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# Indigenous Movements, Democracy, and U.S. Interests in Latin America

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**WESTERN HEMISPHERE  
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**Raúl L. Madrid  
University of Texas at Austin**

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# **Indigenous Movements, Democracy, and U.S. Interests in Latin America**

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*The views expressed in this research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the US Government, Department of Defense, US Southern Command or Florida International University*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Indigenous movements have become increasingly powerful in the last couple of decades and they are now important political actors in some South American countries, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and, to a lesser extent, Peru and Chile. The rise of indigenous movements has provoked concern among U.S. policymakers and other observers who have feared that these movements will exacerbate ethnic polarization, undermine democracy, and jeopardize U.S. interests in the region. This paper argues that concern over the rise of indigenous movements is greatly exaggerated. It maintains that the rise of indigenous movements has not brought about a marked increase in ethnic polarization in the region because most indigenous organizations have been ethnically inclusive and have eschewed violence. Although the indigenous movements have at times demonstrated a lack of regard for democratic institutions and procedures, they have also helped deepen democracy in the Andean region by promoting greater political inclusion and participation and by aggressively combating ethnic discrimination and inequality. Finally, this study suggests that the indigenous population has opposed some U.S.-sponsored initiatives, such as coca eradication and market reform, for legitimate reasons. Such policies have had some negative environmental, cultural, and economic consequences for indigenous people, which U.S. policymakers should try to address. The conclusion provides some specific policy recommendations on how to go about this.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S POLICYMAKERS

The U.S. should try to engage indigenous movements in Latin America, rather than marginalize them. It should dialogue more frequently with the current generation of indigenous leaders and it should seek to educate and build ties to the next generation. The U.S. should also identify common areas of interest and work with indigenous movements to advance them. For example, the U.S. should support the indigenous movement's efforts to address inequality and discrimination and to promote indigenous political participation and representation. At the same time, however, the United States needs to continue to take a stand against policies or actions by indigenous leaders that undermine democracy.

Policymakers should also take steps to ensure that U.S.-sponsored free market policies help, rather than hurt, the indigenous population. The United States should help create social programs designed to compensate for cuts in social spending and enable the indigenous population to compete more effectively in the market economy. Such programs could provide training and credit to indigenous farmers and entrepreneurs as well as seek to improve local health and education systems. The U.S. should also ensure that U.S. mining, forestry, and agricultural companies clean up the environmental damage caused by their activities and minimize such damage in the future.

In addition, the U.S. should reorient its counternarcotics policy in several ways. First, the U.S. should acknowledge that there are legitimate, traditional uses of coca and it should work with Andean governments to limit coca farming to the amounts necessary to supply those traditional uses. Second, the U.S. should shift its focus away from coca eradication and devote more resources to encouraging indigenous farmers to grow alternative crops. Finally, the

U.S. needs to do more to reduce the market for illegal drugs, such as cocaine, in the United States.

## **INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS, DEMOCRACY, AND U.S. INTERESTS IN LATIN AMERICA**

Indigenous movements are increasingly important political actors in South America. From Colombia to Chile, indigenous organizations have emerged in recent years to contest elections, carry out protests, and make policy demands. Some observers have argued that these indigenous movements represent a real threat to U.S. interests in the region. They point out that indigenous organizations have opposed various U.S.-sponsored initiatives in Latin America from free-market policies to coca eradication. Moreover, according to many of these skeptics, indigenous movements will exacerbate ethnic polarization and undermine democracy in the region.

This paper argues that concern over the rise of indigenous movements is greatly exaggerated. It suggests that the indigenous population has valid reasons to oppose some U.S.-sponsored initiatives, such as coca eradication and market reform. Indigenous movements have resisted market-oriented policies in large part because such policies have failed to bring significant benefits to indigenous areas and at times have had negative environmental and economic consequences. They have opposed coca eradication, meanwhile, because coca is a traditional part of indigenous culture and coca growing has provided a livelihood for many indigenous peasants. As I discuss in the Conclusion, there are a number of steps U.S. policymakers could and should take to address these concerns.

