

**CITIZENSHIP AND DIFFERENCE : INDIGENOUS POLITICS IN  
GUATEMALA AND THE CENTRAL ANDES**

**John Peeler  
Bucknell University  
Lewisburg, PA 17837  
peeler@bucknell.edu**

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### **Introduction**

Modern democratic theory has been a dialogue between radicals such as Rousseau, who seek to approximate the ideal of direct democracy under conditions of perfect equality, and liberals such as Locke and John Stuart Mill, who emphasize limited government, representation, and rights, rather than directly exercised popular sovereignty. The latter tradition has been dominant, represented in twentieth century political theory by pluralism, which depicts democratic politics as an arena for conflict among competing interests seeking to shape public policy (e.g., Dahl, 1956, 1971). The interests are thought to check each other and to check the government, such that power is dispersed and the liberties and rights of citizens protected from government abuse.

Many dissenters against pluralism follow Rousseau and Marx in being preoccupied with the corrosive effects of inequality on the possibility of authentic democracy. Critics such as Bachrach (1967) and Macpherson (1977) show how the realities of extreme social, economic and political inequality vitiated the meaningfulness of ostensible democracies. Dahl himself has been increasingly concerned with the adverse effects of inequality on democracy (1985, 1989, 1998). Barber (1984) seeks to lay out parameters for a "strong democracy," that would have more meaningful popular participation. Perhaps the most systematic analysis in this current is that of Gould (1988), who argues, first, that liberty and equality, far from being opposed, actually presuppose one another, and that,

when the concepts of freedom and equality are properly understood, what follows from them is the requirement for an extension of democracy beyond the political sphere to social and economic life; and that in all of these spheres, the form of decision-making should be participatory to the extent feasible, and representative otherwise (25).

A variant of the radical school of dissent against pluralism has come to be known as communitarianism. Objecting to the general liberal disposition to see society as an aggregation of egoistic individuals with rights, communitarians emphasize that we are all inherently social: we are part of a community that is prior to our individual existence. While not denying the importance of rights in a democracy, communitarians emphasize our obligations to the community that gives us life and defines us as cultural beings. Amitai Etzioni has been prominent in the development of communitarian thinking (see 1996, for example), emphasizing the need for modern societies to reemphasize traditional

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values after the breakdown of social order in the 1960s and 1970s. Douglas Sturm (1998) on the other hand, develops a communitarian and relational perspective on human rights that agrees with Gould on the extension of such rights to social and economic life, and that regards it as a fundamental human obligation to preserve and protect the rights of everyone, especially minorities and others who are least powerful. But, argues, Sturm, rights cannot be absolute and inviolable, but rather “strong prima facie moral claims susceptible to modification depending on surrounding circumstances,” (34) where some rights would be more basic and less subject to compromise than others. The balancing of rights, Sturm argues, should take place in the context of this central political question: “How might we so construct our lives together that all life flourishes?” (35).

A related line of critique against liberalism has been developed by Sandel (1982, 1998). In a sweeping critique of John Rawls’ liberalism, Sandel argues that its abstract individualism simply cannot allow for the formation of community among individuals, each of whom must be understood as an agent uniquely situated, rather than as an artificially denatured actor in Rawls’ “original position.”<sup>1</sup>

Jürgen Habermas (1973, 1975, 1983, 1987, 1996) has had a seminal influence on democratic theory since the 1970s. Arguing that the political process is fundamentally communication, Habermas envisions an “ideal speech community” in which every person would be able to communicate freely, unconstrained by either formal rules or by differentials of social power. An ideal speech community is then a community of equals, in which decisions would be made purely on the basis of reasoned discourse. Habermas thus questions the traditional liberal insensitivity to social and economic inequality, emphasizes that politics is inherently communal, and stipulates that politics involves rational interaction among persons with different values and convictions, not simply a confrontation among interests whose outcome is determined by power.

Several recent strains of democratic theory have drawn inspiration from aspects of Habermas’ thinking. Young (1990, 4; see also 1996) for example, argues that “where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression.” Whereas pluralism would call for a unitary citizenship with minority rights, the politics of difference would go further to conceive the democratic political order as an arena for the recognition of and response to fundamental differences among citizens that go beyond mere interest.

Cohen (1998) distinguishes *aggregative* and *deliberative* approaches to collective decision-making, where the former presupposes equal consideration to the interests of each person, and the latter presupposes free public reasoning among equals who are governed by the decision. He associates the aggregative approach with Dahl, and the deliberative approach with Habermas. He further argues that the deliberative conception of democracy is the more compelling interpretation of the fundamental idea of democracy, because, first, it emphasizes the collective character of political decisions, requiring “that we offer considerations acceptable to others, understood to be free, equal, and reasonable, and whose conduct will be governed by the decisions” (222). And second, the deliberative approach is superior because, “Given that citizens have equal standing and are understood

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<sup>1</sup> McCready (1999) points out that Sandel is subject to many of the same methodological shortcomings as he attributes to Rawls.

as free, and given the fact of reasonable pluralism, we have an especially strong showing of legitimacy when the exercise of state power is supported by considerations acknowledged as reasons by the different views endorsed by reasonable citizens, who are understood as equals” (224). Cohen thus emphasizes the deliberative character of an ideal democracy, while acknowledging the necessity of “reasonable pluralism” in modern society.

Benhabib (1996, 73-74) develops an even stronger defense of deliberative democracy in a context of pluralism. Against the argument that a truly deliberative democracy would be impossible in a large, modern state (as opposed to a *polis*), Benhabib argues that a deliberative model of democracy need not presuppose the fiction of a general deliberative assembly. Rather, a deliberative and proceduralist model of democracy privileges

*a plurality of modes of association* in which all affected can have the right to articulate their point of view. These can range from political parties, to citizens’ initiatives, to social movements, to voluntary associations, to consciousness-raising groups, and the like. *It is through the interlocking net of these multiple forms of associations, networks, and organizations that an anonymous “public conversation results. It is central to the model of deliberative democracy that it privileges such a public sphere of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks and associations of deliberation, contestation, and argumentation.* (73-74. Italics hers)

With the advent of democracy in much of Latin America over the last twenty years (Peeler 1998a), these issues of democratic theory become relevant. This paper will focus in particular on efforts of indigenous peoples to assert their rights to full citizenship in a democratic context, especially in the four countries where those peoples approach or exceed a majority of the total population: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru.<sup>2</sup> These large indigenous populations have entered the political stage in unprecedented ways and with unexpected weight. They have gained political power and cultural rights within these fragile new democracies, either by emphasizing class and economic issues or by stressing cultural identity. The former emphasis constitutes a demand for equality among citizens, while the latter constitutes a demand for recognition of difference.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In the Latin American context, one is considered indigenous when one’s primary language is indigenous and one participates in the culture of an indigenous people. Many Latin Americans are largely or entirely of indigenous lineage, but would be seen as such only if they are culturally indigenous. As will become clear, the relatively small populations inhabiting the Amazon Basin and other isolated regions (e.g., eastern Panama) are commonly placed in a distinct category from the dense populations inhabiting the highlands of these four countries. The Amazonian populations are always referred to as indigenous, while the highland populations, though culturally and linguistically distinct, are sometimes not referred to as indigenous. Useful comparative studies on indigenous political participation include Warren, ed. (1993); Radcliffe and Westwood (1996); and Díaz Polanco (1997).

