haven and his definition of democracy in terms of citizen input. I therefore took into account whether having an equal right to vote actually guarantees indigenous groups equality of input in government.

The authors of the existing literature also identify potential challenges to democracy from Latin America's indigenous movements. Jorge Dominguez identifies three kinds of coups in Latin American history: overthrow of the government by armed forces; overthrow of the government and armed forces high command by a faction of the military; and overthrow of the legislative and judicial branches of government by the president.<sup>19</sup> While he says the current prospects for continued constitutional government in Latin American states are high, the danger of coups, especially the third type, is very real. He identifies the example of Peru's Alberto Fujimori successfully dissolving the rest of the government with charges of corruption.<sup>20</sup> His argument, that democracy is challenged when presidents increase their own power at the expense of the other governmental institutions' constitutional powers, is correct. I applied this idea to my research by looking for instances of presidents taking actions to this effect, which could weaken democracy according to all three of my definitions. However, this problem is by no means exclusive to leaders elected by indigenous movements: it applies to presidents all over the world.

Van Cott argues that while indigenous movements can strengthen democracy in many states, they can topple governments that are already weak, as has occurred in Bolivia. If the indigenous parties install equally flawed regimes, they can ultimately increase electoral volatility and party disintegration.<sup>21</sup> This directly relates to the definition of successful democracy put forth by Gunther, Montero, and Botella. While it applies to any movement, not just indigenous

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>19</sup> Jorge I. Dominguez, "Latin America's Crisis of Representation," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 109.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>21</sup> Van Cott, 136.

parties, Van Cott's argument helped me evaluate changes in power in the Bolivian and Chilean governments that occurred during my chosen time period. By examining positive or negative press coverage of indigenous party members who came to power as a result of indigenous movements, I aimed to assess whether the movements weakened democracy by increasing electoral volatility and party fragmentation. Van Cott also argues that indigenous parties are often sexist and prone to tactics that are better suited for armed conflict than a multi-party government.<sup>22</sup> These challenges do seem greater for indigenous parties than others.

In another article, Van Cott and Roberta Rice perform an extensive quantitative analysis examining the factors that influence the success of indigenous political parties. They gather data on the party movements in six countries, setting 1990 as the starting point for these movements in post-dictatorial Latin America. They identify Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Nicaragua and Venezuela as sites of successful indigenous party action, defining success as gaining national legislative representation. Argentina, Chile, and Peru, on the other hand, are examples of less successful indigenous movements because of their lack of electoral victories. The authors find that favorable institutional situations (such as an electoral rule that grants parties proportional representation in the national legislature), demographic situations (such as optimal size of the indigenous population), and political conditions (such as indigenous activism that is focused regionally) form a strong foundation for indigenous party success. In addition, these parties are more likely to be successful in the presence of certain political and structural conditions, such as high poverty rates and low presence of class-based identities.<sup>23</sup> This study focuses on the causes

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>23</sup> Rice, Roberta, and Donna Lee Van Cott. "The Emergence and Performance of Indigenous

Peoples' Parties in South America - a Subnational Statistical Analysis." *Comparative*

*Political Studies* 39, no. 6 (2006): 709-732.

of indigenous movements rather than the effects, which is the gap I intend to fill. However, Van Cott and Rice's work provided the time frame for my research (1990 to the present) as well as qualitative information on the indigenous party movements in individual countries.

Van Cott and Rice also argue that rather than contribute to high electoral volatility and party fragmentation, indigenous parties arose from them. The authors show that social changes in the 1970s and 1980s led to the collapse of the existing party systems as their constituencies split off and their platforms lost focus, setting the stage for the rise of successful indigenous parties. According to the Gunther, Montero, and Botella definition, this resulted in stronger democracies in the countries where these successful movements took place. When evaluating the effects of indigenous party movements on electoral volatility and party fragmentation, I tried to take into account how volatile and fragmented the party systems were before the movements began.

Another portion of the literature is devoted to case studies, examining why certain indigenous movements have been successful. Madrid argues that Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) in Bolivia has responded to the fluid and heterogeneous nature of indigenous identity there by combining an ethnic focus with the tenets of populism, expanding its base beyond those who self-identify as indigenous.<sup>24</sup> He says that the party has employed strategies of indigenous appeal, including choosing indigenous candidates and tying itself to similar organizations nationwide, as well as populist strategies, including disseminating an antiestablishment message and establishing redistributive and state interventionist policies. Finally, the party employs a charismatic national leader, Evo Morales.<sup>25</sup> Madrid's conclusions relate to Dahl's argument that pledging to end the marginalization of a long-oppressed ethnic group is an effective strategy.

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Roberta Rice and Donna Lee Van Cott, "The Emergence and Performance of Indigenous Peoples' Parties in South America - a Subnational Statistical Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 6 (2006): 709.

<sup>24</sup> Madrid, "The Rise of Ethnopoliticism in Latin America," 475.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.

In another case study, Jonas Wolff compares the protest movements of Ecuador's indigenous population and Argentina's recently unemployed workers, identifying four common elements between them. Each formed its foundations in the local community; advocated against the national establishment while calling for positive local reforms; organized based on participation and consensus; and used the roadblock as its chief form of protest.<sup>26</sup> He argues that these characteristics initially caused these movements' success, but later allowed the establishment to partially meet their demands and then reabsorb their constituencies into the political mainstream.<sup>27</sup> However, Wolff underestimates the extent to which these movements did increase the political participation of their constituencies, and therefore the success of their countries' democracies according to the participation definition. He says that the fact that they did not completely disrupt the existing party structure signifies a failure. I would argue that this combination of avoiding party fragmentation and increasing indigenous participation strengthened Ecuador's and Argentina's democracies according to two definitions of democracy.

The existing research offers explanations for why indigenous movements have achieved power. However, there are few comparisons between countries with and without strong indigenous populations from the 1990s, when these movements emerged in force. Van Cott offers a tentative conclusion that in countries with high indigenous populations, like Bolivia, their movements result in dramatic shifts of power from the established, exclusive institutions to the indigenous parties. In countries with small indigenous populations, like Chile, their inclusion results in a more general increase in participation of a variety of historically excluded minorities.<sup>28</sup> In my research, I examined the validity of this claim and drew my own conclusion.

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<sup>26</sup> Jonas Wolff, "(De-)Mobilising the Marginalised : A Comparison of the Argentine Piqueteros and Ecuador's Indigenous Movement," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39 (2007): 16-17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>28</sup> Van Cott, 127.

## Research Design

To answer my research question – what is the relationship, if any, between indigenous party movements and the success of democracy? – I took a qualitative approach by analyzing the effects of indigenous party movements on the nature and strength of their countries’ democracies. My goal is to expand upon the existing research by addressing my question through the different lenses of multiple concepts of democracy. My research is explanatory in nature, seeking to explain the success of democracy with the actions of indigenous party movements.

My independent variable is the action of indigenous parties in attempting to recruit supporters and to achieve electoral and political victories. My dependent variable is the success of democracy in the parties’ countries. Based on my literature review, I divided this variable into three subcategories: voting and influence, government responsiveness, and electoral volatility and party fragmentation. I hypothesized that active indigenous parties would increase both citizen influence and government responsiveness, and would therefore strengthen democracy according to two definitions. However, I also expected that the parties’ actions would increase electoral volatility and party fragmentation, signaling a weakening of democracy according to my third definition. Because this is a qualitative paper, I examined and explained instances that affected these variables, rather than merely counting them. I also took into account the possibility that indigenous parties’ actions would change the nature of voting, responsiveness, and fragmentation, not just the degree. Ultimately, I tried to synthesize these three definitions to examine the overall effect of indigenous parties on democracy. I expected that the gains for democracy would outweigh the losses caused by increased volatility and fragmentation, showing that indigenous party movements have strengthened democracy.

I chose a qualitative approach to my research because the nebulous and multifaceted nature of the definition of democracy makes it almost impossible to quantify. Also, comprehensive numerical data on voter turnout and party registration, particularly broken down by ethnic group, is not available for South American countries. I aimed to evaluate and assess the substantive ways that indigenous parties affect the quantity and quality of participation, government responsiveness, and electoral volatility and party fragmentation. For participation, I looked for evidence of indigenous party efforts to increase voter turnout and run indigenous candidates, and for changes in the proportion and sectors of the population that voted in local and national elections, sought state-sponsored elected office, and won state-sponsored elections. To evaluate government responsiveness, I looked for news about indigenous party lobbying and protests, followed by news of government officials acquiescing to their demands. For electoral volatility and party fragmentation, I looked for news about blocs of voters switching parties or splitting off from old parties to form new ones. Because few, if any, statistics are available on indigenous voter eligibility and turnout and on membership in different indigenous groups, I relied mainly on qualitative evidence.

My strategy was a comparative case study focusing on two countries, Bolivia and Chile. I choose these cases using the maximum variation strategy, allowing me to compare two countries with similar political situations but different success of indigenous party movements. Both Bolivia and Chile transitioned from dictatorial rule to democracy in the 1980s. Also, indigenous parties existed before 1990 in both countries, but the movements for their prominence did not take place until after that year.<sup>29</sup> This movement was considered a success in Bolivia, in which a majority of the population is indigenous, and a failure in Chile, which has a much smaller

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<sup>29</sup> Roberta Rice and Donna Lee Van Cott, "The Emergence and Performance of Indigenous Peoples' Parties in South America: A Subnational Statistical Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 6 (2006): 714.

indigenous population.<sup>30</sup> Because of this key difference, the case of Chile has the potential to suggest what aspects of Bolivian democracy are results of its successful indigenous movement.

The time period of my sample is from 1990 to the present and is based on Rice and Van Cott's quantitative study of the indigenous party movements in six Latin American countries, including Chile and Bolivia. Their field research defined 1990 as the starting point for indigenous movements in post-dictatorial Latin America. Using the present as my end date allowed me include recent developments in both countries, especially Bolivia, where an indigenous party is still in power.

My method of data collection was reading and analyzing documents, due to my focus on historical developments in the indigenous party movements and my physical location. Observing or interviewing Bolivians and Chileans was not feasible because I do not have access to high government figures or the largely rural indigenous populations. My data consisted mainly of articles from *LatinNews*, a European publication written to provide those in business, financial services, government and academia with news and analysis on economic and political developments in Latin America.<sup>31</sup> Although this publication was removed from the region, it also did not have a noticeable ideological bent in favor of the Chilean or Bolivian government, business interests, or indigenous groups. To find relevant articles, I performed searches of editions from 1990 to 2010 with search terms including "indigenous movement," "indigenous party," "Chile," and "Bolivia."

In addition to the information I gained from these articles to use directly in my paper, I also identified key dates in the history of each movement. I then searched through the microfilm archives at the U.S. Library of Congress to find editions of respected, national Chilean and

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Intelligence Research Ltd., "About Us," LatinNews, <http://www.latinnews.com/default.asp?mode=about> [accessed January 29, 2010].



Bolivian newspapers (*El Mercurio* and *El Diario*, respectively) that covered the events in each country's indigenous movement on these key dates. I used these articles to supplement the *LatinNews* coverage with primary sources. Finally, I used the data gathered by the scholars covered in my literature review, particularly the work of Van Cott, Rice, and Madrid.

I organized this data chronologically by country, so as to provide a clear picture of the recent history of the indigenous movement in each country. Because I sought to understand whether indigenous movements affected the quality of democracy for two individual cases, I analyzed this data with the methods of a case study. This combines categorical aggregation (searching for patterns) with direct interpretation (looking at single instances).<sup>32</sup> My qualitative approach allowed me to look at the context of the changes in each variable, to better understand how each indigenous party action affected the strength of democracy in that country.

The ethical issues of this project are minimal because I did not perform human subject research or deal with personal information, and therefore did not need to obtain informed consent. The potential for my findings to cause harm is small, given the limited distribution this paper will have. Also, although I spent a semester studying in Chile, I do not see any potential conflicts of interest. Because I read newspapers and other publicly-available documents, I did not interact or obtain data from anyone whom I know personally.

Performing a qualitative case study allowed me to examine the nuances of indigenous parties' effects on different aspects of democracy in their countries. This method helped me identify different qualitative indicators of the status of democracy in Chile and Bolivia (my dependent variable) and then explain these situations in terms of these countries' indigenous party movements (my dependent variable), if a causal link existed. News articles were the most accessible data to me and were used to build upon the field observations used as data in the

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995.

existing literature. In keeping with the case study method of research, I identified single cases within each country's history where an indigenous party's action directly impacted the strength of that country's democracy. I also looked for patterns in the ways that these parties affected their countries' democracies, both within and across my cases of Chile and Bolivia. Because the goal of a case study is to explain the case, my plan to explain the status of these countries' democracies in terms of their indigenous parties ultimately helped me answer the larger question of what makes a successful democracy.