This paper also argues that the rise of indigenous movements has not brought about a marked increase in ethnic polarization in the region because most indigenous organizations have been ethnically inclusive and have

eschewed violence. The rise of indigenous movements has had some negative consequences on democracy, however. Indigenous leaders and movements sometimes have demonstrated a lack of regard for institutions of liberal democracy and they have participated in protests that have led to the removal of democratically elected presidents in Bolivia and Ecuador. Yet at the same time, the indigenous movements have helped deepen democracy in the Andean region by promoting greater political inclusion and participation and by aggressively combating ethnic discrimination and inequality. Thus, the overall effect of the rise of indigenous movements on democracy is mixed.

This paper is organized as follows. The first section discusses the rise of indigenous movements in the region, focusing on Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru. The second section explores why indigenous organizations have opposed U.S.-sponsored coca eradication and market-oriented policies in the region. The third section examines what impact these movements have had on democracy and ethnic polarization in the region. The conclusion offers some recommendations as to how U.S. policymakers should deal with the indigenous movements.

## **THE RISE OF INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS**

Indigenous people represent a significant portion of the population in Latin America. According to recent census data on ethnic self-identification, indigenous people represent 62 percent of the population in Bolivia, 42 percent in Guatemala, 27 percent of the population in Peru, 6 percent of the population in Ecuador and 4 percent in Chile (Layton and Patrinos 2006). Nevertheless, the indigenous population traditionally played little role in politics in the region. Not only did the indigenous population typically lack its own parties, but it had little representation in the main parties and political institutions in the region.



In the last two decades, that has begun to change. Powerful indigenous movements and parties have emerged in some countries in the region and indigenous people have gained increasing representation in these countries' main political institutions (Lucero 2008; Madrid 2008; Van Cott 2005; Yashar 2005). The indigenous movement is currently strongest in Bolivia where indigenous people currently have a significant presence at all levels of government, but Ecuador and, to a lesser extent, Chile and Peru, also have active indigenous movements.

Bolivia has had important indigenous organizations since the 1970s when an independent political movement known as the Kataristas emerged among the Aymara population. During the late 1970s, the Katarista movement founded a national indigenous confederation, the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB), and carried out protests that helped pave the way for the return to democracy in the country. After the return to democracy, coca grower unions that were composed mostly of Quechua-speaking peasants gradually took over the CSUTCB. Under their leadership, the CSUTCB became increasingly militant, carrying out a wave of protests and marches. In 1995, at the instigation of the coca growers, the CSUTCB, along with a confederation of peasant colonists, the Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia (CSCB), and a women's peasant federation, Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas Bartolina Sisa, founded an indigenous party, the Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (ASP). The ASP did not initially fare well in elections outside of its base in the coca growing areas of rural Cochabamba, and in 1998 it split up because of divisions among its leadership. One of its leaders, Evo Morales, then founded a new party, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), by borrowing the registration of a largely defunct left-wing party. Under Morales' leadership, the MAS expanded its base, reaching out to indigenous and mestizo leaders and organizations

throughout the country. Morales and the MAS finished a surprising second in the 2002 elections and then captured the presidency in 2005. Morales was reelected in 2009 by a large margin.

The ascent of Morales and the MAS has increased the political influence of the indigenous movement in Bolivia considerably. Numerous indigenous leaders have been elected to local and national level offices, while others have been appointed to important governmental posts. Morales and the other leaders of the MAS also consult regularly with indigenous leaders and organizations through party assemblies and congresses as well as through a governmental advisory body known as the National Coordinator for Change (CONALCAM). Most indigenous organizations in Bolivia have supported the government and have reaped benefits from doing so. However, some indigenous leaders and organizations, such as the Amazonian indigenous confederation, the Confederación Indígena del Oriente y Amazonia Boliviano (CIDOB), and an association of traditional highlands governing bodies, the Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ), have had fallings out with the government or have opted to maintain their independence from it.