<sup>3</sup> This paper will focus on the majoritarian cases, but it should be noted that in other prominent cases of indigenous mobilization, where the indigenous population is a minority (e.g., the Maya in Chiapas, the Miskitos in Nicaragua, Amazonian peoples in Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and the Mapuche in

### **Subjection and Citizenship: Indigenous Peoples in Empire and Republic<sup>4</sup>**

In the highlands of Guatemala, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru, the dense and civilized indigenous population that survived the conquest came to be absolutely fundamental, as coerced labor, to the colonial economy. The colonial regime and its republican successors thus sought simultaneously to subjugate and to sustain the indigenous societies on which they depended for labor. In contrast, in other territories such as Chile, Brazil and Argentina, where indigenous populations were smaller, serious attempts were made to wipe out indigenous populations that were seen as obstacles to development. In regions peripheral to colonial development, such as Amazonia, indigenous peoples were largely left alone except for occasional exploratory expeditions.<sup>5</sup>

The indigenous responses to the colonial regime entailed a repertoire from submission (with a variety of insubordinate subterfuges), to flight, to armed rebellion. Most of the time, most people do not appear to have thought that flight or resistance were likely to be fruitful. The local *jefes* usually had good reason to collaborate with the authorities because they would get a share of the proceeds from exploiting their own people. Others may have felt that by going along, they could at least survive, while flight or resistance would raise the probability of destruction. Nevertheless, flight to remote areas like the Guatemalan Petén and the eastern fringes of the Andes did regularly occur, and there were numerous serious indigenous rebellions, most notably those of Tupac Amaru (Peru) and Tupac Katari (Bolivia) in the 1780s.

The independence of Latin America was bad news for indigenous peoples. Though the Crown had a strong interest in exploiting them, it also had policies that partially shielded them from utter destruction at the hands of colonists intent on gaining quick wealth. After independence, policy throughout the region shifted increasingly toward economic liberalism (and its ideological auxiliaries, social darwinism and positivism), which in promoting capitalist private property facilitated the dispossession of the indigenous peoples and their reduction to wage laborers.<sup>6</sup> Many communities, with a weakened material base in the land, were hard-pressed to survive. Political liberalism showed no concern for community integrity, but considered indigenous individuals, in principle, as citizens. However, the exercise of citizenship was usually limited to those with either property or literacy, so the vast majority of the indigenous were politically marginalized. To the extent that there was indigenous political participation, it usually

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Chile) the demand has been principally for recognition of the right to be different -- and also to have equal rights as citizens.

<sup>4</sup> See Peeler (1998b) for a fuller historical narrative; and Kicza (2000) for in-depth analyses of several cases.

<sup>5</sup> In his comparative study (1996) of indigenous peoples and state systems in Mexico, the United States, Canada and Australia, Richard Perry finds that genocide was usually tried as a policy, though never with complete success.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most determined effort in the four countries to resist the liberal political economy of the early Independence era was mounted by the Conservative caudillo Rafael Carrera in Guatemala. With strong indigenous support, he ruled from 1840-1865, acting forcefully as the benevolent *patrón* of indigenous communities. Only after his overthrow did Liberal reform come to Guatemala.

took the form of *gamonalismo*, or local clientelism, whereby a local *jefe* (perhaps indigenous, perhaps mestizo) would buy and sell votes in return for favors.

By about 1930, all four countries displayed a remarkably similar pattern: an indigenous majority politically marginalized, socially and culturally besieged, and economically exploited. The indigenous were not part of the nation, but they were part of the economy. The politically marginalized indigenous population were frequently seen as a drag on national development, a block to national integration. *Indigenismo*, a movement among white or mestizo intellectuals, sought to address this political subjection by affirming the indigenous heritage of Latin America while advocating the integration of the indigenous into the mestizo nation. *Indigenismo* became the dominant approach to indigenous affairs in most Latin American countries in the rest of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

Pursuant to this ideology, there were numerous attempts after 1930 to mobilize indigenous peoples in each of the four countries for political action in support of their own interests, both from top-down and bottom-up. Frequently, leftist and populist movements saw the peasantry (indigenous and mestizo) as potential allies and thus supported the organization of peasant *sindicatos*. A similar pattern occurred in Chiapas, where the Cárdenas government itself promoted land redistribution and peasant organization under the emerging clientelistic structure of the official party.<sup>8</sup>

The period after 1930 witnessed a significant experience with autonomous political action by indigenous people, often in alliance with reformist or revolutionary forces from nonindigenous sectors. Most often, these indigenous political actors were demanding land and associated benefits from the state. Although the peasantry in all four countries was heavily indigenous, these early organizations for the most part identified themselves as peasants without explicit regard for ethnicity. Up to the 1960s, in short, indigenous political activity was frequent, but in a context of class conflict more than ethnic conflict.

The victory of the Cuban revolutionary movement of Fidel Castro in 1959, and its consolidation as a communist regime allied with the Soviet Union, was a seminal event throughout Latin America. In virtually every country of the region, leftist forces drew immense encouragement from the Cuban success, and sought to analyze it for lessons that could be applied to their own national conditions. Everywhere, pressure for revolutionary change increased, and was often reflected in the emergence of insurgent forces seeking to replicate the Cuban success. Few were very successful in the short run, but by trying to create mass revolutionary movements they helped create a climate for new thinking among ruling elites about national security.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Van Cott (1994), pp. 4-6. A similar orientation underlay the ideology of the Mexican revolutionary establishment from the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40). See Knight (1986).

<sup>8</sup> On the Bolivian revolution and the peasantry, see Malloy (1970); Dunkerley (1984). On the Maya role in the Guatemalan reform governments of 1944-54, see Handy (1989). On peasant organization in Peru, see Remy (1994); Handelman (1975). On peasant organization in Ecuador, see Ibarra (1992); Isaacs (1993); Selverston (1994); Quintero and Silva (1995), Ch. 15; Báez, et al. (1995). On peasant organization in Chiapas, see Harvey (1998), Ch. 2.

<sup>9</sup> On insurgency and counterinsurgency in Latin America, see Wickham-Crowley (1991, 1992), and McClintock (1998).

The response of the authorities to this revolutionary threat took two forms, reformist and repressive. The Peruvian military regime of Velasco Alvarado that took power in 1968 and ruled until 1975 is the prototype of the reformist type. Similar regimes held power for shorter periods in Bolivia (1966-70) and Ecuador (1972-76), but military reformism had only a faint echo in Guatemala during the weak civilian presidency of Méndez Montegnegro (1966-70). Although the intent of the military reformers was to prevent revolution, their redistributive strategy usually provoked resistance from both national economic elites and from multinational corporations. This conservative resistance was generally supported by the United States, which had responded to the Cuban Revolution by promoting the reformist Alliance for Progress in the early 1960s, but after 1965 increasingly emphasized counterinsurgency and a very broad view of national security that encouraged Latin American military establishments to see their national defense role in terms of combating internal subversion.<sup>10</sup>

The result was a more repressive response to the revolutionary threat, a series of conservative to reactionary military regimes during the 1970s that repressed popular movements, imposed rigorous controls on indigenous communities, and promoted the concentration of income and property at the expense of the poor and indigenous. Guatemala was distinguished both by the presence of a nationally significant insurgency during the 1970s, and by a much higher level of repression. The insurgency, both stimulus and response to the repression, showed increasing ability to appeal to the Maya population. By contrast, the three Andean countries had only localized insurgencies and less repression. This is not to say that they were politically quiescent, only that mass political action was not channeled into insurgency in the Andean cases, and was in Guatemala.<sup>11</sup>