## Case Study: Chile

### Early Demands and Rising World Concern

Chile's indigenous population, about 692,000 people, is relatively small, comprising just 4.6 percent of the total population. The largest indigenous group is the Mapuche, whose 650,000 people have historically struggled to keep their traditional lands and enjoy basic human rights.<sup>33</sup> Chile was a relatively stable country until 1973, when socialist president Salvador Allende was overthrown and killed in a military coup. He was replaced by Augusto Pinochet, a dictator whose regime has been implicated in countless human rights violations including torture, executions, and forced disappearances. The regime had particularly disastrous results for Chile's already marginalized and impoverished indigenous population because the government purposely broke up indigenous community lands.

In 1988, after the fall of the Pinochet dictatorship, the new democratic government under President Patricio Aylwin set up a Special Commission for Indigenous Peoples to draft laws to protect their rights. Aylwin also promised that Chile would ratify the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169, passed in 1989, which lays out land and culture rights and professes the autonomy of indigenous peoples. However, the appointed vice president of Aylwin's commission avoided accepting responsibility for the betterment of Chile's indigenous groups. He admitted that while indigenous people are deprived of land and water in their native lands, and subjected to racism in Santiago, "repairing the harm done to the original inhabitants of these lands is not only the responsibility of one government, but of a whole society."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview," *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, May 2008.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

The next year, 1989, saw the failure of Chile's indigenous groups' most significant attempt to found an overarching national organization. Indigenous leaders tried to form the Partido de la Tierra y la Identidad (Land and Identity Party) to represent their own interests in the government, rather than using intermediaries (traditionally parties of the Marxist left). However, just before the elections, the movement's leaders failed to register the party and chose to run under the established parties instead. This perpetuated a legacy of indigenous parties in Chile that "are limited in scope, weak in outreach, and marginalized from political debates."<sup>35</sup>

This early defeat actually increased electoral volatility, because the indigenous electorate, which had the potential to unite behind one party, was instead divided among various leftist parties. The actions of the indigenous leaders in choosing to run under established parties led directly to this increase. Although the creations of a new party would have led to individual voters switching to it, increasing electoral volatility in the short term, the presence of a long term indigenous party could have prevented indigenous voters from switching among the many leftist parties as each temporarily pledged to represent their interests.

The October 1990 visit to Chile of Spain's King Juan Carlos set off a split in the burgeoning indigenous movement. The Metropolitan Coordinator of Indigenous Peoples scheduled a protest rally in Santiago, but the mayor refused to grant permission to hold it. This signified an early failure of the movement to strengthen democracy by improving government response to citizens' demands. Meanwhile, in the city of Temuco, one Mapuche organization invited the King to engage in talks as another planned a protest against his visit. Then an explosive was set off under a statue of a Spanish conqueror.<sup>36</sup> Already, the different movements were dividing indigenous supporters and increasing the potential for party fragmentation, while

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<sup>35</sup> Roberta Rice and Donna Lee Van Cott, "The Emergence and Performance of Indigenous Peoples' Parties in South America."

<sup>36</sup> "Royal visit triggers off protest in Chile," *Latin American Weekly Report*, October 25, 1990.

the bombers indicated that they considered political participation within the government structure pointless. This divide between governments and extremist groups is a common theme for Chilean indigenous people. If they feel that the existing political parties do not reflect their interests, their extreme actions may increase electoral volatility and party fragmentation.

The UN kept the issue of indigenous rights in the foreground by declaring 1993 the International Year of the World's Indigenous People. The Chilean Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Congress, unanimously passed a law to set up the Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena (National Indigenous Development Corporation; CONADI) which included indigenous representatives, a land and water fund, and a language and culture preservation fund.<sup>37</sup> The law also officially ended the subdivision of indigenous lands that Pinochet had established.<sup>38</sup> This would seem to signal a victory for both indigenous parties and democracy: indigenous people participated in the government through CONADI, and the government became more responsive to more of its population. Indeed, indigenous political groups took an active role in drafting the law.<sup>39</sup> However, the bill was changed significantly in Congress before its passage, dissatisfying some of its initial supporters. One Chilean Mapuche organization demanded that it go farther by officially recognizing the Mapuche as a people for the first time.<sup>40</sup>

It is unclear as to how much the Chilean government's actions were a result of pressure from local indigenous parties as opposed to international pressure. *LatinNews* reported that across the continent, "the new 'Indian question' has already been picked up by politicians -- together with the environment, the rediscovery of poverty and the questioning of the fruits of

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<sup>37</sup> "New 'Indian question' survives 1992," *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 11, 1993.

<sup>38</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> "New 'Indian question' survives 1992," *Latin American Weekly Report*.

about half-a-decade of neo-liberalism.”<sup>41</sup> Also, days before the new Chilean law was approved, a convention of fifty legislators from eleven Latin American countries was held in Santiago to address indigenous rights. One of the main resulting demands was that all governments ratify the ILO’s Convention 169. This demand was echoed in a meeting of indigenous organizations in San José, Costa Rica, where the attendees agreed upon the ratification of Convention 164 as a common political goal.<sup>42</sup> If the Chilean government did adopt the Convention, it would signal an improvement in the government responsiveness definition of democracy, but this would include responsiveness to international will as well as domestic. However, it was not until 2008 that Chile ratified the binding document, thus showing the government’s refusal to agree to a key demand of the Mapuche.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, attendees at the San José meeting expressed concern that political allies of indigenous groups were using the indigenous to pursue their own agendas. A Mayan Guatemalan leader said, “Left-wing groups manipulate the Indian identity to gain space for themselves at home and abroad...We don't want protection, but effective participation in society and the economy.”<sup>44</sup> A Quechua leader said that “Indians tend to get caught in a vice between insurgent groups who seek refuge and support among them, and governments who believe that we want to replace the structures of the state.”<sup>45</sup> This phenomenon was especially acute in Chile, which had no national indigenous political representation and therefore had to rely on existing leftist parties. This echoed the legacy left by the failure of the Land and Identity Party and helps explain why the absence of a dominant indigenous party promotes electoral volatility.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> “Convention 169: Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention,” 1989, International Labor Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C169> [accessed March 31, 2010].

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

The trend of world concern for indigenous rights continued with the release of a May 1993 ILO Report that announced that Latin American's indigenous people experienced the highest levels of poverty and unemployment. The ILO also said, though, that Latin America was on the forefront in protecting indigenous peoples' rights, and that countries including Chile had made significant legislative advances. At the same time, several Mapuche lands were threatened by construction projects. The newly-formed Inter-Regional Mapuche Council, designed to be an umbrella organization to coordinate and represent Mapuche society, noted "the absence of a clear state policy of respect for the rights of the indigenous peoples in these new times."<sup>46</sup>

The early 1990s set a precedent of the Chilean government pledging to better the situation of the Mapuche, while the lack of political will to do so prevented real change from being implemented. The collapse of the Land and Identity Party led to the lack of a united front to elicit government response. It also weakened democracy by increasing electoral volatility and party fragmentation as indigenous voters switched among parties that did not directly represent their concerns. In addition, of the gains that were made for Chilean indigenous peoples, it is unclear which of them were responses to the actions of Chilean indigenous parties and which came about as a result of international pressure. This set the stage for a weakened democracy.

### **CONADI and Conflict Over Land**

The years after 1993 saw the return of a significant amount of land returned to Chile's indigenous peoples, particularly the Mapuche.<sup>47</sup> However, CONADI, the organization charged with distributing public lands and purchasing private property for indigenous communities, experienced an upheaval in 1998. Then-Chilean President Eduardo Frei fired two of CONADI's

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<sup>46</sup> "ILO takes up Indian cause," *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 10, 1993; Mapuche International Link, "About Us," Mapuche Nation, <http://www.mapuche-nation.org> [accessed March 31, 2010].

<sup>47</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

directors and appointed Rodrigo Gonzalez, a member of the ruling Socialist Party, as the organization's first non-indigenous director. The majority of Mapuche organizations refused to recognize him as leader.<sup>48</sup> This represented a clear problem for Chilean democracy from the citizen input perspective: indigenous groups did not feel they had access to the CONADI directorship or to representation by Gonzalez.

It also signaled problems for democracy through the government output lens. In 1999, timber companies announced plans to begin logging operations on Mapuche-claimed land in Chile's Bío Bío and Araucania regions. Confrontations between the indigenous locals and the police and logging company employees grew frequent. Meanwhile, CONADI had only budgeted about 7,000 hectares of land to distribute to indigenous communities in 1999, about a third of the total amount claimed by indigenous groups.<sup>49</sup> This aspect of the law was a failure for democracy if indigenous groups had to fight for land outside of the established government organizations.

The Frei administration insisted that while poverty was the root of the indigenous groups' demands, they had been influenced by "foreign infiltrators" like outside environmentalist and anarchist groups.<sup>50</sup> This attitude has interesting implications for the effect of local indigenous group actions on democracy. Rather than tie them to a specific race and culture, the Chilean government clearly did not view indigenous rights as a legitimate concern, but rather as an amalgamation of the concerns of the poor and of environmentalists and fringe groups. So far, indigenous parties had failed to make headway in this view, reinforcing the legacy of long-term party failures. This can be tied back to the failure of any one group to become a long-term viable party and consolidate the demands of indigenous people into one unified voice.

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<sup>48</sup> "Indian land disputes in Chile," *Latin American Weekly Report*, March 9, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*



The indigenous protests against the logging companies grew more intense when Mapuche activists began burning forests. Even as Chilean business leaders hailed new foreign investment, radical activists started at least seventy-two forest fires in 1999, which *LatinNews* reported may have deterred new investment in addition to the costs incurred in damages and insurance by the logging companies.<sup>51</sup> Two of the most radical groups, Coordinador Arauco Malleco de Comunidades en Conflicto (Arauco Malleco Coordinator of Communities in Conflict; CAM) and Consejo de Todas las Tierras (All Lands Council; CTT), garnered international press for advocating violence to reclaim their lands. In fact, they are the only two Mapuche organizations named by *LatinNews*, even though *LatinNews* alludes to many other nonviolent Mapuche groups.

Even in Chilean press, the Mapuche activists failed to garner much attention: they continued their protests, but rarely made the front page. One exception was a March 1999 article in the respected, conservative-leaning Santiago paper *El Mercurio* that described the Mapuches' ultimatum to logging company Forestal: stop planting trees in ancestral lands, or the protests would escalate. The article included quotes from Forestal officials, who said they would engage in dialog only if the protests did not involve violence, and interviews with government officials, who pledged to meet with protesters and take additional social measures to improve life for the Mapuche. Nowhere were any of the Mapuche leaders or protesters quoted in the article.<sup>52</sup> Even in the media, the Mapuche could not compete with the government and large corporations in order to have their voices heard. Moreover, the government was unable to back up its pledges to better their lives. *El Mercurio* reported a week later that the government did not have nearly enough land to distribute to the Mapuches in the south. National government officials directed the Mapuche to request their promised land through CONADI, but CONADI officials said they

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<sup>51</sup> "Indian militancy threatens timber upturn," *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 4, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> "Exigen Case de Labores: Ultimátum de Mapuches a Forestal," *El Mercurio*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, March 1, 1999, page A1.

did not have enough land to go around. It seems the president's officials were eager to pledge their help, but less eager to take responsibility for not allocating enough land to CONADI.

In its analysis, *LatinNews* said, "The Mapuche issue is one of the most difficult problems the winner of Chile's presidential elections on 16 January will have to tackle."<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Lagos, the government candidate, lost in the nine boroughs with the most violent protests.<sup>54</sup> However, this does not necessarily imply that indigenous voters turned out to vote against him. Anti-indigenous or neutral residents of the regions could have been unhappy enough with the violence to vote against Lagos. The early land conflicts failed to secure improvements for the Mapuche or for Chilean democracy through their efforts. CONADI did not have the ability to fully respond to indigenous demands or truly improve indigenous participation; the administration allocated it insufficient land and appointed a non-indigenous director. Moreover, the failure of the Mapuche to receive publicity for their nonviolent struggles, either in the press or in the government, engendered greater electoral volatility and party fragmentation as they split into different factions or aligned temporarily with non-indigenous leftist groups.

## The Ralco Dam

One key conflict involving Mapuche land began in 2000 and involved the efforts of Endesa, a Spanish energy company, to complete a hydroelectric power project in Ralco, on ancestral Mapuche land.<sup>55</sup> Many Mapuche residents agreed to relocate so that a dam could be constructed that would flood their lands, but ten families refused and complained to the company's headquarters. They legally challenged the decrees that the Chilean ministry of the economy was about to enact, which would have granted approval for the power station and

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> "Indigenous peoples versus the dams," *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 29, 2000.

transmission lines. In response, the company temporarily halted the project. While this was a victory for the Mapuche, it was not brought about through the government, but rather through a private company. In fact, Chilean President Frei said that it was up to the company, not the government, to resolve the issue, since the government's only role was to approve the project as legal. However, the head of an indigenous commission proposed that the interior ministry hold a political summit in Santiago with Mapuche leaders to discuss the problems with the dam, and requested that a plebiscite be held so that the 5,000 Alto Bio-Bio residents could decide on the project.<sup>56</sup> If enacted, this proposal would have represented a concrete improvement in the input definition of Chile's democracy. However, because the Mapuche had not succeeded in convincing the government to respond to their demands, the proposals were unsuccessful.