Ecuador also has a relatively strong indigenous movement. The largest indigenous confederation in Ecuador, the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE), first emerged in the late 1980s and carried out a number of highly successful protests during the 1990s. In the mid-1990s, CONAIE helped found an indigenous-based political party, Pachakutik, which won a significant number of mayoral and legislative positions in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and helped elect Lucio Gutiérrez president in 2002. In the last five years, however, the influence of CONAIE and Pachakutik has been on the wane. Pachakutik fared rather poorly in elections in 2006 and 2009, and CONAIE has had less success in mobilizing people in

protests. Moreover, both CONAIE and Pachakutik have had a frosty relationship with the current Ecuadorian president, Rafael Correa. Some other indigenous organizations, meanwhile, have sought to challenge CONAIE's preeminence in the indigenous movement, including an evangelical indigenous federation, the Federación Ecuatoriana de Iglesias Evangélicas (FEINE), and the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas, y Negras (FENOCIN), a leftist federation of indigenous and black organizations. Neither of these organizations commands the support of nearly as many indigenous people and communities as CONAIE, but they have had more influence with recent governments.

The indigenous movement in Peru is considerably weaker than the Bolivian and Ecuadorian movements. There are some strong organizations in the Peruvian Amazonian, notably the Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDASEP), and the Confederación de Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú (CONAP), but the vast majority of the Peruvian indigenous population lives in the highlands where indigenous organizations are weak and fragmented. The two traditional organizations of highlands peasants, the Confederación Campesina del Peru (CCP) and the Confederación Nacional Agraria (CNA) were both severely weakened by the guerrilla war that ravaged the highlands in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Shining Path targeted many peasant organizers for assassination and the violence made it difficult for organizations in the highlands to engage in political activity. Neither of these organizations has recovered since that time. They have relatively few members and their main affiliates are based far from the country's capital and main center of power. The most influential indigenous organization in the highlands in recent years has been an organization that sprang up to protest the negative environmental effects of mining in largely indigenous communities, the Confederación Nacional de Comunidades del Perú Afectados por la Minería

(CONACAMI). Nevertheless, even this organization has limited ability to mobilize people or shape national policies.

Chile has the weakest indigenous movement of the four countries, but one that has become increasingly active in recent years. Chile's indigenous movement is concentrated in the southern part of the country where the Mapuche population lives. The movement is relatively fragmented, however, and no single organization commands the allegiance of most Mapuche people. One of the most militant organizations is the Consejo de Todas las Tierras, an organization formed in 1991, which has carried out numerous protests and occupations to demand land rights and political autonomy for the Mapuche in Chile. Nevertheless, the Consejo de Todas las Tierras has not demonstrated an ability to mobilize large numbers of people and it has alienated the main political parties and actors in Chile. Other organizations have close ties to the main political parties, but these organizations have yet to demonstrate that they have appreciable support within the Mapuche population.

## **U.S. INITIATIVES IN THE REGION**

Indigenous movements in Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru have vigorously opposed some U.S. policy initiatives in the region, including free market reform. Over the last several decades, Latin American countries have implemented a variety of free market reforms, privatizing numerous state-owned companies and opening up their economies to foreign trade and investment. Chile, which initiated its reforms in the mid-1970s, has gone the furthest in terms of implementing these policies, but Bolivia, Peru, and, to a lesser extent, Ecuador also enacted important measures beginning in the late 1980s or early 1990s. The U.S. has strongly encouraged Latin American countries to enact these policies, providing

aid, debt refinancing, and other benefits to countries that implement the free market reforms.

The reforms have brought a number of benefits. They have helped Latin American countries conquer hyperinflation, they have generated increased financial flows to the region, and they have given Latin American consumers access to a broad range of, often inexpensive, foreign made products. The reforms have generated uneven growth over time and within countries, however, and the policies have actually had a negative impact on many indigenous communities. Indigenous peasant farmers have had a hard time competing with the agricultural imports that flooded Latin American markets when their governments reduced tariff barriers. Indigenous people have also been hard hit by cuts in government social spending that have accompanied the neoliberal reforms. The removal of restrictions on foreign investment, meanwhile, has led many foreign companies to establish mining, oil exploration, forestry, and agricultural concerns on traditionally indigenous lands. Indigenous people have complained that these companies have often caused environmental damage and brought few benefits to the indigenous communities located in these areas.