An important influence on the indigenous response to repression and counterinsurgency was the progressive sector of the Roman Catholic Church. Doctrinal changes emerging from the Second Vatican Council, as interpreted by the 1968 and 1979 Latin American bishops' conferences, reemphasized the scriptural basis of the Church's concern for social justice. Within this tradition, clergy and religious motivated by a prophetic demand for social justice developed liberation theology as a systematic rationale for the church's special concern for the poor and for social justice. In the parishes, both indigenous and non-indigenous, these religious leaders promoted *concientización*, that is, a consciousness of being oppressed, of solidarity with other oppressed people, and a disposition to demand justice. Important elements of the Church, in short, not only affirmed its traditional, paternalistic commitment to social justice, but actively promoted the empowerment of the poor (including indigenous people) to act for themselves. The progressive Church also made itself felt among the more isolated populations of the Amazonian region and the Guatemalan Petén, where the conservative developmentalism of the 1970s opened the way in all four countries for rapid penetration by petroleum companies, loggers, ranchers and developers, who were usually well-connected to the

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<sup>10</sup> A good treatment of the reformist military regimes in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador is Rouquié (1987, Ch. 10). See also Wickham-Crowley (1992, Ch. 8). On the Alliance for Progress and National Security doctrine of the United States, see Schoultz (1981).

<sup>11</sup> See Jonas (1991); Malloy (1988); McClintock and Lowenthal (1983); Martz (1987).

military authorities. The Church was not simply acting paternalistically to defend the weak and exploited. Rather, it was helping them empower themselves (Berryman 1987).

Conditions in all countries were profoundly shaped by external forces. The United States, concerned to prevent the spread of the Cuban Revolution, expanded military aid and pushed military establishments to preempt or repress any potentially revolutionary movement. Interwoven with this counterinsurgency emphasis, the United States also pushed for respect for human rights and transitions to democracy, as another means of preventing revolution. This emphasis was particularly evident in the early years of President Carter (1977-1979), but reemerged in the later years of President Reagan (1985-1989). The military rulers in all four countries would have had to swim against a strong current to retain control far into the 1980s. Even in Guatemala, where repression was strongest and the insurgency the most threatening, movement toward a transition began to emerge with the Ríos Montt coup of 1982, and was completed in 1985 with the inauguration of President Cerezo (Schoultz 1981; Schoultz 1987; Schoultz 1998: 362-366).

Further, when external economic conditions changed, actors had to adjust. A deterioration in the economic climate in the early 1980s left all four countries completely unable to service their growing debts. The need to resort to the International Monetary Fund and other sources of concessionary finance exposed them to intense pressure to adopt orthodox stabilization plans and, increasingly, neoliberal structural adjustment plans which concentrated adverse effects on the poor majority of the populations, including the indigenous (Haggard and Kaufman 1995).

The prolonged economic crisis mobilized indigenous political movements, pushing people into the political arena to demand attention to their needs as well to work together in order to maximize influence. The establishment of democratic regimes gave them space to act politically with much less fear of repression. The emergence of important indigenous movements in all four countries since the early 1980s is thus directly related to these global changes (Peeler 1998: Ch. 3). Similarly, the Zapatista movement in Chiapas chose to emerge into the public eye on 1 January 1994 precisely to protest the anticipated negative consequences of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for Mexico's poor, both indigenous and mestizo, and it utilized the political opening that had been taking place in Mexico since the late 1980s (Womack 1999).

### **Indigenous Political Action**

Majorities systematically excluded, exploited and repressed for half a millennium have found ways, in the last quarter century, to demand equality, to demand respect, to demand, in short, meaningful citizenship. How they did so varied along the dimension of equality and difference. This section reviews major features of indigenous political action in each of the four countries.

Guatemala. The relations between Guatemala's indigenous Maya population and the state have been, in recent decades, more conflictual than in any of the Andean countries. The Guatemalan revolutionary insurgencies were certainly more durable, probably affected a larger portion of the territory and population, and may have posed as serious a challenge to the state as did the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso of the 1980s. The Guatemalan guerrilla movements that began in the early 1960s were able to persist into the

mid-1990s; from the 1970s, they were able to recruit substantial support from the indigenous population. During the 1980s, the Unión Revolucionaria Nacional de Guatemala (URNG) posed a very serious challenge to the Guatemalan state, and elicited a response from the Army that was unprecedented in the savagery of the repression visited upon the indigenous population.

Prior to the 1970s, the Guatemalan approach to indigenous peoples was roughly parallel to those of the Andean countries, at least at the level of rhetoric: there was usually some commitment, in constitution, law, and policy, to protecting and meeting the special needs of indigenous communities. But Guatemalan governments as a rule did even less than their Andean counterparts to actually bring these policies to fruition. As a result, when the insurgency heated up in the 1970s and began to gain indigenous support, the response of Guatemala's military authorities was predictably repressive. As noted earlier, the Guatemalan military had not produced anything like the reformist Peruvian junta of 1968-75. The closest analogue would be the reformist civil-military coalition of 1944-54, and all military elements sympathetic to that regime were systematically purged after the CIA coup of 1954. Indeed, the first insurgency of the 1960s was led by one such ex-officer, Yon Sosa. In short, a thoroughly reactionary army dominated Guatemalan politics from 1954 to 1985, and continued thereafter to have autonomous control of the counterinsurgency effort, notwithstanding the election of civilian presidents after 1984 (Black 1983a, b; Jonas 1991; Wickham-Crowley 1992).

Over the long course of Guatemalan history, the Maya peoples have mostly contrived to survive in a repressive environment by avoiding direct assertions of their rights or direct challenges to authority. But the escalating repression of the 1970s and 1980s forced them to forge new, more assertive organizations. These new associations included: (1) community-level or grassroots movements; (2) popular organizations; and (3) Maya institutions (Bastos and Camus 1993, cited by Adams 1994, p. 162).

The community, of course, is the foundation of Maya life, so it was predictable that the Army would attack indigenous communities as a basic aspect of counterinsurgency. Maya communities throughout the country responded to these attacks by flight into exile or into the forests of northern Guatemala, or by remaining in place and organizing to resist.<sup>12</sup> In the former case they tended to remain organized as communities in Mexican refugee camps, demanding that the state create the conditions for their safe return. Communities that fled into internal exile also remained organized, demanding that the state recognize them as refugees rather than combatants. Finally, communities that stayed were subjected to a variety of repressive counterinsurgency tactics to which they had to respond. Most notably, virtually all villages were required to set up *Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil* (Civil Self-Defense Patrols, PACs). But whereas in Peru many indigenous communities supported similar patrols (*rondas campesinas*) and collaborated with the Army to block the guerrillas, in Guatemala the patrols were seen exclusively as an imposition by the army upon a population that increasingly saw itself as "between two armies" (Stoll, 1993). By the late 1980s, many communities had succeeded in dismantling their PACs. In 1990, the community of Santiago Atitlán went further: outraged by the

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<sup>12</sup> On the response of indigenous communities to insurgency and counterinsurgency, see Menchú (1984); Montejo (1987, 1999); Montejo and Akab' (1992); Perera (1993); Stoll (1993); Warren (1993); Wilson (1995); Gutiérrez (1994); Metz (1998).

murder of community members at the hands of an army patrol, the community successfully demanded that the Army withdraw entirely from the village (Adams, 1994, p. 167).