After President Ricardo Lagos replaced Frei, he called the first-ever meeting of indigenous and business leaders, including nine Mapuche, Rapanui, Atacameno and Aymara delegates, four businessmen from the farming and timber industries, seven cabinet ministers, and three Christian leaders. The goal was to set up a commission charged with coming up with a comprehensive new policy for indigenous communities in the next fifty days.<sup>57</sup> However, representatives from the radical CTT were not included, even though their leader publicly offered to cooperate with the new commission. The indigenous groups' actions had increased participation for some, but not all. This came after evidence arose in February 2000 showing that some of the accused Mapuche attacks on forestry companies were actually staged by company security guards. However, in a small victory for responsive democracy, President Lagos

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> "Lagos moves on 'new deal' for Indians," *Latin American Weekly Report*, March 21, 2000.

appropriated \$130 million more to help 650 Mapuche communities, partly allocated to purchase private lands and return them to the Mapuche.<sup>58</sup>

The Mapuche suffered a setback in the land conflict in 2003, when a Mapuche woman who had led protests against the Ralco complex for eight years gave up her fight against Endesa. She ceded her plot for another piece of land twenty times larger plus the equivalent of \$287,000 because, she said, her son was ill.<sup>59</sup> This illustrates a core problem with any fight between an impoverished, disenfranchised member of a minority and a large company. The movement can only last as long as the protesters can afford to hold out, especially in the absence of a strong national indigenous group to support them. This action was also an even further departure from an increase in the government's responsiveness to citizens' demands. Not only did this protester give up her fight, her choice had been to protest entirely against the private sector.

The Bío Bío River dam project is an example of a common theme throughout the conflicts among indigenous organizations (particularly the Mapuche), the private sector, and the Chilean government: the indigenous groups won some much-touted concessions from the government, but the state ultimately sided more with the private sector. The government did bow to some indigenous demands and agree to meet with a few of their leaders, signaling slight gains for both representation and response. Ultimately, however, these talks did not yield long-term improvements for the Mapuche, or long-term gains for Chilean democracy.

## Court Convictions and Increasing Violence

This pattern continued in subsequent years. Chile's indigenous people won a symbolic victory in 2003, when the Commission for Historical Truth and New Treatment of Indigenous Peoples produced a report for President Lagos detailing the problems they faced. It signified the

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<sup>58</sup> John Rector, *The History of Chile*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003, 225.

<sup>59</sup> "Mapuche activist," *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 7, 2003.

administration's interest in examining the status of indigenous people, but it did not result in any legal or constitutional changes to benefit them.<sup>60</sup> The government also pledged to study the Mapuche demands named in a letter to local governments asking for dialog and increased land demands to CONADI.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, this pledge did not result in actual policy changes.

Also in 2003, CTT ramped up their pressure on the Chilean government by seizing and occupying twenty-six farms in the south. Their stated aim was to persuade the government to organize "a public dialogue between the Mapuche, the political parties, the timber industry, CONADI, and the planning ministry to discuss their grievances."<sup>62</sup> They claimed that the government tended to side with timber and power businesses in land disputes. Meanwhile, the Chilean Carabineros (the paramilitary police force) evicted protesters from four farms, including one owned by a former economy minister from the Pinochet government. The Chilean presidential administration continued to voice its support for the indigenous communities in general, but also moved to suppress independent action by CONADI.<sup>63</sup> Chile's indigenous people and democracy suffered a significant setback when the Chilean administration stifled the influence of a government organization designed to advocate for indigenous people.

The conflict prompted a 2003 visit to Chile by the UN Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples, Rodolfo Stavenhagen. The Chilean government came under harsh criticism from the international community for the way it treated the Mapuche.<sup>64</sup> Possibly in response, the executive branch of the government did attempt to keep its promise to constitutionally recognize indigenous peoples, but proposals to do so were rejected by the Chilean Senate in May 2003.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

<sup>61</sup> "Gobierno estudiará demandas de Mapuches," *El Mercurio*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, 3 May 2003, page C1.

<sup>62</sup> "Demand for public 'dialogue' over grievances," *Latin American Weekly Report*, May 6, 2003.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

The fact that the legislature was even more unresponsive to indigenous demands than the president signifies the extent to which indigenous representation was absent from the congress.

That same year, the Chilean judicial branch entered the fray, dealing the movement another major setback. In 2001, three Mapuche leaders and activists were imprisoned on charges of terrorism after they were arrested for allegedly setting fire to a forest and a building, which belonged to a former Chilean agriculture minister. The charges were based on an anti-terrorism law that dated from the Pinochet dictatorship and was used to prosecute indigenous protesters despite the Lagos government's insistence that there was no terrorism in the country. The Chilean appeals court had ordered the activists' release, but the supreme court overturned the ruling, saying that the appeals court hadn't considered all the evidence. Mapuche leaders rejected the ruling and accused the government of "another set-up of political connivance" against their people.<sup>66</sup> These claims were not without merit. The fact that the law benefited corporations was publicly acknowledged: One 2000 editorial in *El Mercurio* advocated the use of the law against indigenous protestors, saying it was necessary to restore confidence in the government, especially to benefit the private sector.<sup>67</sup> Also, Human Rights Watch issued a report condemning the use of the anti-terrorism law against the Mapuche. The law had lasting political implications, since people convicted of terrorism were banned from holding public office for fifteen years by the Chilean Constitution. Human Rights Watch also pointed out that police officers who were accused of abuse against the Mapuche were tried in military courts, "courts which have a record of acting as guarantors of impunity for those who abuse the rights of indigenous peoples."<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>66</sup> "Mapuche court setback," *Latin American Weekly Report*, July 8, 2003.

<sup>67</sup> "Ley de seguridad a indígenas," *El Mercurio*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, January 2, 2000, page A3.

<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Undue Process: Terrorism Trials, Military Courts, and the Mapuche in Southern Chile," 16, no. 5 (October 2004), 2.

Supreme Court's action was a clear setback for the Mapuche, even more so because it further alienated them from government institutions and encouraged efforts to work outside them.

The court decision added to a wave of protests in Mapuche territory. Reports of more land invasions and arson attacks surfaced, increasing party fragmentation and electoral volatility as these extreme protest actions further divided the Mapuche.<sup>69</sup> *LatinNews* reported that a "militant Mapuche organisation has decided to short-circuit the Chilean judicial process and appeal a court sentence directly to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission."<sup>70</sup> The action further decreased the likelihood of Mapuche participation in government and of the government's responding to them. At the same time, nonviolent protests failed to gain significant attention. For example, a hunger strike by several activists that year gained a brief article buried in *El Mercurio*, but no government response.<sup>71</sup>

Even more damaging to Mapuche participation in Chilean democracy, some Mapuche leaders held a national congress and then informed President Lagos that they had decided to create a Mapuche parliament. It was planned to include four representatives, meeting in committees on the economy, international relations, justice, health, housing, education, and culture.<sup>72</sup> Not only does trying to form a separate legislative body remove the possibility of securing indigenous participation and government response to it, the demands alienated less extreme Mapuche voters who may have been willing to work with the existing government.

In an effort to diffuse the tension, President Lagos announced in April 2004 that he would soon allow the debate over constitutional recognition of Chile's indigenous peoples to resume in Congress, still a major point of contention for the protesters. Lagos said his goal was to hold a

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<sup>69</sup> "Mapuche launch land invasions, *Latin American Weekly Report*, December 12, 2003.

<sup>70</sup> "Restless Mapuche create 'parliament'," *Latin American Weekly Report*, October 28, 2003.

<sup>71</sup> "Pobladores Inician un Ayuno Seco," *El Mercurio*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, October 27, 2003, page C7.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

vote before the year's end. Under recommendations from Aylwin's commission, he also said he would create a council to represent all ethnic groups and an under-secretariat of indigenous affairs to coordinate government action toward indigenous peoples.<sup>73</sup> This pledge illustrates the link between participation and response. Until this point, the protesters did not have enough participants in the government to secure a response to their demands. Now, Lagos was improving democracy through the response definition by offering the indigenous people further opportunities for participation, which would also improve democracy from that definition. However, like many of the government's other concessions, this pledge ultimately brought about little change in Chile's democracy or indigenous people's lives. A World Bank study released in May 2005 found that while Latin American indigenous people had garnered greater political power, their situation had not improved. The study measured indigenous political parties, elected representatives, constitutional provisions, and targeted health and education programs and found that they had "grown remarkably in the last fifteen years," but that indigenous people still comprised a proportionally small part of national legislatures in Latin America and considered themselves to have a small political voice.<sup>74</sup>

A 2004 joint report by Human Rights Watch and Chile's Indigenous Peoples' Rights Watch noted that more indigenous protests become violent, using roadblocks, land occupation, arson, cutting down of trees, and destroying of machinery. The Chilean government consequently charged over 200 members of the one group that advocated violence, CAM, with terrorism crimes.<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch found that as of 2004, though, only 2.4 percent of all Mapuche communities were involved in illegal acts.<sup>76</sup> The extremism that received most of the

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<sup>73</sup> "Update," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 20 April 2004.

<sup>74</sup> "Update," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 24 May 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

<sup>76</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Undue Process: Terrorism Trials, Military Courts, and the Mapuche in Southern Chile."



publicity was only the work of a small proportion of the indigenous population. Meanwhile, Chilean indigenous people as a whole had still failed to gain a greater voice through the government's few concessions to them. Democracy had improved slightly from the government response lens, but these gains were tempered by the fact that the responses were usually promises by the government rather than actions.

### **Controversial Reforms under Bachelet**

Michele Bachelet won the presidency in December 2005 and vowed to resolve the Mapuche conflict. She proposed giving CONADI more power to make policy affecting indigenous communities, and her pledge was finally followed by concrete action. In early 2006, the Bachelet administration ruled that the anti-terrorist law would no longer be used to arrest people protesting for the return of their land to their communities. Bachelet also opened a new Intercultural Hospital in the heart of the conflict area.<sup>77</sup> These are clear and significant examples of an improvement in government response to citizen demands.

In September 2007, the UN General Assembly approved the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which included articles recognizing rights to self-determination, ancestral lands, and government assistance with employment, education, and health. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon asked that governments incorporate the articles into their policies. This action, although a victory for Chile's indigenous people, was not a grassroots campaign that came from the communities themselves. It is another example of outside organizations potentially bringing about local change for Chile's indigenous communities.<sup>78</sup>

However, this declaration did foment another major step in Chile for indigenous rights. President Bachelet signed a proposal to reform the Constitution in October 2007. The reform

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<sup>77</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

<sup>78</sup> "Bachelet tries to cement indigenous rights in Chile," *Latin American Weekly Report*, October 25, 2007.

would officially recognize Chile's indigenous groups for the first time, guarantee indigenous lands, and secure the rights of indigenous people to practice their traditions, languages and institutions. However, Congress next had to pass the reform, and it would be the fifth time since 1990 that the ruling Concertación Party government had attempted to do so. In the past, the opposition party had claimed that recognizing indigenous groups would destroy national unity.

In a potential case of the actions of indigenous groups increasing party volatility and electoral fragmentation, a leader in CTT said that the proposal was insufficient. He called for the Mapuche to be granted nearly complete self-determination – politically, judicially, institutionally and economically. He also criticized the proposal for not addressing the fact that Mapuche land was still claimed by private forestry corporations. He led a march of 4,000 Mapuche activists to commemorate the annual Día de la Raza, Chile's indigenous people's day.<sup>79</sup>

In addition, the Mapuche activism against the forest company's land holdings came back to haunt Bachelet in 2008. Patricia Troncoso had been arrested during the Ralco Dam conflict. She was not Mapuche but white, and came from a middle class Santiago family. However, she, according to *LatinNews*, “raised greater awareness of the Mapuche cause than the Indians have managed in fifteen years” by holding a hunger strike to protest her ten-year sentence for setting a company-owned forest on fire.<sup>80</sup> While Troncoso did raise the profile of the struggle, the fact that it took a non-Mapuche woman from Santiago to garner national and international attention illustrates the weakness of the political voice of Chile's indigenous groups.