As the 1990s wore on, indigenous people mounted an increasing number of protests against the neoliberal policies and their effects. In Ecuador, for example, the indigenous movement first came to prominence in the 1990s because of the massive marches, roadblocks, and demonstrations they carried out to protest market-oriented policies implemented by the Rodrigo Borja, Sixto Durán Ballén, and Abdalá Bucaram administrations in Ecuador. During this period, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement came to be known as the leading opponent of neoliberal policies in the country (Ibarra 2002, 28). In Bolivia as well, the indigenous movement spearheaded the opposition to free market policies beginning in the 1990s. The Bolivian indigenous movement was particularly critical of trade liberalization, the privatization

of natural resource companies, and a proposal to export natural gas through Chile. In Peru and Chile, the indigenous movement has not played a central role in the struggle against free market policies, but they have carried out protests against them. Moreover, in both countries, the indigenous movement has aggressively opposed policies that have opened up indigenous areas for mining and forestry activities by multinational companies.

Indigenous movements in Bolivia and Peru have also vigorously opposed U.S.-sponsored coca eradication efforts. The U.S. has been extensively involved in coca eradication programs in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru where much of the world's supply of coca is grown. These programs have met particularly strong resistance in Bolivia where the unions of coca growers are quite powerful and wield a great deal of authority within the indigenous movement. Indigenous organizations in Peru have also opposed coca eradication, but the coca growers in Peru have less influence in the Peruvian indigenous movement. As a result, the Peruvian indigenous movement has not made an end to coca eradication one of its principal demands.

Coca growers in both countries have held numerous protests and marches in efforts to block eradication efforts. In Peru, for example, the coca growers held a 16 day march in 2003 that involved more than 8,000 participants (Cabieses 2004, 11). President Toledo eventually met with the marchers after they arrived in Lima and agreed to some of their demands, declaring that “all of you, producers of coca—you are not narcotraffickers” (Cabieses 2004, 12). The coca grower unions have also sought to gain influence through the electoral process. Leaders of the coca growers have won numerous mayoralties in coca growing regions in the Department of Ayacucho and they also elected representatives to the national legislature and the Andean Parliament in 2006 (Huber 2008).

Coca growers have gained even more influence in Bolivia. In Bolivia, coca growing expanded dramatically beginning in the 1980s when many Quechua-speaking Bolivians migrated to the sub-tropical areas of Cochabamba in search of work. The coca growers formed strong unions, which used roadblocks, marches, and other protests to resist U.S.-sponsored coca eradication policies. As we have seen, these coca grower unions helped create an indigenous-based political party, and eventually managed to get their leader, Evo Morales, elected as president of Bolivia. After taking office, Morales expanded the amount of coca that Bolivians were allowed to grow legally in the country. Under Morales, the Bolivian government has continued to eradicate coca grown outside of the legally protected areas and narcotics seizures have actually increased in recent years. Nevertheless, the U.S. has repeatedly accused Morales of failing to do enough to fight narco-trafficking and in late 2008 it suspended trade preferences it had granted Bolivia under the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA). Morales retaliated by expelling the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency from the country.

Indigenous movements in the Andes have opposed coca eradication in part because coca is a traditional part of indigenous culture in the region. Coca leaf, which is a mild stimulant, has been chewed by indigenous inhabitants of the Andes for thousands of years (Lloréns 2004). It is also used to prepare coca leaf tea, or *mate de coca*, and it is employed in various traditional medicines. In Peru, a 2003 survey found that approximately three million Peruvians, or fifteen percent of the population, chew coca leaf, and another million Peruvians also use the coca leaf to prepare coca leaf tea (Rospigliosi 2004, 13-4). Indigenous people constitute about three-quarters of the people who chew coca leaves in Peru, but coca leaf tea is consumed by all sectors of society in Peru (Rospigliosi 2004, 39). The percentage of coca leaf chewers among the total population is probably even greater in Bolivia, although precise figures were not available. In

both Bolivia and Peru, however, the amount of coca grown significantly exceeds the quantity consumed in traditional ways and this surplus makes its way into the hands of narco-traffickers.