A second major counterinsurgency tactic was to force suspect villages into fortified settlements euphemized as “development poles,” but really strategic hamlets along the lines of U.S. practice in Vietnam. Once under Army control in these hamlets, there was not much people could do except protest their confinement. In this they were supported by the popular movements on the national scale, and by international solidarity groups.

Organization at the community level naturally led to national popular organizations that had a strong indigenous thrust. As Adams (1994, p. 162) puts it, these are “associations that have arisen to deal with Guatemalan social problems to which the Maya have proven to be especially vulnerable.” Among the most notable of these predominantly indigenous popular organizations was the Committee of Campesino Unity (CUC), organized in 1978 to unify indigenous and ladino peasants in struggles for land and labor rights. Its predominantly class-based orientation, and its open alignment with the left, led to the later formation of the National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous People and Campesinos (CONIC), which took a more explicitly ethnic stance. The two principal human rights organizations, the Mutual Support Group (GAM), and the National Committee of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA), both had majority indigenous memberships, and the latter had indigenous leadership. The resistance to self-defense patrols (PACs) took on a national dimension with the organization of the Council of Ethnic Communities “Runujal Junam” (CERJ) in the late 1980s. The Guatemalan contribution to the debate on the significance of the Columbian Quincentenary in 1992 was led by the Maya Coordination of the New Awakening, usually called *Majawil Q’ij*. In 1994, over 150 Maya organizations joined to form the Coalition of Organizations of the Maya People (COPMAGUA), which made a proposal on behalf of the Maya peoples to the peace talks between the government and the URNG.

The third form of Maya organizations, major Maya cultural institutions include the Academy of Maya Languages of Guatemala, chartered by the Guatemalan Congress in 1990, and charged with standardizing the Maya alphabet and setting up schools for each of the 21 Maya languages.<sup>13</sup> The Maya Educational and Cultural Center (*Mayab’ Nimajay “Cholsomaj”*) was established in 1988 to promote all aspects of Maya culture. The Council of Maya Organizations of Guatemala (COMG) was established in 1990, linking 15 Maya institutions (Adams, 1994, pp. 165-166).

Maya popular organizations were active in the formation, in 1995, of the New Guatemala Democratic Front (FDNG), which elected six candidates to Congress (including two Maya women), and has become the principal force on the Guatemalan left, in spite of continuing repression. In the same campaign, other Maya groups supported the successful presidential candidacy of the conservative Alvaro Arzú, of the National Advancement Party (Otzoy, 1996, p. 35). Arzú, during 1996, would finally bring to a conclusion years of peace negotiations between the government and the URNG, begun in 1991 under the terms of the 1987 Esquipulas II Central American peace accord.

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<sup>13</sup> The Academy’s charge to standardize the alphabet was a victory over the competing plan of the Summer Institute for Linguistics, the missionary-linked Protestant organization that has long been active in several Latin American countries, including Peru (see above).

Guatemala thus became the last of the Central American countries to achieve a peace settlement -- if it holds (Sieder, 1998, Azpuru, 1999; Plant, 1999).

Since the 1996 settlement, Guatemalan Maya organizations have been active participants in the difficult process of implementation. This has frequently involved responding to echoes of past repression, as in the recent assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi, shortly after he had released a report on human rights violations during Guatemala's long civil war (Jeffrey, 1998; Garvin, 1998). Increasingly, however, the transition to peace has set up conflicts among Mayas, especially over land, as returning refugees seek to reclaim land now occupied by others (often with Army support). The government has done little to solve these disputes, and has been pressed by various Maya and peasant organizations, such as the Coordinadora Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas y Campesinos (CONIC).

The limits of the political power of Maya organizations were on display in 1999. In May, a referendum on approval of constitutional changes to provide legal recognition of Maya collective rights was decisively rejected in an election with less than 20 percent turnout. Voting among rural Maya was apparently especially low. And in November and December, Alfonso Portillo of the Guatemalan Republican Front (led by former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt) decisively won the presidency in spite of Ríos Montt's record of brutal repression of indigenous communities during his rule (1982-83).

In the last thirty years, Guatemala's Maya have made major advances in their organization and their ability to defend their interests in the political arena. These advances have come in the context of a durable and widespread insurgency, and in the face of a brutal counterinsurgency program administered by an army that took the doctrine of the national security state to its limits and beyond. During this period, the arena of legal politics was completely devoid of a left wing, and labor and peasant unions were systematically repressed. Some Maya organizations, such as the CUC, have been tacitly allied with the URNG, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú has never made a secret of her sympathy for the guerrillas' cause.<sup>14</sup> Other Maya groups have adopted a much more conservative political stance. Many organizations seem anxious to avoid such open partisan commitments, and the dominant approach emphasizes cultural interests such as Maya languages and community autonomy. Economic and political demands tend to be placed within the context of cultural concerns.<sup>15</sup> Maya concerns have achieved an unprecedented prominence in the political discourse of ladinos, among whom one may note a certain nervousness about the future.

Bolivia. Following the breakdown of the clientelistic Military-Peasant Pact in the mid-1970s, the energy of Bolivian peasants was increasingly directed toward autonomous organization, in the hope of breaking definitively with the paternalism and clientelism that had characterized peasant organizations since the Revolution of 1952. A perennial and

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<sup>14</sup> See Stoll (1999) for a provocative and controversial analysis of the uses of Menchú in North American scholarship on Guatemala. See also an interview with Menchú by Burt and Rosen (1999), and with Stoll by Dudley (1999); and "If Truth Be Told: A Forum on Stoll and Menchú," a special issue of *Latin American Perspectives* 26(6) (1999) coordinated by Jan Rus.

<sup>15</sup> Montejo (1999, 194) argues that Maya refugees "have been able to depoliticize the dangerous identities imposed on them by reviving their Maya cultural traditions in the camps, which shows the world at large that they are not dangerous criminals or pathologically ill."

basic cleavage among peasant organizations had to do with relative emphasis on class or culture. Leftists in general emphasized the class status of peasants and viewed ethnic appeals as divisive. This had been the thrust of most opposition efforts to organize the peasantry since the Revolution. However, as early as the 1960s, parties and movements were founded that emphasized indigenous (especially Aymara) culture and tradition. The symbolic inspiration for most of these movements was the figure of Tupak Katari, indigenous rebel of 1781 in what was then the colonial province of Upper Peru.

Katarismo was less a movement than a banner, in that it was prone from its inception to fragmentation based on competing leadership ambitions and ideological perspectives. Nevertheless, Katarismo was notably more successful than class-based movements in gaining adherents from among indigenous peasants of the altiplano. By the 1990s, there were at least six Katarista political parties active on the national scene. The most prominent was the Tupak Katari Revolutionary Movement for Liberation (MRTKL), led by Víctor Hugo Cárdenas, who became Vice President of the Republic from 1993-97 as a result of a pact with the candidate of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada. The pact undoubtedly helped Sánchez win election in 1993, but it is not so clear what benefit indigenous peoples received from having a Vice President in a government that systematically pursued neoliberal economic reforms at the expense of the poor.

Paradoxically, while Katarismo helped to place indigenous issues on the national agenda, none of the Katarista parties ever captured a large vote (see Albó 1996 and Degregori 1998 for analysis of this point). One beneficiary of the political mobilization of indigenous people was the populist Patriotic Consciousness (CONDEPA) movement of La Paz radio commentator Carlos Palenque, who was elected Mayor of La Paz three times on the basis of a broad cultural appeal to the poor *cholos* (i.e., mestizos) and indigenous people living in and around La Paz. Palenque, who died in 1997, also made serious runs for the presidency, gaining more than 10 percent of the vote in 1989 and 1993. Had he lived, he would have been a serious competitor in 1997 as well. Moreover, by the 1990s most of the major parties and candidates were appealing to indigenous voters on the basis of themes originally raised by the Kataristas.