The issue of international intervention came into play here too, as President Bachelet faced international pressure to end Troncoso's 112-day hunger strike. Meanwhile, José Bengoa, a Mapuche historian and author, argued that the Mapuche homeland was becoming an Intifada

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> “Bachelet faces Mapuche intifada,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 7, 2008.

with its daily hunger strikes, road blocks, marches and fires. These efforts succeeded in scaring the Chilean government into believing that Troncoso could become a rallying point for greater social unrest. The Catholic Church negotiated a deal that Troncoso and two other activists could serve out their sentences in a work camp and return home on weekends.<sup>81</sup> Bachelet also created a special commission for indigenous affairs to start a dialogue with the Mapuche about their demands, including the return of Mapuche lands and the release of imprisoned protesters. However, continuing the pattern of the Chilean government siding with businesses, *LatinNews* reported that “it is difficult to see the government upsetting the hydroelectric, forestry and mining companies in Araucanía in order to appease the 300,000 Mapuche living there.”<sup>82</sup>

This solution presents an interesting trade-off for Chile’s democratic strength. On the one hand, the government responsiveness school would argue that the Chilean government’s favorable response to the Mapuche protests is the essence of democracy, even though it was not enacted through voting. On the other hand, those who opposed the decision to lighten Troncoso’s sentence claimed that it set a precedent of rewarding violence. While not included in my definitions, the rule of law is an important component of a strong democracy. Furthermore, any decision in which the administration and the Church overrule the judicial branch necessarily weakens the separation of powers. Also, the fact that the Church, not the government, negotiated the compromise lessened the victory for Troncoso’s supporters and signaled a potential weakening of the democratic government. Meanwhile, in another blow to the Mapuches’ confidence in the judicial system, a paramilitary police officer was absolved by a military tribunal of shooting a young Mapuche activist who was killed while setting a fire. His death had fomented more protests across the region. After she ended her hunger strike, Patricia Troncoso

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

wrote, “The Mapuche will never enjoy due process of law because the State has pre-emptively judged the Mapuche cause.”<sup>83</sup>

As the conflict wore on in 2008, NGOs weighed in. This time, in addition to international pressure from Amnesty International, a prestigious Chilean organization, Observatorio de Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas (Observatory of the Rights of Indigenous People; ODPI), called on the UN to investigate the government’s treatment of indigenous Chileans, which they charged had not improved despite Bachelet’s pledges. ODPI, directed by José Aylwin, former president Patricio Aylwin’s son, wrote to the government condemning human rights violations include torture, arbitrary arrests, and denial of constitutional rights. Twenty other NGOs asked UN observers to intervene in the conflict.<sup>84</sup>

The influx of international pressure opened a debate within the Chilean government. The Interior Minister said that the outside organizations could help solve the country’s problems, but the opposition party in Congress criticized the comment, saying it would cause too much international interference in Chilean affairs. Just two days later, a presidential spokesman reversed the administration’s official position when he said, “We have not invited nor are we going to invite any international observer because Chile does not need people to tell us how to solve our problems.” Only three more days after that, the minister secretary-general of government said that the government would not invite outside NGOs but also would not stop them from coming. International openness (along with human rights and the rule of law) is another condition not covered explicitly in my definitions, but important to democracy. However, even if international NGOs did secure the rights of Chile’s indigenous people, it would

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> “Government dithers over Mapuche policy,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 14, 2008.

not represent a victory for citizen participation or government responsiveness from the indigenous people's perspective.

The debate was furthered when *La Nación*, a major state-owned newspaper, ran an opinion piece arguing that Mapuche leaders had gained the support of various European parties for their proposals to create an independent Mapuche government. The Mapuche leader Aucan Huilcaman said at a conference in Madrid that he thought a Mapuche government could be set up in 2010, on the anniversary of Chilean independence. He also promised to submit a plan for this autonomous government in April 2008, so that it could then be analyzed to see how it would fit with the existing Chilean governmental structures.<sup>85</sup> This proposal was a potential cause of further fragmentation. Regardless of the practical merits of his proposal, Huilcaman would deal a direct blow to Chilean democracy if the Mapuche completely abandoned going through the national government to fulfill their needs. In addition, Huilcaman promised to plan the Mapuche government before considering how it would work with the Chilean government, implying the depths of the Mapuche lack of confidence in the existing institutions.

### National Victories and Local Conflicts

A democratic victory had occurred for the Mapuche just months before. While various Mapuche political groups had been taking action for nearly a decade, an official Mapuche political party (Wallmapuwen, meaning Mapuche Land,) had been formed the previous September. Pedro Quilaqueo, its leader, responded to Huilcaman's plan by pointed out that the Mapuche could coexist with the Chilean government just as Catalonia and Basque have coexisted with Spain.<sup>86</sup> The appearance of an official indigenous party, which would presumably

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

compete in national elections, had the potential to improve indigenous participation. However, it could also increase electoral volatility and party fragmentation.

March 2008 saw another qualified victory for Chile's indigenous people: the Chilean Senate finally approved ILO Convention 169, which would have provided constitutional recognition of Chile's indigenous people for the first time. However, the Senate amended the legislation with a clause that allowed the government to interpret it as it saw fit. Chile's indigenous and human rights groups called on Bachelet to veto it so that the legislature could adopt the original declaration, which spelled out standards for indigenous land protection and political participation. While the approval of the Convention was a landmark for indigenous representation in Chile, the fact that the government reserved the right to alter the requirements of political participation and land protection shows the extent to which it was not willing to guarantee the indigenous groups a full political voice. At the same time, however, the government also released a plan to create a new under-secretariat for indigenous affairs position under the ministry of planning.<sup>87</sup> This did guarantee at least some level of greater indigenous participation in government.

Indigenous groups scored a greater political victory in September 2008, when President Bachelet approved ILO Convention 169 and removed the interpretive clause. *LatinNews* called the declaration "the overriding objective of Chile's indigenous groups, spearheaded by the Mapuche." However, the debate was not yet over. The convention, unlike the Chilean government, used the words "territories" and "land" interchangeably, which left the document open to interpretation. It also said, "Preference shall be given to methods of punishment other than confinement in prison," which had the potential to further inflame the conflict over the

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<sup>87</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

imprisoned activists.<sup>88</sup> The adoption of the declaration was also not the same as the constitutional reform that many indigenous leaders demanded, but it still represented a victory for Chilean democracy as the government grew more responsive to its indigenous citizens' demands.

Late 2008 saw a fresh wave of conflict. Three militant Mapuche groups occupied private company-owned farms in July and attacked police with stones and shotguns. This prompted the return of the use of terrorism charges against them. In October 2008, a police-escorted convoy carrying a special prosecutor was ambushed by militant groups and two police officers were injured. Eleven suspects in the ambush were arrested in a massive police operation in April 2009 on charges of "illicit terrorist association."<sup>89</sup> July 2009 saw the arrest of Héctor Llaitul, the leader of CAM, who was suspected of masterminding the ambush. He had been imprisoned on terrorist charges on separate occasions in 2007 and 2008, but was released when it was found that some of the evidence against him was fabricated. Llaitul's arrest was reported in the press as a success after months of investigation. One aspect that separates this case from previous militant Mapuche group actions was the fact that investigators found anarchist literature in the home of one of the suspects; *LatinNews* reported that this might mean there was a connection between the Mapuche and the anarchist groups that had recently conducted bombings in Santiago.<sup>90</sup> Whether this connection existed or not, the reported association between Mapuche political groups and violent anarchist organizations did nothing to bring the Mapuche groups further into the political system.

In September 2009, President Bachelet named an existing government official, José Antonio Viera-Gallo, her new indigenous czar. Viera-Gallo pledged to introduce a bill to amend the anti-terrorism law so that it could no longer be used to prosecute Mapuche activists as it had been in the past year. This came after the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> "Mapuche militants react to arrest of their 'military' leader," *Latin American Weekly Report*, July 30, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

Discrimination published its finding that the law had been applied principally to prosecute Mapuche activists in the land conflict. However, opposition presidential candidate Sebastián Piñera stood in the way of the reform and publicly claimed that Mapuche activists were receiving training from foreign terrorist groups.<sup>91</sup> Viera-Gallo also proposed another bill to send to the legislature, to create an indigenous council and indigenous representation in Congress. The bill would also increase CONADI from seventeen to forty-four members, including eight popularly elected representatives from different ethnicities.<sup>92</sup> On its face, the fact that this proposal was made represented a significant victory from the government response definition of democracy, especially coupled with Viera-Gallo's pledge that the administration was always willing to enter into dialogue with indigenous groups.

However, a new umbrella organization for the Mapuche, Mapuche Territorial Alliance, denounced the proposed reforms. They said that the government had not consulted them, that the proposals would only create more bureaucracy, and that the Mapuche would conduct more land invasions and demands for political autonomy. Viera Gallo categorically refused to consider the prospect of Mapuche self-government. Meanwhile, in a move that threatened to increase electoral volatility and party fragmentation, a far left presidential candidate, Marco Enriquez-Ominami, called Viera-Gallo conservative and demanded that the Mapuche be guaranteed representation in Congress. The right-wing Piñera opposed the idea.<sup>93</sup> As of the end of last year, Viera-Gallo's proposal to guarantee indigenous seats had not yet been introduced in Congress.<sup>94</sup>

CAM reached new extremes in October 2009, when they declared war on the Chilean government and claimed that from the Bío Bío River south was an autonomous Mapuche nation.

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<sup>91</sup> "Bachelet names new indigenous czar," *Latin American Weekly Report*, September 3, 2009.

<sup>92</sup> "Indigenous groups flex their muscles across the region," *Latin American Weekly Report*, October 8, 2009.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."



In an increase of electoral volatility and party fragmentation, moderate Mapuche groups distanced themselves from CAM. Viera-Gallo denied that there was a civil war in the region, but CAM's move gained international attention in Latin America. *LatinNews* described the event as part of a trend of "increased radicalization of the Mapuches in...Chile."<sup>95</sup>

Recently, CONADI has pledged to distribute land plots to 115 different indigenous groups, and to respond to requests for land from 308 others, by 2010. Indigenous advocates have criticized the actions, claiming that because the land being transferred is mainly government-owned, the government is taking no additional effort to turn private property over to original indigenous owners. Chile's ODPI reported that the government's approval of business ventures, including forestry projects as well as gold mines, is the biggest threat to indigenous communities. ODPI continues to claim that Chile's laws do not take into account the voices of the indigenous communities that are directly affected by them, and that the government usually sides with business and persecutes the indigenous groups that make demands for change.<sup>96</sup>

Chile's indigenous movements never resulted in the rise of a strong indigenous political party; neither the Land and Identity Party nor Wallmapuwen managed to consolidate the indigenous electorate into their ranks. Instead, political demands were made either within existing left-wing parties or through social groups that operated outside the political system. As Madrid found, this increases party fragmentation, as indigenous voters tend to split their votes between major parties.<sup>97</sup> This was furthered by the fact that groups like CAM grew more extreme, causing their moderate followers to increase electoral volatility by leaving their ranks and splitting off into new groups. While the more extreme indigenous actions gained more

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<sup>95</sup> "Fernández tables political-reform proposal," *Latin American Weekly Report*, November 5, 2009.

<sup>96</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Chile: Overview."

<sup>97</sup> Raul Madrid, "Indigenous Voters and Party System Fragmentation."

publicity than any other, the changes they secured were most often nothing more than lip service from the Chilean government, devoid of actual improvements for their lives.

While Viera-Gallo's appointments and proposals could have signaled improvements in Chile's democracy by improving both citizen input and government response, they were rejected by both the rest of the government and by many indigenous groups. Perhaps two decades of unfulfilled promises by the Chilean government and fruitless action by the Mapuche had made the indigenous electorate unlikely to respond to anything but radical change. This would mean that not only did the presence of many conflicting political groups weaken democracy by increasing electoral volatility and party fragmentation, it also weakened democracy by preventing gains that would have been made in citizen participation and government response.

## Case Study: Bolivia

### Foundations: The Kataristas

Indigenous people make up a much higher proportion of the Bolivian population than the Chilean population. They total 4.1 million people, or 62 percent of the total, of which the majority is roughly evenly split between Quechua and Aymara people.<sup>98</sup> They won the return of some ancestral lands and the right to vote in 1952, but continued to experience severe human rights violations and inequality. Unlike other Latin American countries, indigenous movements were active in Bolivia before the 1990s: an Aymara nationalist movement, the Kataristas, fought for self-determination within Bolivia.<sup>99</sup> Their efforts continued as Bolivia was governed by military dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s, which had notoriously poor human rights records. Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia; CIDOB), which calls itself the national representative of Bolivia's indigenous movement (but is not a political party), was founded in 1982 by members of the Guarní, Chiquitano, Aymara, and Guarayo peoples.<sup>100</sup> Civilian rule was officially restored that year.<sup>101</sup>

Bolivia's indigenous people received a major legislative victory in 1989, when a new law prohibited the use of traditional indigenous land for colonization, ranching or forestry. However, the law was not universally applied or enforced. In September 1990, eight hundred members of indigenous groups marched from La Paz to the Amazon in protest. They succeeded in getting 1.5 million more hectares of their land recognized as indigenous territory, although the lands were

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<sup>98</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Bolivia: Overview," *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, May 2008.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia, "Quiénes Somos?" CIDOB, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, <http://www.cidob-bo.org> [accessed March 30, 2010].

<sup>101</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. *Bolivia*. The World Factbook, February 4, 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bl.html> [accessed January 20, 2010].

still threatened by logging. Indigenous mobilization also prompted the Bolivian government to pass decrees recognizing indigenous ownership of more forest land, and to promise to consider the environmental impacts of its policies.<sup>102</sup> These developments are early examples of the Bolivian government becoming more democratic by responding to the demands of its citizens.