The indigenous movement has also opposed coca eradication programs because of the negative health and environmental consequences of aerial spraying of coca crops and the violence that has been associated with some coca eradication efforts. Nevertheless, the main reason that indigenous movements have opposed coca eradication is because coca growing is an important source of income for many indigenous people. In Peru, some 50,000 people were estimated to work in the coca industry in 2004, and the number has certainly grown since that time because the number of hectares of coca under cultivation has steadily increased in recent years (Cabienes 2004, 12; McClintock and Vallas 2010, 207). The number of coca growers in Bolivia is also quite large. By the early 1990s, there were more than 40,000 coca growers in Cochabamba alone and the number has continued to expand since that time, both in Cochabamba and in other departments, such as La Paz (Healy 1991, 88-9). Although most coca growers in Bolivia and Peru are not wealthy by any standard, they earn considerably more from coca growing than they could from other available forms of employment.

The indigenous movement thus has valid reasons to be concerned about both coca eradication and free market reform. Both policies have had some negative economic, environmental, and health consequences for indigenous people and they have undermined traditional indigenous customs. The indigenous movement has viewed these policies as being imposed on their countries by the United States and other foreign interests, which has exacerbated anti-American attitudes among the movement's leaders. It is therefore in the interest of the United States to address these



concerns, and the conclusion provides some recommendations about how the U.S. might do this.

## **IMPACT ON ETHNIC POLARIZATION & DEMOCRACY**

Some observers have expected the rise of indigenous movements to have a very negative impact on ethnic polarization and democracy in Latin America. National security analysts in Washington have argued that indigenous movements promote radicalism and ethnic separatism ("A political awakening" 2004, 37; Madrid 2005; Oppenheimer 2003, 16A). Many Latin Americans have also been concerned. In Chile, for example, prominent politicians have accused the Mapuche movement of promoting separatism and disrespect for the rule of law (Haughney 2006, 72).

In addition, an extensive scholarly literature has linked the rise of ethnic movements and parties to ethnic conflict and the breakdown of democracy. According to this literature, ethnic parties often engage in outbidding—that is, they seek to woo support among members of their own ethnic group by demonizing members of other ethnic groups and demanding policies that favor members of their own ethnic group (Horowitz 1985; Reilly 2001; Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Sisk 1996). This worsens ethnic tensions and often leads to conflict. Reilly (2001, 9) warns that the consequences of ethnic outbidding "can be devastating: moderate forces are quickly overwhelmed by more extreme voices, leading to an ongoing cycle of violence and retribution." Rabushka and Shepsle (1972, 85), meanwhile, suggest that "as ethnicity becomes increasingly salient, every political decision favors one community and hinders others." Ethnic groups that are out of power may use violence to try to achieve their aims or improve their bargaining position, whereas ethnic groups that are in power may employ force to repress them.

Much of this literature, however, assumes that the boundaries between ethnic groups are relatively clear and stable and that individuals will only support the parties and movements that are created to represent their group (Chandra 2001, 2005). As a result, ethnic parties and movements have incentives to use exclusionary appeals to court members of their own ethnic group, rather than reaching out to members of other ethnic groups through inclusive appeals. In Latin America, however, *mestizaje* or racial mixing has blurred the boundaries between members of different ethnic groups and reduced ethnic polarization. In surveys many people identify with more than one ethnic group or express fluid, mixed, or ambivalent ethnic loyalties. For example, many people who self-identify as mestizo on some surveys identify with some indigenous category on others. These mestizos often appear indigenous, maintain traditional indigenous customs, and sympathize with some traditional demands of the indigenous movement. Moreover, even many whites sympathize with some indigenous demands. Indigenous movements in Latin America thus have incentives to avoid exclusionary behavior and to woo the support of whites and mestizos.