Katarismo wielded more power as a principal current in the organization of peasant unions. Here, too, the conflict between a class orientation and a cultural orientation has been generally present, posing a challenge to unity. However, since 1983, the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) has held together in spite of this strain. Its founding document reaffirmed class struggle, but it also condemned ethnic discrimination and called for a plurinational state (Albó, 1994, p. 61).

The diverse indigenous peoples from the tropical lands to the north, east and southeast of the Andes largely developed their political organization and action in isolation from the altiplano until recent years. By the late 1980s, as pressures for development of their regions intensified, these peoples began to organize regional organizations to defend their rights and interests. The point at which they irrupted into the consciousness of the altiplano peoples was in 1991, when hundreds of persons from the northern lowlands (Beni) marched for 35 days from the lowlands over high passes to La Paz at 14,000 feet, demanding recognition of their right to "Territory and Dignity." The lowland peoples

have continued to be active, and have organized a Confederación Indígena del Oriente, Chaco y Amazonía de Bolivia (CIDOB). However, there is not yet (in contrast to Ecuador; see below) an organization that links indigenous peoples of highland and lowland. There are obviously major cultural divergencies, but there are also significant conflicts of interest that grow from the fact that many settlers in the lowlands, infringing on the territories of the local indigenous peoples, are Quechua and Aymara people from the highlands.

Bolivia has a long tradition of class-oriented organization of its peasants, who are predominantly indigenous (Quechua and Aymara). Without losing that tradition, the emphasis has shifted in the last fifteen to twenty years to organization on the basis of indigenous cultural interests. The two orientations are not totally incompatible in a society where the vast majority of peasants are indigenous and the vast majority of indigenous are peasants -- and virtually all are poor. For example, coca growers from the eastern fringe of the Andes, confronting government efforts (under U.S. pressure) to eradicate their crop and to push them into cultivating other crops, have formed militant organizations and staged major demonstrations and marches. They define themselves by economic interest, not by indigenous identity, but their *lingua franca* is Quechua (British Broadcasting Corporation Worldwide Monitoring, April 12, 1999, Newsbank [internet]). But it is not clear as yet whether the increasing consciousness and organization of Bolivia's indigenous peoples will yield more than symbolic gains.<sup>16</sup>

Ecuador. Indigenous political organization in Ecuador has, as in Bolivia, two distinct histories, one in the Sierra, another in Amazonia; Ecuador has also seen an incipient indigenous movement in its Pacific coastal region.<sup>17</sup> As distinct from Bolivia, however, in Ecuador movements from the distinct regions have overcome their distinct origins and social bases to build a durable and powerful national movement.

Ecuador is also like Bolivia in that its indigenous movements have consistently had to address the conflict between a class-oriented analysis and strategy, and one built on ethnicity. The earliest modern indigenous organization in Ecuador, the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas (FEI), was founded in 1944 under the aegis of the Ecuadoran Communist Party, and sought to organize indigenous people as workers and peasants. The Catholic Church responded to the challenge of FEI by promoting indigenous *sindicatos* independent of the FEI and its class analysis. It was the Church which sponsored the national meeting in 1972 out of which grew the leading indigenous federation of the Sierra, Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui (ECUARUNARI). However, by 1980, the Church had lost much of its influence on ECUARUNARI, which increasingly shifted toward a more leftist, class-oriented stance, but without abandoning its indigenous identity (Selverston, 1994, p. 138).

Indigenous organization in the Sierra was given strong impetus by the agrarian reform of 1964. Many indigenous communities sought to gain advantage in their fight for land by gaining state recognition as *comunas*, formally organized municipal authorities.

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<sup>16</sup> On recent indigenous politics in Bolivia, see Albó (1985, 1994, 1996); Ticona, et al. (1995); Romero Ballivián (1993); Hahn (1992); Ströbele-Gregor (1994); Rivera Cusicanqui (1991); Degregori (1998).

<sup>17</sup> Selmeski, 1992, p. 98. This paper will not deal further with coastal indigenous movements in Ecuador.

This would enable indigenous *comunas*, during the 1970s and 1980s, to fight their battles in the courts, where they had a chance of winning.

The agrarian reform of 1964 also had a seminal impact on organization among the indigenous of Amazonia, paradoxically because it strongly encouraged colonization by Andean peasants in lieu of large scale land redistribution in the Sierra. The result, as in Bolivia, was to set up a basic conflict between the original indigenous inhabitants and the newly arriving indigenous colonists from the Sierra. Several Amazonian nationalities organized in response, with the Salesian religious order providing crucial help to the largest group, the Shuar, in the 1960s (Selverston, 1994, p. 135). Quichua colonists also organized OPIP (Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza) in the 1970s. In 1980, CONFENIAE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía del Ecuador) was founded to integrate all indigenous organizations from the Oriente, or Amazonia.

In 1986, the separate indigenous communities in Ecuador formed the Confederación de Nacionalidades del Ecuador (CONIAE), a national indigenous confederation that merged ECUARUNARI, from the Sierra, and CONFENIAE (Pacari, 1996, p. 24). CONAIE, moreover, has become much more than a passive umbrella organization. It has provided the principal organizational force behind the succession of indigenous demonstrations and strikes that have marked Ecuadoran politics since 1990 (Selmeski, 1992, pp. 94-97; Pacari, 1996).

In 1990, members of CONAIE occupied the Cathedral of Santo Domingo in Quito, while thousands of others closed roads and shut down commerce and transportation for over a week. The principal demand was for action by the government to expedite land claims in the Sierra and territorial claims of indigenous peoples in the Oriente. The government agreed to negotiate, but little concrete was accomplished. An intangible result, however, was overwhelmingly important: a unified, coherent coalition of indigenous peoples had forced their way onto the national stage, demanding attention to their needs, as defined by them. Nothing like it had been seen in Ecuador, or indeed in the Americas.

In 1992, OPIP (Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza) organized a march from the lowland province of Pastaza to Quito, to demand the settlement of indigenous land claims in Pastaza. In 1994, CONAIE (with two other organizations, the Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas-Indígenas -- FENOC-I -- and the Evangelical Federation of Indigenous Ecuadorians -- EFIE ) organized another mobilization that shut down the country for two weeks.

Through these massive demonstrations, and through countless local and regional acts of political assertion, CONAIE in particular and indigenous organizations in general have definitively placed indigenous concerns and perspectives on the Ecuadoran agenda. They are very far from controlling the state, but they have achieved recognition as a legitimate voice to be heard in making national policy. CONIAE continues to play a prominent role in popular opposition to the neoliberal economic policies of successive governments in the 1990s.