The 1993 presidential elections saw the Kataristas, through the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpak Katari de Revolución (MRTKR), align with the mainstream Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR) to win support. The coalition received criticism from indigenous activists in *El Diario*, one of La Paz's largest newspapers (despite the paper's conservative bent.) One editorial "denounced that the different political parties are using the phrases and symbols of the indigenous peoples, like the wipala [the indigenous flag] and the thoughts of Túpac Katari."<sup>103</sup> Another pledged, "The Kataristas will not give their vote in parliament to CONDEPA, nor MNR, nor AP nor MBL, because we would rather die before supporting the corrupt."<sup>104</sup> This illustrates the party fragmentation and electoral volatility that result when indigenous parties are forced to compromise their interests by aligning with other parties; some voters split off and form their own groups, and others switch between the established parties. This established the baseline of volatility and fragmentation that Van Cott found could give rise to successful indigenous parties.

*El Diario* reported before the 1993 elections that 2,386,871 citizens were registered to vote, out of 3,039,398 potential eligible voters. In a news article, the paper said that 25% of potential voters did not register, "certainly due to lack of the documentation required to carry out this civic duty."<sup>105</sup> While it did not have data on which twenty-five percent of the population was

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<sup>102</sup> Minority Rights Group International, "Bolivia: Overview."

<sup>103</sup> "Denuncia campanas denigrantes," *El Diario*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, June 1, 1993, page A3.

<sup>104</sup> "MKN también cerró su campana electoral," *El Diario*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, June 6, 1993, page A3.

<sup>105</sup> "2,386,871 ciudadanos habilitados para votar," trans. Laura Kate Anderson, *El Diario*, June 2, 1993, page A1.

not registered, the rural indigenous people were much less likely to have the proper documents required to register, let alone access to an office to do so. The MNR-MRTKR electoral alliance was not enough to ensure higher indigenous participation in light of these barriers. In addition, *El Diario* reported that it was “impossible” to commit fraud in the coming election.<sup>106</sup> However, after voting concluded, they reported that “serious organization problems confronted the Electoral Court,” and that hundreds of peasants had been prevented from voting in La Paz.<sup>107</sup> Whether these were targeted toward indigenous voters or not, barriers toward registration and voting clearly undermined MRTKR’s ability to improve indigenous participation.

Even so, the MNR-MRTKR coalition won the election, propelling Gonzalo “Goni” Sanchez de Lozada of MNR to the presidency. Victor Hugo Cárdenas, the Aymara leader of MRTKR, became vice-president.<sup>108</sup> On its face, this would seem to be a victory for the citizen-input view of democracy. Indeed, 7,000 of the country’s indigenous attended a ceremony to formally recognize the president and vice-president as authorities, a victory because Bolivia’s indigenous groups rarely considered them legitimate. Cárdenas even promised to work for all Bolivian ethnicities in his address to Congress and delivered it in Spanish, Aymara, Quechua and Guaraní. However, Cárdenas was seen by other indigenous people as having sold out to the government, and the Katarista movement was called an overall electoral failure, in part because of weak organization and inadequate resources and in part because it took “an uncompromising Indianist position.”<sup>109</sup> This echoed the initial opposition to the alignment during the campaign.

Xavier Albó argues that the MNR chose Cardenas as vice president to compete against the populist Conscience of the Country party (CONDEPA), many of whose supporters were

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> “Serios problemas organizativos confrontó la corte electoral,” *El Diario*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, June 7, 1993, page A3.

<sup>108</sup> “Indians support President 'Goni',” *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 19, 1993.

<sup>109</sup> Minority Rights Group International, “Bolivia: Overview.”

Aymara.<sup>110</sup> He too called Cardenas' vice-presidency ineffective, because he was unable to reverse the government's damaging neoliberal economic policies or improve development in indigenous areas beyond providing some basic services. Cardenas was also unable to rally the long-term, unified support of indigenous people behind him or to garner more indigenous influence in the government. It would seem that his appointment was a political gambit, not a true increase in indigenous participation in Bolivian democracy.

### Participation Reforms in the 1990s

Bolivia enacted constitutional reforms in 1994 that recognized the country's multi-ethnic character and established language on collective land rights, bilingual education, customary law, and the Popular Participation Law. This last reform set up and funded 311 municipalities, which shifted power to local governments. The law proved to be an eventual victory for indigenous voters and candidates and, therefore, Bolivia's participatory democracy. The law was also a potential example of a stronger government-output democracy, as it was passed in response to the actions of a coalition of indigenous groups, called the Confederation of the Indigenous Peoples of the East, Chacó, and the Bolivian Amazon.<sup>111</sup>

The full effects of the law were slow to come into force. Because of initial suspicion of the government's true intentions with the law, which some claimed would actually turn traditional organizations into government tools, only half of all community organizations initially registered with the government, and only 140 of the municipalities established their required oversight committees. The government took efforts to allay this suspicion, and indigenous organizations gradually began to trust the law. In addition to creating municipalities, the law also

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<sup>110</sup> Xavier Albó, "Making the Leap from Local Mobilisation to National Politics," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 29, no. 5 (1996), 22.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

provided funding in proportion to the population of each. In theory, this marked the first time that those who didn't live in major towns – much of the rural indigenous population – had the ability to choose their local authorities. Despite some divisions that seemed illogical with the local population makeup, this was a major victory for representation in government.<sup>112</sup>

The December 1995 municipal elections saw a large increase in the number of indigenous candidates, although fewer were actually elected. Four hundred fifty indigenous candidates won seats in local governments, comprising twenty-seven percent of all municipal leaders – a significant increase, but only half of the indigenous proportion of Bolivia's population. Albó attributes this to structural difficulties in the registration and voting process: turnout in rural areas was around fifty percent, while national turnout was sixty-five percent, and the census showed that over half of all Bolivian women were not registered to vote at all. One clear case of improved indigenous participation was the Assembly for the Sovereignty of the Peoples, a party made of Quechua peasants and coca growers. The party was denied recognition by the national electoral body, so it participated in the elections under the name of a leftist party (a common practice in Bolivian politics) and won sixteen of the forty municipalities in their department.<sup>113</sup> The law allowed the party to overcome a structural barrier to participation. As further evidence to the law's positive impact on Bolivian democracy from the participation view, the Bolivian Center for Multidisciplinary Studies found that it “granted to indigenous communities a legal capacity with relation to national citizenship and the direction of the State that they didn't have before.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Xavier Albo, “Making the Leap from Local Mobilization to National Politics.”

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios, “Conflictos Interculturales: Una Respuesta Democrática desde Perú, Ecuador y Bolivia,” CEBEM, December 2, 2006, <http://www.karoline-linnert.de/publicaciones.php?seccion=64&ID=808> [accessed February 15, 2010].

In the wake of the overall failure of the Kataristas, indigenous groups and peasant groups often found common ground with one another, particularly in the fight to maintain the state-owned natural resources established by the 1952 revolution. In 1996, President Sanchez de Lozada signed a law turning state-owned hydrocarbon resources over to private corporations. Trade unions denounced the government, and rural unions who were once the administration's key supporters also criticized the MNR. One vocal critic was the Quechua leader of the coca growers' union, Evo Morales, who gained national press with his accusations of corruption.<sup>115</sup>

A 1997 reform created new electoral districts and eliminated the requirement that candidates for local office belong to an official party. The Bolivian Center for Multidisciplinary Studies found this to be a significant gain for indigenous parties, even though it was not specifically created for them, because it planted the seed for future territorial and political gain. They credited this law with the rise of a new party, Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Toward Socialism; MAS), which claimed Quechuas as the vast majority of its supporters. It was this party with which Morales aligned himself, eventually winning election to Congress with the party.<sup>116</sup> In the 1999 municipal elections, MAS won seventy-nine seats in seven departments, for a total of 3.3 percent of the nationwide vote.<sup>117</sup> Indigenous voting increased over this period as well. From 1997 to 2002, the number of votes cast rose thirty-five percent in majority indigenous provinces and only twenty one percent in minority indigenous provinces. Turnout rose six percentage points and fell one point in the respective communities.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> "Capitalisation of YPFB to go ahead," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 16 May 1996; "Evo Morales documentó corrupción en UMOPAR," *El Diario*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, May 21, 1996, page A5.

<sup>116</sup> "Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios, "Conflictos Interculturales: Una Respuesta Democrática desde Perú, Ecuador y Bolivia."

<sup>117</sup> Donna Lee Van Cott, "Institutional Change and Ethnic Parties."

<sup>118</sup> Raúl Madrid, "Indigenous Parties and Democracy in Latin America."



The 1994 and 1997 reforms increased indigenous participation in Bolivian democracy. They gave a greater voice to the rural population by creating municipalities and granting them more power, resulting in more indigenous people voting and holding office. This represents a significant gain for the democracy as a whole because indigenous people make up a majority of the population. What remained to be seen at this point was the effect on electoral volatility and party fragmentation. MAS had so far found some success by aligning itself with other non-indigenous peasant organizations. This left open the chance that the coalition could split apart when it no longer served one of the groups' interests and ultimately weaken democracy by increasing electoral volatility and party fragmentation.

### The Rise of MAS

Economic demands became a main theme of protests in the early 2000s, as groups with both indigenous and peasant interests clashed with the state. In 2002 Evo Morales and the coca growers' union set up roadblocks and orchestrated protests that resulted in violent confrontations with law enforcement. His union's demands included a higher quota of legal coca planting, entry to the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a reversal of privatizations, improved indigenous land ownership and rights, and laws to provide job stability that were held up in Congress.<sup>119</sup> President Sanchez de Lozada agreed to negotiate with the protesters, which indicated a victory from the output view of democracy, especially because Morales used protests to demand the passage of legislation that was otherwise unlikely to go through Congress.

The 2002 elections brought about unprecedented success for indigenous parties. Between 1989 and 1997, populist parties like the Movimiento Bolivia Libre and Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionario garnered about twenty percent of the votes in indigenous provinces, splitting the

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<sup>119</sup> "Talks resume after 11 deaths in coca protests," *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 28, 2003.

indigenous votes and establishing a baseline of high electoral volatility and party fragmentation. The traditionally largest parties, Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) and Acción Democrática Nacionalista (ADN), won an average of forty-four percent of the vote in indigenous areas, compared with sixty-four percent in non-indigenous areas. However, in 2002, MAS garnered 20.9 percent of the presidential/congressional vote, just two points behind the leading party. Madrid argues that this reduced party volatility in Bolivia and therefore strengthened its democracy.<sup>120</sup> MAS also won eight senate seats and twenty-seven lower chamber seats, and several local and departmental victories as well. The former ASP leader won under a different party name and pledged his support to MAS. Finally, Movimiento Indígena Pachakutik (MIN), an Aymara party led by Felipe Quispe, won 6.1 percent of the vote and gained six lower chamber seats. (This party then set up the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB), an independent union.) This was a total of twenty-seven percent of the vote going to indigenous parties – while the previous record had been just 3.7 percent.<sup>121</sup> The year 2002 was a turning point that saw the first significant victories for Bolivian indigenous parties.

While many indigenous voters did switch their allegiances from MNR or ADN to MAS, increasing electoral volatility in the short run, the success of MAS had the potential to decrease party fragmentation and electoral volatility in the long run by consolidating the indigenous vote. If MAS could continue to win significant percentages of the vote and represent indigenous interests, then it would form a more stable constituency than MNR or ADN had. The challenge was MIN. If both indigenous parties, MIN and MAS, became viable in the long term, then electoral volatility and party fragmentation could ultimately increase. The party division would fall along ethnic lines, polarizing Quechuas and Aymaras and further weakening democracy.

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Donna Lee Van Cott, “Institutional Change and Ethnic Parties.”

Also in 2002, CIDOB organized a march to La Paz of over 2,000 indigenous people from around the country. They were demanding the enactment of a constitutional reform to officially recognize the country's many indigenous peoples. The Bolivian Congress had so far failed to pass one due to deep disagreements over what should be reformed and how to do so.<sup>122</sup> Tensions rose in July 2003, when Movimiento Sin Tierra (Landless Movement; MST) staged a series of land seizures around the country. At first, the military evicted them, which *LatinNews* attributed to the government's fear that MST would unite with other peasant movements to achieve greater disruption. The movement said it wasn't a political organization, but rather a grassroots response to the government's failure to fulfill its promises regarding land ownership.<sup>123</sup> The government agreed to negotiate a week later and promised more titles to ancestral lands, indicating that the indigenous movements were strengthening democracy by gaining increased government responsiveness. At this point, Evo Morales had become MAS' leader.<sup>124</sup> In Congress, he renewed his campaign pledge to rewrite the Bolivian Constitution in a constituent assembly, deciding to work within the existing political process for reform.<sup>125</sup>

Protests from the peasant and indigenous movements continued, and the question of whether they would turn violent cast divisions within the protesters. A September 2003 television broadcast showed Aymara youths training with rifles shortly after a confrontation between protesters and the government turned fatal. CSUTCB leader and Congressman Felipe Quispe claimed the footage was staged government propaganda, aired to justify "massacring the indigenous nation."<sup>126</sup> Meanwhile, commentators noted that Quispe's supporters were mainly

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<sup>122</sup> "Indians," *Latin American Weekly Report*, May 28, 2002.

<sup>123</sup> "Local MST launches 'reform from below,'" *Latin American Weekly Report*, July 8, 2003.

<sup>124</sup> "Evo Morales expands his powerbase," *Latin American Weekly Report*, July 15, 2003.