In fact, indigenous movements in Latin America have reached out to members of other ethnic groups. They have largely eschewed exclusionary rhetoric and actions, they have formed numerous alliances with non-indigenous groups and leaders, and they have embraced a variety of non-ethnic causes and demands. The indigenous movement in Ecuador, for example, came together with various non-indigenous organizations and leaders to create Pachakutik in the mid-1990s. Pachakutik has developed a broad and inclusive platform, it has recruited many whites and mestizos as candidates, and it has forged alliances with non-indigenous parties and endorsed non-indigenous presidential candidates. The Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia has been similarly ethnically inclusive. Indeed, Bolivia's vice president and approximately half of the MAS's legislators are non-indigenous and the MAS has maintained numerous alliances

with white and mestizo-dominated parties and organizations. The leaders of these parties have preached ethnic tolerance and emphasized that they do not represent indigenous people alone.

As a result, the rise of indigenous movements in the Andes has not led to a dramatic increase in ethnic polarization in the region. Inter-ethnic relations in the region continue to be friendly for the most part, although discrimination against indigenous people and Afro-Latinos is commonplace. There has been a notable increase in polarization in Bolivia during the Morales administration, but the polarization is more political than ethnic in nature. Moreover, ethnically-related violence in the region is still quite rare. Indigenous groups have organized numerous illegal protests, including roadblocks and the occupation of land and buildings. In Chile, indigenous groups have even been accused of setting fire to buildings and lands. As a result, there have been numerous confrontations between indigenous protesters and the police or military in the Andean nations. Some of these have turned violent, such as a 2008 confrontation in the Peruvian Amazon. There have been few incidents of inter-communal violence, however, and indigenous leaders have typically foresworn the use of arms. Some guerrilla movements, such as the Shining Path in Peru, have recruited numerous indigenous foot soldiers, but these have been not been indigenous-led movements, and they typically have not embraced ethnic demands. The few indigenous-led armed movements that have emerged in the region, such as the Ejército Guerrillero Túpac Katari in Bolivia, have not obtained a significant following among indigenous people and have disappeared.

The indigenous movements have undermined democracy in other ways, however. Indigenous organizations have participated in various protests that have brought about the overthrow of elected leaders. CONAIE, for example, spearheaded non-violent protests in Ecuador that led to the

removal of President Abdalá Bucaram in 1996 and Jamil Mahuad in 2000. In the latter case, the indigenous movement's occupation of government buildings caused Mahuad to flee the presidential palace and led to the creation of a ruling triumvirate that included the head of CONAIE, Antonio Vargas, as well as a member of the Supreme Court and the military. This triumvirate lasted only a short time, however, before the military insisted on handing power over to the country's vice president. Indigenous protests also led Bolivian presidents Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and Carlos Mesa to step down. Sánchez de Lozada resigned under pressure in 2003 after his efforts to repress the protests led to the deaths of more than 60 protestors. His vice president, Carlos Mesa, then took over as president, but Mesa only governed for a year and a half before he too had to step down in the face of indigenous protests.

Indigenous movements have also weakened democracy in Bolivia through their participation in the Morales administration. The government of Morales has undermined horizontal accountability through various measures, including packing the judiciary and other traditionally non-partisan institutions with his supporters. It has also reformed the constitution to expand the powers of the president and permit Morales to run for a second term. In addition, the Morales administration has undermined the rule of law by using mass mobilizations to intimidate the opposition. Supporters of Morales, for example, carried out protests to put pressure on the opposition to pass the constitutional reform and the agrarian reform law as well as to intimidate opposition prefects into resigning. The Morales administration has also filed criminal charges against leading members of the opposition, including former presidents, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, Carlos Mesa, Eduardo Rodríguez Veltze, and Jorge Quiroga, as well as current or former opposition governors, Manfred Reyes Villa, Leonel Fernández, Rubén Costas, and Mario Cossio. Many of these prosecutions appear to be politically inspired.