Selverston (1994, p. 131) argues that the leaders of the indigenous movement have created this political space by couching their demands in "cultural" terms. However, in spite of the tendency to organize along ethnic lines, basic economic issues have always been a central part of the agenda of indigenous organizations. Especially with regard to

the Sierra, the indigenous population has in fact been integrated into the national economy in certain economic roles (e.g., *huasipungo*) that have been typically exercised by indigenous people. Class is a meaningful organizational principle, but it apparently needs to be mediated by ethnicity to reach indigenous people. There is an economic agenda, but it is not framed in revolutionary terms, but rather as piecemeal, very focused reforms.<sup>18</sup>

Peru. Indigenous communities have had legal recognition in Peru since the Leguía government of the 1920s, thereby reversing the liberal policy of treating indigenous people purely as individual citizens. This change, maintained and expanded in subsequent decades, has had two major effects in shaping the character of indigenous politics in Peru. First, it enabled communities to resort successfully to the courts to gain restitution of lands taken from them in previous decades, thereby reinforcing the economic integrity and political legitimacy of indigenous community organizations. Second, and perhaps paradoxically, it cemented an equation between indigenous status and peasant class that still characterizes Peruvian society today. Thus, the indigenous/peasant communities of the Andes characteristically make demands that focus on economic or class-based objectives, rather than cultural objectives. Indeed, Remy (1994, pp. 111-113) reports that communities typically have demanded education in Spanish, not in indigenous languages, even though their everyday language is likely to be Quechua or Aymara. The point is that Spanish is the language of economic and political power.<sup>19</sup>

The Amazonian indigenous peoples of Peru have had a markedly distinct experience, and as in Bolivia, that has continued to set them apart from their Andean compatriots. Remy (1994: 117) argues that until the 1980s the state did not have a strong presence in Amazonia, that it left administration of the region largely to Catholic missions and other private actors. The indigenous inhabitants were not seen as being effective citizens with rights until they became “civilized.” Finally in the 1950s the state organized the first reserves for Amazonian peoples (Brown and Fernández 1991).

By the 1950s, the Peruvian Andes were characterized by a mix of peasant communities and haciendas, the latter with peasants as quasi-feudal laborers who were attached to the hacienda rather than to a community. In general, the departments of the southern sierra were predominantly populated by Quechua and Aymara-speaking peasants whom we would classify as clearly indigenous, while the central and northern sierra tended to be populated by Spanish-speaking peasants who nevertheless often showed strong indigenous cultural features in their customs, including the strength of community organization. Both peasant/indigenous sectors (communities and haciendas) were increasingly organized in *sindicatos* to defend their economic interests, and by the late 1950s, these organizations were establishing links among themselves and organizing regional confederations such as the Federación Provincial de Campesinos de La Convención y Lares, in the Department of Cuzco. With support from urban labor sectors, strikes and land invasions became increasingly common tactics (Remy, 1994, pp. 114-115). Peasant unrest escalated in the La Convención Valley northwest of Cuzco in the early 1960s, as a small guerrilla insurgency emerged, giving the United States an early

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<sup>18</sup> For the uprisings, see Field 1991; Selmeski 1992; Selverston 1994; Tassi 1992; Almeida et al. 1991; Guerrero 1996.

<sup>19</sup> See Degregori 1998 for an insightful comparison of ethnicity and governability in Bolivia and Peru.

opportunity to test its counterinsurgency doctrine in the context of social reforms supported by the Alliance for Progress (Handelman, 1975, pp. 70-83).

After the 1968 military coup, the military government of Velasco Alvarado sponsored the most sweeping agrarian reform in Peruvian history, as well as local and national peasant organizations. Both initiatives were part of an authoritarian and nationalistic "Revolution" that sought to benefit and mobilize the poorest sectors of society in order to prevent a more radical and uncontrolled revolution. The reform destroyed the haciendas of the sierra and constituted peasant cooperatives to replace them (other types of cooperatives were set up in the commercial plantations of the coast). Although the reform was an economic failure in that production did not increase and most cooperatives could not sustain themselves, it did irreversibly change the rural class structure in favor of the indigenous peasantry. Moreover, although the government failed in its attempt to control all peasant organizations, it did have a durable effect, notably with the survival to the present day of the Confederación Nacional Agraria, an organization originally sponsored by the military government and today one of the major national peasant organizations. On the other hand, several autonomous peasant organizations have survived as well, including the leftist Confederación Campesina del Perú, and weaker centrist organizations linked to Acción Popular (Belaúnde) and Apra. The result, quite contrary to the military government's intentions, is a rather highly organized but fragmented peasantry that is tied to various parties but not under state control, and that continues to define its demands more in terms of class than ethnicity (McClintock 1981; McClintock and Lowenthal 1983; Stepan 1978).

The military coup of 1968 opened new opportunities for Amazonian peoples. The new government recognized a new organizational form, the native community, which was to have a status quite distinct from that of peasant communities in the Andes. Whereas the main concern of the latter would be access to agricultural land, infrastructure, and Spanish education (practical economic concerns), the native communities of the Amazon tended to be concerned with retaining or regaining territory, and with demanding bilingual education in order to maintain their cultures. These preoccupations certainly have an economic dimension, but they are principally aimed at preserving cultural integrity and autonomy in the face of economic and political pressures from outside.

Without doubt the most significant development of the 1980s in the Peruvian Sierra was the emergence of the Sendero Luminoso insurgency. Drawing on a Maoist revolutionary strategy, the Sendero insurrection that began in 1980 sought to mobilize the peasantry for revolutionary struggle. Although they had some early success in the southern highlands, and the Army overreacted to the threat by attacking peasant villages on the mere suspicion of complicity, by the mid-1980s indigenous peasant communities throughout the highlands and in much of Amazonia had organized local self-defense squads (*rondas campesinas*) that kept the guerrillas from dominating many communities. These self-defense squads were at first resisted by the Army, but later encouraged as part of its counterinsurgency strategy. Indigenous peasant communities, with a long-standing tradition of autonomous organization and defense of their interests, increasingly resisted Sendero's hegemony, and even collaborated with the Army (compare Guatemala, below). It may be that their willingness to do so is a fruit of the Army's agrarian reform and its promotion of peasant organizations after 1968. One result, argues Remy (1994, p. 127),

is that the indigenous peasantry has gained increased acceptance in urban circles as a legitimate and respected interlocutor in Peruvian national affairs. Paradoxically, this brutal revolutionary insurgency may have finally cemented a bond between the indigenous peasants and the mestizo nation.<sup>20</sup>

As in Ecuador and Bolivia, the Amazonian indigenous peoples have had a markedly distinct experience, and as in Bolivia, that distinct experience continues to set them apart from their Andean compatriots (Remy 1994; Brown and Fernández 1991; Morin 1992; Ballón Aguirre 1987). Remy (1994, p. 117) argues that until quite recently the state has not had a strong presence in Amazonia, that it left administration of the region largely to Catholic missions and other private actors. The indigenous inhabitants of the region were seen as savages who were to be drawn into civilized life, but who were not seen as being effective citizens with rights until they became “civilized.” Finally in the 1950s the state organized the first reserves for Amazonian peoples.

As early as 1965, some Amazonian peoples (specifically, the Asháninka) became involved in one of the episodes of guerrilla warfare that shook Peru during the period. In this case, elements of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) descended from the Andes into Asháninka territory and recruited significant numbers of that people into their forces. Brown and Fernández (1991) argue that the receptiveness of the Asháninka was attributable to a belief that the leader of the MIR column had the same spiritual authority as an eighteenth century rebel called Juan Santos Atahualpa. As in La Convención (see above), government repression was not long in coming. The Asháninka, in particular, have continued to mount an active self-defense in the 1980s and 1990s.

The reforms that followed the military coup of 1968 opened new opportunities for the organization of Amazonian peoples. The new government recognized a new organizational form, the native community, which was to have a status quite distinct from that of peasant communities in the Andes. Whereas the main concern of the latter would be access to agricultural land, infrastructure, and Spanish education (practical economic concerns), the native communities of the Amazon tended to be concerned with retaining or regaining territory, and with demanding bilingual education in order to maintain their cultures. These preoccupations certainly have an economic dimension, but they are principally aimed at preserving cultural integrity and autonomy in the face of economic and political pressures from outside.