<sup>125</sup> "Morales – 'constituent assembly or revolt,'" *Latin American Weekly Report*, July 15, 2003.

<sup>126</sup> "Hints of black propaganda in versions of Bolivian unrest," *Latin American Weekly Report*, September 30, 2003.

Aymara, like him, including the CSUTCB and the other workers involved in strikes and protests. They claimed the Aymara were a violent minority who did not speak for the rest of Bolivia.<sup>127</sup>

Morales continued to lead protests, and while both he and President de Lozada called for dialogue, talks continually failed to resolve the land issues. Even as a member of parliament, Morales chose to work both inside and outside the government, recognizing the potential of protest to strengthen democracy by making the government more responsive. For example, the movement presented the government a list of demands in late 2002, including the resignation of two government officials. *El Diario* reported “increased participation of representatives of the mobilized sectors in the dialog with the government.”<sup>128</sup> MAS further blurred the line between protest and participation in government when the government took on the tactics of protesters. On the opening day of the national congress in early January, the representatives shouted and waved signs at one another, some reading “Evo + Coca = Muertos? [Dead?]” and “Evo + Muertos = Terrorismo?” While MAS’ actions may have destabilized the nation, they also gave the protesters a voice in the government. Their effect on democracy would ultimately hinge on whether the government responded to their demands.

Some of Morales’ opponents criticized the instability furthered by the protests. One editorial said: “Evo Morales constitutes a real danger to the validity of democracy and to national stability...Incredibly, the press, radio, and television, far from contributing to the pacification of the country, are throwing wood on the fire, whether they want to or not, by giving press to the agitators and blockaders.”<sup>129</sup> Interestingly, this opponent chose to attack Morales by accusing him of undermining Bolivian democracy with the protests and roadblocks that he organized.

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> “Juicio de responsables contra Sánchez de Lozada,” *El Diario*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, January 16, 2003, page A5.

<sup>129</sup> “Dios salve a Bolivia,” *El Diario*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, January 16, 2003, page A2.

Other opponents accused him of aiming to depose the president all along, rather than actually wanting to compromise, a claim that MAS denied.<sup>130</sup> However, the true test of whether Morales' actions harmed democracy would be whether they increased participation in the government, whether the government responded to his protests, and whether it consolidated the indigenous voting bloc into one stable party.

The protest movement had made gains for Bolivian democracy in terms of securing government responses to their demands. Electoral volatility and party fragmentation, on the other hand, had the potential to increase as tensions rose between MAS and CSUTCB, splitting supporters along ethnic lines of Quechua vs. Aymara. Meanwhile, some opposition to MAS criticized the instability that its protests caused. It would remain to be seen whether the gains for democracy made by the government's response would outweigh the protests' instability.

### **Tension with the Mesa Administration**

Massive protests from the indigenous and worker groups, opposing his plan for the nation's gas resources, forced President de Lozada to resign. In October, a new president, Carlos Mesa, was elected and immediately brokered a three month truce with the peasant movements. He accomplished this by meeting with Quipse and the CSUTCB, calling himself "a mestizo who loves Bolivia" and praising past Aymara protests.<sup>131</sup> Morales also publicly announced a truce period with the new president. Mesa also promised that his cabinet would include no one from a particular political party, and created two new posts, one for indigenous and peasant affairs and one for popular participation. He also appointed two indigenous cabinet members.

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<sup>130</sup> "MAS niega complot contra Sanchez de Lozada," *El Diario*, trans. Laura Kate Anderson, January 18, 2003, page A6.

<sup>131</sup> "Quispe & Morales grant Mesa a 'truce,'" *Latin American Weekly Report*, October 28, 2003.

These all represent potential victories to democracy from the participation standpoint, but President Mesa's actions did not win him the lasting support of Bolivia's indigenous peoples, particularly Morales and MAS. Mesa initially hinted that he would find a way to shift the power to call a constituent assembly from Congress to the Executive Branch so that he could do so and fulfill one of the chief indigenous group demands.<sup>132</sup> This choice presents the problem of undermining Bolivian democratic institutions but promising greater participation in government. However, initially, the Mesa and previous governments did little to advance indigenous participation. Bolivia's three traditionally largest parties, MNR, ADN, and MIR, had just one indigenous representative in the lower house of congress, and none in the senate, from 1997 to 2002.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, the increase in indigenous representation that was to come with the rise of MAS was a clear victory for indigenous representation, and therefore Bolivian democracy.

Meanwhile, Morales tried to position himself as the next frontrunner for the presidency by speaking out about the need to regain public ownership of the natural gas industry and end eradication of coca. However, a November opinion poll found that the plurality of the public supported former President Jorge Quiroga, not Morales. (The poll's sample was not available, however, so it may have failed to take into account the preferences of indigenous people in rural areas who formed the base of Morales' supporters.) Quiroga proposed the formation of an electoral alliance to block Morales and Quispe. *LatinNews* analyzed that Morales' resulting opposition to Quiroga had the potential to polarize the electorate, splitting the indigenous highlands and the lowlands and endangering the possibility of a new constitution granting regional autonomy.<sup>134</sup> This echoes the concern established earlier that the presence of two

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Raul Madrid, "Indigenous Voters and Party System Fragmentation."

<sup>134</sup> "Quiroga emerges to defy Morales," *Latin American Weekly Report*, November 11, 2003.

indigenous parties could split votes along ethnic lines, weakening democracy by increasing electoral volatility and party fragmentation.

Mesa did work to satisfy indigenous demands to convoke a constituent assembly. Despite the warnings about dangers to democratic institutions raised by the opposition, the Bolivian Congress cooperated with the administration. They passed constitutional amendments allowing Mesa to convene the assembly and to hold referendums so citizens could vote on issues like Bolivia's natural resources. Other constitutional changes included text that said that "the representation of the people is exercised through the political parties and associations of citizens" (Article 22) and that candidates for the legislature must be put forward "by a political party or directly by associations of citizens or indigenous peoples" (Article 61).<sup>135</sup> Morales weighed in on this new language, saying the constituent assembly "ends the monopoly enjoyed by the political parties."<sup>136</sup> Raúl Madrid hypothesized that the law could increase volatility and fragmentation. He found a positive correlation between the number of distinct ethnic groups and the number of political parties they form, which results in greater party fragmentation. Surveys in Bolivia in the late 1990s also found that indigenous voters had less confidence in political parties than did non-indigenous voters, increasing their capacity for fragmentation. Madrid also said these political parties often failed to form because of high political and financial barriers.<sup>137</sup> However, the new law allowing social groups, not just political parties, to put forth candidates greatly lowered one such political barrier.

In April 2004, Mesa said that he would promote major decentralization of the government to give greater power and autonomy to Bolivia's different regions. This proposed reform came in the tradition of the 1994 Popular Participation Law, which had remained

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<sup>135</sup> "Reforms enable new electoral calendar," *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 24, 2004.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Raul Madrid, "Indigenous Voters and Party System Fragmentation."

successful in improving Bolivian democracy: by 2004, fifty-nine percent of municipal officeholders self-identified as indigenous. In a move that further strengthened the participatory aspect of the democracy, Mesa proposed that governors of Bolivia's nine departments be elected rather than appointed by the federal government.<sup>138</sup> The Bolivian Center for Interdisciplinary Studies found that this allowed indigenous peoples and citizens' associations to compete with political parties within the State's structures of political representation. Eighteen political parties turned out for the 2004 municipal elections.<sup>139</sup> This proliferation of political groups would seem to increase democratic strength through the input definition, allowing those running for office to become more representative of the population as a whole. However, a body of research suggests that the more representative a democracy is, the more parties it has, and the less stable its government becomes.<sup>140</sup> This would imply that an increase in representation would correspond with an increase in electoral volatility and party fragmentation. This relates to the possibility that the rise of both MAS and CSUTCB would increase volatility and fragmentation.

The traditional business and governmental leaders, centered in the wealthy Media Luna region, vocally opposed the influence of indigenous and other populist groups. While they stopped short of calling for independence for their region, they did propose a federal system of government for the new constitution.<sup>141</sup> Meanwhile, the government and military sought to keep the country from breaking up.<sup>142</sup> Felipe Quispe was the only leader to propose seceding to form an independent nation for his people. He advocated a separate nation of indigenous people (and

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<sup>138</sup> "Mesa moves to assuage federalists," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 27 April 2004.

<sup>139</sup> Centro Boliviano de Estudios Multidisciplinarios, "Conflictos Interculturales: Una Respuesta Democrática desde Perú, Ecuador y Bolivia."

<sup>140</sup> Reuven Hazan and Gideon Rahat, "Lessons from the 1996 Elections in Israel: Representation, Electoral Reform, and Democracy: Theoretical and Empirical," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 10 (December 2000): 1310.

<sup>141</sup> Mesa moves to assuage federalists," *Latin American Weekly Report*.

<sup>142</sup> "Indian power play behind wave of roadblocks," *Latin American Weekly Report*, 22 June 2004.



implied that the Quechua would be subordinate to the Aymara.)<sup>143</sup> Clearly, this proposal furthered the potential to split the indigenous electorate along ethnic lines.<sup>144</sup>

The coalition of indigenous groups and unions was further split when Mesa proposed a referendum on whether to rescind the current law that governed the country's hydrocarbon industry. Media Luna business leaders claimed it would stop foreign investment in the industry, while Quispe and labor leaders thought the proposal didn't go far enough toward making the industry public again. Morales, on the other hand, denounced the far-left opposition as not being representative of the people and supported the idea of a public vote on the matter. His was the only position that would have had the potential to strengthen voting and participation.<sup>145</sup> MAS also gained fifteen percent of the vote nationwide in the 2004 midterm elections, the best of the established political parties, and expanded its votes beyond the coca-growing regions where it originated.<sup>146</sup> It seemed as though Quispe's extremism was losing him support from indigenous voters, and decreasing the likelihood of a polarizing split in the electorate.

In a potential blow to indigenous representation in Congress, Quispe resigned from Congress in June 2004 to devote himself to achieving the independence of the Aymara state. He said that Congress was corrupt and guilty of repressing indigenous protests.<sup>147</sup> That month saw a series of roadblocks – made of rocks strewn across roads – organized by various CSUTCB leaders vying for victory in the organization's upcoming elections. The group demanded the renationalization of the hydrocarbon industry, the suspension of the referendum mentioned above, and the cancellation of a law granting legal immunity to U.S. soldiers in Bolivia.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> "Mesa bows to Santa Cruz lobby," *Latin American Weekly Report*, March 9, 2004.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> "All except Morales oppose referendum," *Latin American Weekly Report*, May 25, 2004.

<sup>146</sup> "Morales in drive to expand his regional base," *Latin American Weekly Report*, April 19, 2005.

<sup>147</sup> "Quispe quits seat to 'liberate' the Aymara," *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 8, 2004.

<sup>148</sup> "Indian power play behind wave of roadblocks," *Latin American Weekly Report*.

However, the second demand was ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, an acting Aymara mayor was also arrested for masterminding the lynching of the former mayor, who had been accused of corruption. A local peasant group threatened to blow up an oil and gas pipeline unless he was released. The incident, as well as another lynching months later, was chalked up to traditional Aymara methods of justice.<sup>150</sup>

These developments fed fears that an indigenous rebellion was imminent. In the city of Viacha, a crowd marched on the town hall and demanded the resignation of the mayor, and Aymara peasants later marched into town to try to reinstate her. The press called it an ethnic confrontation. The second Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities was held in Quito that month, where an Aymara separatist leader accused Mesa of going back on his promise to help indigenous and peasant organizations.

In the midst of the Aymara-related instability, Morales worked to expand MAS' legislative victories. He announced that his party would field gubernatorial candidates in every department in the upcoming elections, and sought partnerships with local indigenous, social and business groups in each. He also filed charges against opponents Quiroga, Sánchez de Lozada and Mesa for failing to get congressional approval for contracts they signed with oil and gas companies.<sup>151</sup> While this political move was by no means unique to an indigenous leader, it does represent a danger to democracy by finding ulterior motives to neutralize electoral opponents.

Mesa was placed in a political bind when MAS, CSUTCB, and CIDOB all staged marches to demand changes to the new hydrocarbons law passed by Congress, which would have taken steps toward re-founding a state oil and gas company, before Mesa signed it into law or vetoed it. The groups demanded the outright re-nationalization of Bolivia's oil and gas, and a

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<sup>149</sup> "Beyond the radicals, an ethnic tinderbox," *Latin American Weekly Report*, July 27, 2004.

<sup>150</sup> "Indian power play behind wave of roadblocks," *Latin American Weekly Report*.

<sup>151</sup> "Morales in drive to expand his regional base," *Latin American Weekly Report*.

guarantee that indigenous communities could veto developments on their land. *LatinNews* compared the unified movement to the one that unseated President Sánchez de Lozada.<sup>152</sup> Mesa ultimately neither vetoed nor approved the law, leaving it to Congress. The decision split the electorate into two camps: the Media Luna-based business interests, who wanted more regional autonomy, appointed a provisional assembly for the region and planned a referendum on autonomy. Meanwhile, Morales, his followers, and other labor groups marched to demand nationalization of the oil and gas industry and a constituent assembly to decide on their own autonomy. While the labor group wanted the state to officially announce its control of the industry, though, Morales said that it already belonged to the state, and President Mesa just had to seize the country's oilfields with the military.<sup>153</sup> This split with the labor groups signaled Morales' push to gain further national prominence his own political movement gained force.