Although the Morales administration does not represent the indigenous movement *per se*, Morales is the most prominent indigenous leader in Bolivia and most of the indigenous movement has supported and even facilitated his actions. Bolivian indigenous organizations, for example, participated in protests designed to intimidate opposition. Thus, the indigenous movement in Bolivia should be held partly responsible for the violations of democratic principles that have occurred under the Morales administration.

The rise of indigenous movements in Latin America has also helped deepen democracy in some ways, however. First, the indigenous movements have helped the indigenous population gain greater political representation. Indigenous people traditionally had very little political influence in Latin America. The major political parties in the region typically did not recruit indigenous leaders as candidates for important elected offices, nor did they often name indigenous people to important positions within the government or the party hierarchy. As a result, very few indigenous people served in positions of authority in the Andean nations prior to the 1990s. The rise of indigenous movements and, especially, indigenous parties changed all that. The indigenous parties have helped numerous indigenous people get elected as councilors, mayors, legislators, governors, and even president, in the case of Bolivia. Bolivia's new constitution also sets aside seats in the legislature and on the electoral tribunals for people of indigenous-peasant origin. In addition, indigenous people have been appointed to important ministerial positions in recent years. In Ecuador, for example, President Gutiérrez named indigenous people to the top positions in four ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Ministry of Agriculture. Indigenous people have also held a number of important ministries in Bolivia in recent years, including the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Ministry of Justice. Indigenous people have made fewer inroads in Chile and Peru in large part because these countries have no major indigenous

parties and their indigenous movements are considerably weaker than in Bolivia and Ecuador. Nevertheless, the number of judges, prosecutors, mayors and legislators with indigenous last names has risen steadily in Peru in recent years, although they still represent a small proportion of the total (Paredes 2008, 12-3). Thus, the indigenous movement has helped deepen democracy in Latin America by promoting greater descriptive representation and political inclusion.

The rise of indigenous movements has also helped increase political participation among indigenous people in the region. Voter turnout was traditionally lower in indigenous areas than in non-indigenous areas of the Andes in part because indigenous people had higher illiteracy rates, often lacked identity documents, and lived in more isolated areas. The failure of the main parties to recruit indigenous candidates or address indigenous demands may also have suppressed voter turnout in indigenous areas. The emergence of powerful indigenous parties and movements helped change this situation in Bolivia and Ecuador, however. The indigenous parties generated more enthusiasm for voting by running indigenous candidates and embracing traditional indigenous demands. They also pushed for the provision of free identity cards, the translation of electoral materials into indigenous languages, and the establishment of more voting centers in rural, highly indigenous areas. As a result, the turnout rate is now typically higher in indigenous areas than in non-indigenous areas of Bolivia and Ecuador (Madrid 2005).

In Bolivia, the rise of the indigenous movement and, specifically, the election of Evo Morales as president have also helped boost satisfaction with democracy among indigenous people (Madrid 2010). Before 2005, Bolivia had one of the lowest levels of satisfaction with democracy in the hemisphere and democratic satisfaction was particularly low among indigenous people. After the election of Evo

Morales, however, satisfaction with democracy in Bolivia began to increase. Surveys by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) found that in 2008 65 percent of self-identified indigenous people reported being satisfied or very satisfied with democracy, up from 49 percent in 2004.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, only 48 percent of whites and mestizos reported being satisfied or very satisfied with democracy in 2008, which was slightly lower than in 2004. The percentage of indigenous Bolivians who believe that their country is democratic also rose considerably in the wake of Morales' election. According to LAPOP surveys, 66 percent of self-identified indigenous people classified Bolivia as somewhat or very democratic in 2008, up from 51 percent in 2004. By contrast, only 60 percent of mestizos and whites categorized Bolivia as somewhat or very democratic in 2008, the same percentage as in 2004. Mass level evaluations of and satisfaction with democracy have also increased in Ecuador in recent years, but the timing of it appears unrelated to the rise of indigenous movement in that country. Moreover, the increase has not been higher among indigenous people than among whites and mestizos in Ecuador.