Since the 1970s, Amazonian indigenous populations have increasingly built organizational alliances among themselves capable of engaging the state and the national society of Peru. Both ethnic and zonal federations have emerged. In 1980 there was a “Primer Congreso de Nacionalidades Quechuas, Aymaras, y Nativas de la Selva,” but this attempt to unite Andean and Amazonian peoples, was apparently never repeated.<sup>21</sup> Amazonian peoples received strong backing from a variety of outside interests that have their own reasons for supporting indigenous organizing in the region. In addition to the long-standing Catholic missions, Protestant groups such as the Summer Institute of

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<sup>20</sup> On the Sendero Luminoso, see Palmer (1992); Watters (1994); NACLA (1990-91); Degregori (1997); McClintock (1998, 1999); Basombrío (1999). On the Peruvian *rondas campesinas*, see Degregori, et al. (1996), especially chapters by Degregori, del Pino, and Starn; Kirk (1997).

<sup>21</sup> “Primer Congreso de Nacionalidades Quechua, Aymara, y Nativos de la Selva, (Cusco: Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, 1980).

Linguistics,<sup>22</sup> a variety of nongovernmental organizations such as Cultural Survival, environmentalists and anthropologists working in the region, all in their various ways seek to support (and guide) the organization of Amazonian peoples. But these peoples are certainly not simply instruments of outside manipulation, as some opponents allege (e.g., pro-development Peruvians and multinational corporations that want access to Amazonian lands). Rather, they seem to be learning from these outside groups how better to define and defend their societies and cultures.

Amazonian peoples have been deeply affected by the confluence of insurgency (not only Sendero Luminoso but also the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru [MRTA]), the illegal cocaine trade, and government efforts (with U.S. support) to control and repress them. There has been a rapid expansion of coca and cocaine production by settlers from the Andes in territories of Amazonian peoples, which has led to the displacement and exploitation of the latter. Further, both insurgencies have financed themselves by protecting the cocaine producers, which means they have needed to exercise control over the Amazonian peoples in the area. Finally, the state (under strong pressure and with aid from the United States) has engaged in repeated sweeps and scorched earth tactics that are extremely destructive of the environment within which the Amazonian peoples must subsist. These conflicting forces have led to intense battles in the Amazonian region, with Amazonian peoples often fighting each other, as well as the drug traffickers, the insurgents, and the Army (Remy, 1994, pp. 126-127).

Indigenous peoples from both the Sierra and the Amazon have emerged into important political roles in Peru, but the two sectors have yet to make common cause. The massive peasant population of Quechua and Aymara from the highlands, along with their close relatives who live in the nation's slums, have become indisputably the mass base of Peruvian politics, speaking through their own organizations as peasants and workers, more so than as indigenous people. It is still largely the case in Peruvian consciousness that to be a peasant is to be indigenous, and to be indigenous is to be a peasant. The minority Amazonian populations, in contrast, still see themselves principally as distinctive peoples who want to preserve their identity and autonomy even while demanding their rights as Peruvians.

## Conclusions

Explaining the Differences. Endowed with similar social structures and confronted with similar international conditions, it is not surprising to find considerable parallels in the political roles of indigenous peoples in these four countries. Authoritarian regimes in each country during the 1970s reached a point of exhaustion and yielded to a transition to constitutional democracy. Under democratic rules, the energies and pressures produced by years of insurgency and counterinsurgency and economic crisis could be more easily and openly expressed. Yashar (1998) argues that indigenous organizations in all countries had strong incentives to organize as a result of the dismantling of state programs

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<sup>22</sup> The Summer Institute of Linguistics is a missionary-linked conservative Protestant organization long active in several Latin American countries, including all four of these countries. It has faced charges from the left that it collaborates with the CIA. It is also active in Guatemala; see below.

in rural areas in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence we have observed a blossoming of indigenous political action in the last two decades.

Nevertheless there are also important differences. The four cases represent four distinct approaches to the issues of equality and difference in democratic citizenship. In Peru, we find not only Andean but also Amazonian populations that are objectively indigenous, in terms of language and culture, who see themselves as such, and proudly so. Yet their intervention in the political process is largely cast in terms of demands for economic advancement, especially through land tenure in the Sierra, and collective territorial rights in Amazonia. The right of Andean campesinos to be full citizens in the liberal sense (civil and political rights), while retaining their distinctive language and culture, has long since been accepted in Peru. They are demanding, as a class, not as an ethnic group, the economic and social rights that go with a more radical approach to citizenship. They may be undergoing, as López (1997) argues, a process of *cholificación*, but, paradoxically, without giving up, without being expected to give up, their Quechua identity. The Amazonian peoples, as small and besieged minorities, have a very different problem, but they, too, have chosen to cast their demands in terms of economic interests and rights -- defined collectively in this case. Peru, then, represents a rather thorough commitment of indigenous people to a strategy of incorporation into the larger society, and of struggle for advancement as citizens, within it.

Guatemala represents the opposite case. Certainly, class-oriented peasant organizations that cut across the Maya-ladino divide are important parts of the political process, demanding land and defending other economic interests of peasants. Yet, what is striking in the Guatemalan case is the degree to which explicitly Maya organizations have come to the fore. Such organizations do not give up the notion of traditional, liberal citizenship rights. Instead, they use those rights the better to make demands for cultural autonomy and acceptance of the principle of the plurinational state. Such demands are not being seriously articulated at all in Peru.

Ecuador and Bolivia represent intermediate cases. The tradition of class struggle is very strong in Bolivia, and with a well-established organizational base. In the Revolution, indigenous peasants defined themselves as campesinos, not indians. Yet, in the last generation the Katarista movement has brought indigenous Aymara consciousness to the center of Bolivian politics, even as minority peoples from the eastern lowlands have begun to assert themselves. The Bolivian pattern is thus mixed, but probably closer to the Peruvian pattern than to the Guatemalan.

Ecuador is the case where explicitly indigenous organizations have been able to move beyond a stage of exuberant proliferation, to achieve substantial national unity. CONAIE, with its demands for ethnic autonomy and for the acceptance of Ecuador as a plurinational state, has become a major player in national politics. Yet Ecuador also retains a significant element of more class-oriented organizations making economic demands. Ecuador is thus also a blend, but perhaps closer to Guatemala than to Peru in its pattern.

How can we explain these differences? Yashar (1998:31-32) argues that the countries she studied varied in the scope of political liberalization experienced in the 1980s, from relatively full openings in Ecuador and Bolivia, to partial opening in Mexico and uneven opening in Guatemala, to growing restrictions and authoritarianism in Peru

(notwithstanding its formal transition to democracy after 1980). However, although the Peruvian regime did become more restrictive after 1980, it started out in 1980 much less repressive than the Guatemalan regime, and is certainly no more repressive than Guatemala in the late 1990s. And if we take a longer view, back to the 1950s, there is no doubt that the Guatemalan military has been much more consistently repressive than those in the other countries, and much less involved in promoting reforms to ameliorate the conditions faced by the indigenous population.

Patterns of indigenous political action are products of political cultures formed over generations, indeed centuries. In these countries, the indigenous population has had to learn how to cope with repression and exploitation in order to survive. Moving from weakness, they have at least these two defensive interests: protecting their meagre economic resources, and defending the integrity of their societies and cultures. Moving from strength, successive political regimes (defending successive socio-economic orders) have these corresponding interests: exploiting the labor of the indigenous populations, maintaining control over indigenous societies, and maintaining ideological hegemony over indigenous cultures.