Interestingly, the Santa Cruz assembly was unelected: in this case, the opponents of the indigenous party actually took actions to reduce citizen input democracy. At the same time, Morales' call for the army to seize what owners considered to be private lands could have furthered violence and the possibility of a coup, or at least Santa Cruz's secession. Indeed, as each group made its demands, troops gathered in the capital, ostensibly to ensure order but fostering rumors that a coup was brewing. However, because the military traditionally sides with the political right in Bolivia, Morales' call was unlikely to be heeded.<sup>154</sup> This recalls the work of Dominguez, who hypothesized that an indigenous party in power could be more likely to cause coups, specifically by using the army against the other branches of government. This established the potential for future problems for democracy.

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<sup>152</sup> "Mesa faces pincer-like wave of protest actions, *Latin American Weekly Report*, May 10, 2005.

<sup>153</sup> "As confrontation escalates, the military rumbles," *Latin American Weekly Report*, May 24, 2005.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the conflict, leaders from Santa Cruz, the power center of the Media Luna region, and from El Alto, Bolivia's poorest city and the powerbase of the indigenous worker movements, met in July 2005 and opened the door for further dialogue. Santa Cruz leaders also met with leaders from Cochabamba (Morales' original base) and demanded that Congress pass an amendment giving their departments greater representation in Congress. The Constitution actually already said that the regions' growing populations merited new seats, but Congress had rejected the idea, saying that the country's political and social situation was too volatile.<sup>155</sup>

Although Mesa's presidency included significant legal reforms that furthered indigenous political participation, it also created controversy within the politically active indigenous population. The end of his term saw the two main indigenous parties employ very different tactics, with different results for democracy. CSUTCB fought for autonomy and ethnic division. While they made some gains for indigenous representation by winning votes, Quispe's extremism ultimately drove supporters away. MAS, in contrast, was much more moderate and expanded its electorate beyond its Quechua base. Also, in addition to increasing participation by gaining new indigenous votes and representatives in congress, MAS also went beyond CSUTCB by increasing government response. Because Morales chose to work within the government rather than declaring his independence from it, he established long-term gains for Bolivia's democracy from the response standpoint. However, Morales, while still staying true to the ideals of the worker movements, increased his public profile by calling for slightly more extreme action than did the unions. The fact that his party gained supporters as CSUTCB lost them signaled a temporary rise in electoral volatility and party fragmentation, but established the potential to reduce them in the long term once voters were consolidated in MAS. Meanwhile, however, the ethnic tensions caused by the split in the two parties decreased the nation's stability.

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<sup>155</sup> "Unexpected coming together of opposites," *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 2, 2005.

## Morales Gains the Presidency

Ultimately, Morales' leadership gained MAS the presidency in 2006. MAS also won 72 seats out of 130 in the lower chamber, giving them a simple majority, and 12 seats out of 27 in the Senate.<sup>156</sup> The victory was a major one of indigenous parties – it represented what was clearly greater indigenous presence in government. Morales' vice president, Alvaro García Linera, was a former Katarist. He claimed that Bolivia's political climate was not the same as the authoritarian ones in Venezuela or Cuba, and said that the victory was based in Bolivia's organic, bottom-up civil society.<sup>157</sup>

*LatinNews* analyzed Morales' initial meetings and actions as efforts to convey that he was assertive, but willing to compromise. Morales cultivated his image so that it would make democracy and government seem more accessible to the country's poor and indigenous communities. He wore traditional Andean clothes when touring the country and didn't wear a tie, even to his inauguration. He opened dialogue with Chile and Mexico, countries that Bolivia had longstanding tension with. He installed a peasant organizer, an Aymara, and four women in his cabinet.<sup>158</sup> He worked to reduce the tensions between Aymaras and Quechuas, potentially winning over more ex-CSUTCB supporters and decreasing electoral volatility and party fragmentation in the long term. While Morales' very election did strengthen the participation element in Bolivian democracy, however, it remained to be seen what the new administration's actions would do for democracy.

Morales submitted to Congress his plan to democratically elect a constituent assembly. He worked within the Bolivian constitution, but said that if the opposition didn't approve the

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<sup>156</sup> "Temperature rising again," *Latin American Weekly Report*, November 21, 2006.

<sup>157</sup> "'Not the same as Venezuela or Cuba,'" *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 17, 2006.

<sup>158</sup> "Evo Morales: before the deeds, gesture and style to signal his direction," *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 24, 2006.

legislation, he would mobilize social organizations to ensure its passage. His proposal was designed to include proportional indigenous and female representatives, with each congressional district electing three representatives – two from the winning party and one from the runner-up – and one of the top party posts going to a woman. Santa Cruz-based Podemos, the biggest opposition party, objected to the law, which they said was stacked against them. Because MAS did not have a two-thirds majority in Congress, it needed the support of another party. When they did not achieve this, Morales and Alvaro García called for their supporters to mobilize against what the vice president called “the oligarchs.”<sup>159</sup> This decision set a precedent that made Bolivia’s democracy both more accessible to citizen input and more responsive to citizen demands. However, the importance Morales placed on protest, even as he still worked within the existing constitutional framework, would endanger democracy if he clamped down on mobilization of his opposition.

By June of his first year in office, Morales revealed his plan to redefine Bolivia in terms of its indigenous heritage, making it not “the imagined indigenous ‘state within a state’ that the military and other defenders of tradition have long railed against, but an experiment in superimposing an indigenous state upon the existing one.”<sup>160</sup> MAS released a plan called Refundar Bolivia (Re-found Bolivia) that stated that indigenous people had the rights of self-determination, recognition of their political systems, management of their collective resources, practice of their own customs and medicine, and exercise of their own political rights and citizenship according to their customs. It made Quechua and Aymara the official languages along with Spanish, and the indigenous banner the official flag along with the traditional one. It pledged that Bolivia would become “a plural, participative, communitarian and representative

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<sup>159</sup> “Morales readies outside muscle for battle in congress,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 21, 2006.

<sup>160</sup> “Bolivia’s ruling party unveils its plan to overhaul almost everything,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 6, 2006.

democracy, based on the diversity of people, for the elimination of all forms of colonialism, segregation and discrimination,” fostering “the mechanisms of consensual democracy practiced in the [indigenous] communities.”<sup>161</sup>

Refundar Bolivia reflected the customs and rights of the sixty percent indigenous majority of the population. Also, the document stated that indigenous communities had established foundations of democracy. The opposition called the plan divisive, and was further incensed when Morales appointed a Quechua activist, Silvia Lazarte, to preside over the constituent assembly. Morales was criticized because the majority party (MAS) was charged with appointing the assembly president.<sup>162</sup> As the assembly went on, opposition continued to grow over whether new constitutional measures would be approved by a simple or by a two-thirds majority. Strikes against the administration and counter protests erupted in the Media Luna region. The Bolivian defense minister threatened to prosecute anyone who engaged in secessionist rhetoric, and the interior minister said she would investigate the protests and called its organizers “fascist hordes.”<sup>163</sup> Meanwhile, the interior minister and the administration praised and continued to encourage the indigenous groups’ siege of Santa Cruz.<sup>164</sup> This implies that while MAS’ initial protests expanded government responsiveness to their demands, once they became the ruling party, they undid some of the progress. However, the government did compromise with Santa Cruz by requiring a two-thirds majority on structural votes.<sup>165</sup>

As Morales’ efforts to compromise began to anger his supporters, he called a “march for democracy” to rally support for his government and minimize the threat of a coup. Before an audience of mostly indigenous people, he said that his government was not racist in their favor;

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> “Assembly gets off to a troubled start,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>163</sup> “Between strike and siege, they are talking,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 8, 2006.

<sup>164</sup> “Flip-flop on siege of Santa Cruz fair,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, September 19, 2006.

<sup>165</sup> “Government continues to back down from tough talk,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, September 26, 2006.

he praised the middle class and private businesses along with the rural indigenous populations. He also spoke to union groups that had recently violently protested against him, saying, “It is time that we all became instruments of liberty and not oppression”<sup>166</sup> Although Morales appealed to the middle class in Media Luna, his rhetorical strategy to characterize his government as the embodiment of liberty and democracy, and his opponents as instruments of oppression, is hardly democratic. It underscores the problems for Bolivia’s output democracy, along with his administration’s crackdown of opposition protests.

Opposition to the MAS government grew as the prefects (governors) of six of Bolivia’s nine departments openly opposed Morales’ proposal to let the legislative branch call the prefects to testify before them at will, and dismiss them if an absolute majority desired. The prefects, all of whom belonged to the opposition parties, called the proposal an authoritarian abuse of power, while Morales said it was a democratic way to oversee their work.<sup>167</sup> Does the proposal represent a gain or a loss for representative democracy? On the one hand, it puts the performance of executives up to a vote by the legislature; on the other hand, it gives the legislature power to remove officials elected directly by the public.

Meanwhile, the constituent assembly finally made progress when a compromise on the voting procedures passed, requiring only the final text of the constitution to need a two-thirds majority for passage. Delegates from the Podemos party planned to challenge the vote in court, and members of the opposition began hunger strikes. Their leader claimed, “Democracy is under threat; the unity of the country is at risk; and all the laws are at risk of being contravened.”<sup>168</sup>

Instigated by Morales, indigenous protesters convened on La Paz to demand that the Senate pass his proposed land reform bill, and five of the opposing prefects met to find ways to

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<sup>166</sup> “Morales starts to sound more conciliatory,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, October 17, 2006.

<sup>167</sup> “Temperature rising again,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, November 17, 2006.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*



demand the two-thirds majority and oppose the proposed accountability bill. They threatened regional strikes and called the MAS vote “totalitarian and anti-democratic.” However, the opposition boycotted the Senate session to prevent debate on the land reform bill days earlier, also an impediment to democracy.<sup>169</sup> As tension grew, the prefects upped their demands to regional autonomy, and the administration accused them of trying to secede.<sup>170</sup> Morales then criticized the supreme court as being stacked against indigenous people and the process to select judges, which involved appointment by both chambers of congress, as being too political. He appointed judges to four vacancies, claiming congress had not reached a consensus, although they would have to ratify his appointments. The president of the supreme court accused him of violating separation of powers, and Podemos planned to appeal the appointments.<sup>171</sup>

The debate over the voting procedures in the constituent assembly reached new levels in early 2007, when 5,000 Morales supporters marched on Cochabamba to demand the resignation of its prefect, Manfred Reyes Villa, who had advocated greater autonomy for Media Luna. Thirty-one people were injured when police pursued protesters who tried to break into the prefect’s office, and Reyes Villa fled in disguise. Vice President García Linera accused him of provoking the protests and denounced police for breaking up what he called a legitimate protest. Morales had called a meeting in Cochabamba to come up with a political strategy, and decided to appoint government delegates to each department to coordinate between the executive branch, the prefects, and local groups. The prefects claimed it was an attempt to exert control over them. The meeting also resulted in a proposed compromise over constituent assembly voting

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<sup>169</sup> “Morales tries to turn screw on opposition,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, November 28, 2006.

<sup>170</sup> “Regional summits overshadowed by Bolivia’s internal problems,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, December 12, 2006

<sup>171</sup> “Morales harangues judiciary,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 4, 2007.

procedures, and a new coordinating body to connect the government and the constituent assembly, made up of administration officials, indigenous groups and social groups.<sup>172</sup>

Tension with Media Luna grew as the constituent assembly's work finally got underway. MAS protested the region's call for autonomy, but revealed a double standard when one MAS delegate proposed a plurinational state with forty-five regions, with thirty-six indigenous groups gaining self-government and sovereignty. The administration claimed it was merely allowing the indigenous people rights to autonomy that they had long been denied, and accused the departments of plotting a coup.<sup>173</sup> After months of debate over voting rules, the assembly was forced to award itself more time to draft a new constitution, extending its mandate until December. They voted to do so in a rare example of consensus.<sup>174</sup>

Many indigenous groups were upset at the delay in the constitution, including CIDOB, who wanted to see the proposed plurinational state enacted. Morales was able to claim a victory when he announced the passage of a land reform law that granted thousands of acres of collective land to indigenous groups.<sup>175</sup> However, pressure from the far left mounted, including from Morales' own coca growers' union, as they demanded Morales dismiss some moderate cabinet members and the vice president. Various indigenous groups also wanted to see Morales move farther to the left and award official recognition to traditional indigenous forms of government.<sup>176</sup> Tensions grew and the constituent assembly suspended its meetings for a month as a new controversy erupted over whether to move the national capital from La Paz to Sucre. In the interim, 10,000 indigenous Morales supporters convened for a summit, in which they decided

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<sup>172</sup> "Power clash centres on Cochabamba," *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 11, 2007.