Finally, the rise of the indigenous movements in the Andes has also helped deepen democracy in the Andes by reducing ethnic discrimination and inequality. The indigenous population has traditionally suffered from a great deal of social discrimination, and it lags behind the non-indigenous population on many socio-economic indicators including income, life expectancy, education, and access to health care and housing. Indigenous movements have lobbied hard for the government to implement policies to combat discrimination and to close these gaps. They have had the most success to date in Bolivia where the Morales administration has moved aggressively to address indigenous

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<sup>1</sup> These data represent the author's original analyses of LAPOP survey data. For more information on LAPOP surveys, see: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/>

poverty and exclusion. Under Morales, the Bolivian government has tightened laws against racial discrimination and it has sought to enhance respect for indigenous culture through the teaching of indigenous languages and history in the public school system. Bolivia's new constitution also grants various collective rights to the indigenous population, including the right to self-governance and territorial autonomy and the right to use traditional forms of justice. In addition, the Morales administration has enacted laws that should disproportionately benefit the indigenous population, including literacy programs, a major agrarian reform program, and conditional cash transfer schemes. These measures appear to have brought some benefits already, since illiteracy, infant mortality, and extreme poverty have all declined under the Morales administration and the rural poor's share of national income has increased (Movimiento al Socialismo 2009).

## **CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper has argued that the rise of indigenous movements in Latin America has not had the negative effects that many policymakers and observers expected. The indigenous movement has opposed some U.S. initiatives in Latin America, but this opposition has been grounded in valid concerns and U.S. (and Latin American) policymakers should take these concerns into account in crafting policies toward the region. To begin with, policymakers should take steps to see that the indigenous population benefits from market-oriented policies, rather than being hurt by them. Latin American governments with the assistance of the United States should create social programs designed specifically to help the indigenous population compete in the market economy and to compensate for cuts in social spending that have negatively affected indigenous communities. Such programs could provide training and credit to indigenous farmers and entrepreneurs as well as seek to improve local health and education systems. They



might be funded in part by tax revenue generated from the mining, forestry, and agricultural activities of corporations in indigenous areas. Efforts should also be made to ensure that these companies clean up the environmental damage caused by their activities and minimize such damage in the future. Latin American governments would need to be the instigator of such policies but the U.S. can play an important role in encouraging and supporting their implementation.

The U.S. should also reorient its counternarcotics policy in several ways. First, the U.S. must acknowledge that there are legitimate, traditional uses of coca and it should work with Andean governments to limit coca farming to the amounts necessary to supply those traditional uses. Second, the U.S. policy should shift its focus away from eradication, which is a politically controversial policy that has created a great deal of anti-American sentiment without affecting the overall supply of coca grown in the region. Instead, it should devote more resources to encouraging peasant farmers to grow alternative crops. Third, the U.S. needs to do more to reduce the market for illegal drugs, such as cocaine, in the United States. As some indigenous leaders have pointed out, the U.S. has focused too much on eradicating the supply of drugs and not enough on developing policies, such as drug treatment programs, to stem the demand for drugs at home.

More generally, the U.S. should try to engage indigenous movements in Latin America, rather than marginalize them. It should dialogue frequently with indigenous leaders and bring more of them to the United States for meetings and conferences. It should also develop programs so that the next generation of indigenous leaders might study in the United States or at least gain greater familiarity with this country. The U.S. should also support the indigenous movement's efforts to address inequality and discrimination and to promote indigenous political participation and representation. At the same time, however, the United States needs to continue to take a stand against policies or actions

by indigenous leaders that weaken democracy or exacerbate ethnic or political polarization. U.S. criticisms of the excesses of indigenous movements will only be effective, however, to the extent that the U.S. improves its ties to the indigenous movements and demonstrates that it can be a partner in the struggle against ethnic inequality in Latin America.

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