<sup>173</sup> "Morales clashes with Media Luna over autonomy," *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 21, 2007.

<sup>174</sup> "Bolivia's constituent assembly awards itself four more months," *Latin American Weekly Report*, July 5, 2007.

<sup>175</sup> "Morales proclaims "agrarian revolution" in Bolivia," *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 9, 2007.

<sup>176</sup> "Left ratchets up pressure on Morales," *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 16, 2007.

to consider moving the assembly to a MAS-governed district and rejected the possibility of moving the capital.<sup>177</sup>

Morales' ascension to the presidency signaled positive gains for democracy. His conscious efforts to include indigenous people in government expanded representation, and his efforts to enact constitutional reforms expanded responsiveness. However, while he conceded to a few of the demands of the Media Luna-based minority, he also cracked down on their protests, despite the fact that he himself used protests to win the presidency. This established a possibility that his oppressive actions could undermine the gains for democracy made by MAS' actions.

### A New Constitution

The constituent assembly finally pushed through a draft constitution, but only after it reconvened under armed guard, as four people were killed in protests outside. It was approved by a simple majority by MAS delegates – because the opposition was boycotting the assembly in protest at the time. The entire constitution was not printed or even read aloud before the approval vote took place. It established a plurinational state, regained state control of natural resources, and laid out four types of autonomy: departmental, regional, municipal and indigenous. The opposition claimed that the way it had been passed made the draft illegitimate. It was approved in December, but not using the rules initially established. Five prefects threatened to declare autonomy in response. In addition to the basic provisions mentioned above, the new constitution also included provisions to elect supreme court justices by popular vote and to give indigenous systems of justice the same status as state justice. It also allowed the government to prosecute anyone who advocates splitting the country as a traitor.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> "Suspension of assembly averts violence," *Latin American Weekly Report*, September 13, 2007.

<sup>178</sup> "Draft constitution 'approved' in Bolivia amid bloodshed," *Latin American Weekly Report*, November 29, 2007.

The final step was to call a national referendum to approve the final constitution, and then to hold national elections. *LatinNews* said, “Referenda have fast emerged as the only way out of the current political stalemate.”<sup>179</sup> Even as the opposition claimed that the results would not be legitimate, three prefects set dates for plebiscites and referenda on autonomy. Both camps rejected a proposal by the vice president to change the constitution to compromise. In March, Congress approved plans to hold the national referendums and made illegal the regional autonomy votes. However, the legislation was allowed no formal debate, and opposition legislators claimed that they had been physically blocked from entering the building to vote. They responded by boycotting future proceedings.<sup>180</sup>

As the Santa Cruz autonomy vote approached, the situation degenerated into a political crisis, and the Catholic Church tried and failed to mediate between the Morales supporters and the autonomists. Morales refused to declare a state of emergency and insisted that all governmental changes would follow the constitution. Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and the Organization of American States offered to send diplomats to mediate, but were dismissed by the autonomists as being allies of Morales. Indeed, international support sided with the government; the UN Indigenous Special Rapporteur said the Santa Cruz vote was unconstitutional and its autonomy proposal racist and anti-indigenous human rights.<sup>181</sup>

Nevertheless, the vote was held, with eighty-six percent voting for autonomy, and the Santa Cruz prefect declared a regional autonomous government in May. He established an interim legislative assembly with the existing regional government plus five new indigenous representatives, but the presidential administration dismissed the change as illegal and ineffective. Morales encouraged voters not to take part in the subsequent autonomy elections in

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<sup>179</sup> “Tensions rise as congress debates referenda,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, February 28, 2008.

<sup>180</sup> “Congress sets referenda dates; prefects rebel,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, March 6, 2008.

<sup>181</sup> “Crisis attracts offers of international mediation,” *Latin American Weekly Report*, April 10, 2008.

other departments.<sup>182</sup> His government considered incorporating the region's demands into the constitution by holding talks, but Podemos refused to attend. As the other votes drew near, thirty indigenous peasants in Chuquisaca, one of the regions, were attacked by mobs.<sup>183</sup> After the referendums, both sides claimed victory: the regions claimed that they won because majorities voted "yes" on autonomy, but the Morales government pointed out that abstention was over thirty percent in both votes.<sup>184</sup>

As a concession to his opposition, and in a victory for representative democracy, Morales scheduled a recall vote so that the population could decide whether he should remain in office. He won the vote on August 10 with 67.7 percent of the vote, compared to the 53.7 percent that originally propelled him into office. In addition, Morales either maintained or increased his support in every region. However, the Media Luna prefects were also reelected with large majorities.<sup>185</sup>

The constitution was overwhelmingly approved in 2009, and Morales was reelected in December that year, with MAS retaining control of the legislature. Recently, however, controversy erupted when congress failed to appoint judges to vacant posts, stalling the supreme court and creating concerns that Morales would assume more power over the judicial branch to approve judges himself.<sup>186</sup> MAS also lost the April 4 municipal elections in Santa Cruz, and Morales accused the re-elected governor and other opposition leaders of masterminding an assassination plot against him.<sup>187</sup>

The Bolivian Comunidad de Derechos Humanos (Human Rights Community), said:

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<sup>182</sup> "Santa Cruz moves on autonomy," *Latin American Weekly Report*, May 22, 2008.

<sup>183</sup> "Beni and Pando prepare to vote," *Latin American Weekly Report*, May 29, 2008.

<sup>184</sup> "Abstention characterises autonomy votes," *Latin American Weekly Report*, June 5, 2008.

<sup>185</sup> "Morales wins recall vote in Bolivia, but deadlock continues with prefects," *Latin American Weekly Report*, August 14, 2008.

<sup>186</sup> "Morales seeks to consolidate power in local elections," *Latin American Weekly Report*, January 7, 2010.

<sup>187</sup> "Morales targets familiar enemy," *Latin American Weekly Report*, April 15, 2010.

An overarching fact upon examining the [decade] is the ascent of the indigenous Evo Morales to the presidency of the republic, accompanied by a singular process of breaks and transformations of the colonial, patriarchal, and racist structures of a state that ignored the original inhabitants of these lands. The emergence of the original indigenous peasant is one of the most important achievements in human rights of the period and of modern Bolivian history. The social inclusion, the opening of the rural world to interculturalism and diversity, the reacquaintance with ancestral traditions and values, the recuperation of cultural and community values, are part of present-day Bolivia.<sup>188</sup>

The constitutional reforms strengthened Bolivian democracy from the participation and response definitions, particularly in a country with an indigenous majority. MAS also ultimately decreased electoral volatility and party fragmentation. The smaller indigenous and populist parties that emerged during this period did divide the electorate, but MAS won over their supporters and consolidated indigenous support into one party. However, Morales' crackdown on opposition protests and assumption of power over the judicial branch are troubling for the future of the country's output democracy. Van Cott contends that Morales has manipulated MAS' majorities in the lower house of Congress and the Constituent Assembly to avoid negotiating with the opposition. She accuses him of moving toward authoritarianism. "In the process," she argues, "he is not only tarnishing his own democratic credentials, but, as the region's most prominent indigenous politician, he is also tarnishing by association the credentials of other indigenous candidates and movements."<sup>189</sup> If Morales' leadership results in a coup and a subsequent government backlash against the rights of the indigenous majority, it could undo much of the progress indigenous organizations have made.

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<sup>188</sup> Edgar Ramos, *Inclusión y Dignidad Indígena* (La Paz: Comunidad de Derechos Humanos, 2005).

<sup>189</sup> Donna Lee Van Cott, "Latin America's Indigenous Peoples."

## Conclusion

As indigenous political groups in Bolivia and Chile have struggled to secure rights for their people since their countries have emerged from dictatorships, their actions have had vastly different results for democracy. In Chile, indigenous parties have never achieved long-term electoral success or successfully lobbied for concrete improvements in their lives. Indigenous people are technically eligible to vote and serve in the government, but few real improvements have been made in indigenous participation since 1990. While the Mapuche have staged protests that elicited government responses, these responses have usually amounted to nothing more than empty promises. Finally, since Chilean indigenous voters have never been able to back one strong indigenous party, they have contributed to high electoral volatility and party fragmentation by switching their votes among established parties and splitting off to form extremist factions. Most recently, two decades of frustration and failure in indigenous groups seems to have contributed to increasingly extreme proposals and separatist rhetoric.

The actions of Bolivian indigenous political groups, on the other hand, have resulted in significant improvements to Bolivian democracy. At first, the presence of different indigenous parties, mainly MAS and CSUTCB, divided the indigenous electorate. While each party improved indigenous participation and made some gains in improving government response, their conflicts with one another threatened to damage democracy by increasing electoral volatility and party fragmentation. MAS' victories reversed this trend by consolidating the entire indigenous vote into its ranks, stabilizing the electorate. Not only did it win support from Morales' own people, the Quechua, it also gained the votes of the Aymara and non-indigenous workers. This success allowed MAS to win the presidency and a majority in Congress and pass meaningful reforms that strengthened democracy by increasing participation and improving

government responsiveness. However, the gains to democracy are threatened by the Morales government's crackdowns on opposition protests, and the possibility that he might seize more control for the executive over the other two branches of government.

This improvement in all three areas of democracy contradicted my hypothesis. I thought that active indigenous parties would increase both citizen influence and government responsiveness, but also increase electoral volatility and party fragmentation. I also thought that the gains for democracy made according to the first two definitions would outweigh the losses under the third definition. However, I ultimately found that the effect on democracy was dependent on the success of the indigenous movement. The unsuccessful indigenous political actions in Chile failed to significantly improve democracy by any definition, and may have even increased electoral volatility and party fragmentation. The overwhelming success of MAS, on the other hand, signaled gains for Bolivian democracy by all three definitions.

My findings also contradict Van Cott's conclusion that in countries with high indigenous populations, their movements result in dramatic shifts of power to the indigenous parties, and that in countries with small indigenous populations, their inclusion results in a more general increase in participation of a variety of historically excluded minorities.<sup>190</sup> The fact that sixty percent of Bolivia's population is indigenous certainly influenced the fact that MAS managed to shift so much power from the non-indigenous minority to the indigenous majority. However, other authors studying why MAS was successful attributed the party's victories to factors other than the size of the indigenous population, including the fact that they appealed to a broad base

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<sup>190</sup> Van Cott, 127.



beyond one ethnic group.<sup>191</sup> MAS also shifted power to traditionally oppressed groups that were not by definition indigenous, like rural workers and peasants.

Indigenous movements in Chile, by contrast, did not broaden their appeal by aligning themselves with non-indigenous oppressed sections of society. Their movement, therefore, did not result in improved participation for a variety of minorities as Van Cott predicted. This is partly because her conclusion was not predicated upon the success of the movement. However, even if the Chilean movement had been successful, it would not necessarily have improved participatory democracy for groups other than the Mapuche. One significant barrier that they faced was the mere recognition of their movement as an indigenous movement; their demands were often lumped together with other leftist fringe groups or international forces. If the Mapuche had formed one cohesive political party, they might have been able to improve democracy by improving political participation only among the indigenous.

This research fills a gap in the existing research on Latin American indigenous parties, most of which focuses on how these parties achieve electoral success. By exploring South American indigenous movements' histories and analyzing their effects on the strength of their countries' democracies, this study adds another perspective to international relations literature. It also applies democratic theory literature to the study of indigenous parties in a new way.

However, it does leave some questions unanswered.

The dangers to Bolivian democracy posed by some of Morales' actions would be better explored in research that included more definitions of democracy. The term is impossible to encompass in only one definition, and in my research I chose three definitions that I thought would explore indigenous movements' effects on democracy through the widest and most

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<sup>191</sup> Jonas Wolff, "(De-)Mobilising the Marginalised : A Comparison of the Argentine Piqueteros and Ecuador's Indigenous Movement," 16-17.

relevant variety of lenses. However, in doing so, I left out such factors as human rights and the rule of law, both of which are threatened by Morales' actions. In the future, this study could be expanded to include more diverse definitions to better analyze more aspects of MAS' effect on Bolivian democracy.

In addition, further study of this topic would benefit from more quantitative data on party registration and voting behavior. I was limited in my research to materials available in the U.S., so I did not have access to many Chilean and Bolivian newspapers and other publications that would be available in libraries in those countries. In addition, I was limited by the lack of available electoral data on party registration and voting behavior in each country, particularly broken down by ethnic group. Further study with these resources available would allow me to more strongly examine the correlations between indigenous party actions and their effects on the country's democracy. For example, indices of democracy could be used to perform quantitative analyses of the correlation between voting and congressional representation data and the strength of democracy. Also, the use of qualitative data from a wider variety of local newspapers could allow research that takes into account the political biases of the different sources, whereas I was mainly limited to the viewpoint expressed by *LatinNews*.

The implications from my research ultimately serve to contradict the common wisdom that ethnically-based parties are harmful to democracy. As the successful case of MAS shows, if an indigenous party can gain success and grow its supporters beyond the ethnic group that founded it, then it can improve the strength of democracy in its country. As Latin American nations continue to emerge from dictatorship to democracy, historically marginalized indigenous groups have the potential to strengthen their country's democratic governments by fighting for their own political voices.

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