The epoch of the last quarter century presents a particular set of international circumstances that have made it possible for indigenous peoples to assert themselves as never before, in the context of democratization. But these new opportunities come into play within the historically shaped political arenas of each country. Lines of least and most resistance will differ from country to country. Some issues may have been resolved long ago in some countries, and not in others. A key variable is whether revolutionary insurgencies were strong during the period: they were in Guatemala and Peru, and were not in Bolivia and Ecuador. The Guatemalan URNG was more successful than the Sendero Luminoso of Peru in attracting mass indigenous support. This certainly had something to do with a more effective approach used by the Guatemalan insurgents, but it also reflected a more enlightened counterinsurgent response in Peru.

Guatemala consistently displayed the most repressive political environment, especially toward revolutionary class-based movements. The Guatemalan armed forces and upper classes have been systematically imbued with a fanatical anticommunism since 1954. While the Maya population was still regarded with distrust, Maya cultural organizations could appear less threatening as long as they avoided direct identification with a revolutionary insurgency like the URNG. Indeed, the division of the Maya into many distinct linguistic groups has historically eased the task of controlling the Maya. National Maya cultural organizations (e.g., COPMAGUA) were thus able to pose a significant challenge to the established political order precisely by divorcing themselves from the more threatening URNG (cf. Montejo, 1999, 194-196).

Many of the cultural rights being demanded by the Maya are recognized in Peru. There is thus less need for cultural organization and struggle. Peru's Quechua and Aymara are relatively secure in their cultural integrity, without having to make an issue of it. Government repression is aimed squarely at class-based revolutionary activity (e.g., Sendero Luminoso), and not at all at the relatively unimportant cultural organizations. Economic issues come to the fore in a context of chronic poverty, inequality and economic uncertainty. The open path in Peru is that of ad hoc struggles of local communities for immediate economic interests.

The intermediate cases of Bolivia and Ecuador are also explicable in terms of particular local conditions and experiences. Bolivia and Ecuador had less consistent repression since 1980 (in the absence of both major insurgencies and strong states), well-established indigenous peasant participation in economically-oriented *sindicatos*, and the persistence of indigenous identity among peasants. Thus both the path of economic demands and that of cultural reaffirmation are open in Bolivia and Ecuador, and both have been taken.

In Bolivia, a major cultural effect of the Revolution of 1952 was the self-conscious choice of organized *indios* to forswear a label that had been derogatory, to become instead *campesinos*. But that choice did not imply forswearing their Aymara and Quechua languages and cultures. In the 1970s, with the breakdown of the military-peasant pact during the reactionary dictatorship of Banzer and his successors, a renewed emphasis on the indigenous heritage came to the fore as Katarismo. The various Katarista movements and parties took advantage of the space afforded by the emergence of democracy in the 1980s, and rode waves of popular protest against neoliberal economic policies that predominated after 1985. At the same time, the overtly class-oriented protests of the Central de Obreros Bolivianos (COB) met decisive repression as the tin mines were closed and the miners' union destroyed. Nevertheless, class-based, economically-oriented protest continues to be a staple of Bolivian politics -- but the rallies may be conducted in Aymara or Quechua.

Ecuador, lacking the traumatic experience of the Revolution in Bolivia, also never experienced the sharp controversy over *indio* versus *campesino* identity. The Ecuadoran Quichua know that they are both. Long organized into peasant *sindicatos*, the Quichua took advantage of the democratic opening and the weakness of the Ecuadoran state to make common cause with Amazonian peoples in defense of cultural rights beginning in the 1980s. The series of indigenous uprisings beginning in 1990 were the result. However, as was pointed out earlier, CONAIE and other indigenous organizations continue to be major participants in economically-oriented protests against neoliberal policies.

In all three Andean countries, indigenous people of the altiplano appear to take it for granted that they are both indigenous and peasant. In all three cases, they mobilize politically for economic advantage, often making common cause with *cholo* peasants and workers. In Ecuador and Bolivia they also mobilize in defense of difference, while in Peru they do not. Part of an explanation for this difference may lie in the evolution of Peruvian society as described by Degregori (1998, 210):

These contingents of [Quechua and Aymara] migrants are constructing through their city-countryside networks a fragile, embryonic identity of *Peruvian citizens*. This new Peruvian identity, distinct from the "official" identity, is arising from the intersection among gender, regional, class, and ethnic identities. In a study of migrants, we found that the inhabitants of one Lima neighborhood identified themselves as belonging to the popular sector or as workers (and to a lesser extent as poor) in opposition to the upper classes; they also defined themselves as provincial as opposed to *limeños*; as highlanders as opposed to coastal dwellers; as *cholos* in opposition to the traditional criollos; or simply as Peruvians. The

terrain in dispute is no longer only the right to land or to education; now it is the very country, the imaginary community called Peru.

For these urban Peruvian migrants, identity depends on context, relation and opposition. There is no single dichotomy that is more important than others. Many of the same social processes are taking place in Bolivia and Ecuador, but it remains to be seen to what extent rural to urban migration will have a similar impact on the indigenous of these countries.

Guatemala appears quite distinct on this point. Certainly rural to urban migration of Maya people is also occurring on a large scale in Guatemala, but it does not seem to be causing the sort of relativization of identity that Degregori found in Lima -- at least not yet. Perhaps the gulf between ladinos and Maya is still so deep that solidarity is hard to achieve. Instead, it is urban Maya who have taken the lead in forming the diverse Maya cultural and political organizations discussed above. These organizations have some similarity to those in Ecuador and Bolivia, but the latter are much more active in forging alliances for economic objectives than their Guatemalan counterparts.

There is, in short, no straightforward or simple explanation of why patterns of indigenous political mobilization differ among these countries. There is no escape from complexity. Broadly speaking, three patterns may be discerned. First, in Guatemala, prolonged insurgency and consistently repressive counterinsurgency were associated with the proliferation of Maya cultural organizations and demands for collective rights and recognition. Second, in Peru, a less prolonged but more aggressive insurgency, and less repressive counterinsurgency were associated with a virtual absence of indigenous militance except among some Amazonian peoples. Third, in Bolivia and Ecuador, absence of recent insurgencies and absence of a strong state were associated with multifarious indigenous organizations and political mobilization.

One way to make sense of these patterns is to focus on the constraints and openings available to indigenous political leaders. Violent rebellion is not a good option in the present environment in any of the four countries. Neither is a direct challenge to capitalism. Either choice would lead to more repression. The default option, as always in Latin America, is to affiliate on a clientelistic basis with nonindigenous parties and organizations, delivering indigenous support in return for economic and political benefits of incumbency. This is politics as usual in Latin America. Basically, this the option has been taken by local indigenous leaders in highland Peru, and by some indigenous leaders in the other three countries. But significant numbers of indigenous leaders in Guatemala, Ecuador and Bolivia have taken another path, organizing and mobilizing indigenous people as such to defend their cultural integrity as well as their material interests, in the context of constitutionally democratic regimes. In Guatemala, the path of clientelistic incorporation of indigenous people remains partly closed by the heritage of repressive counterinsurgency, so that autochthonous organization is for many the only option. In Ecuador and Bolivia, the rewards of clientelistic incorporation are limited because control of a weak state is of so little consequence. Thus indigenous leaders in those countries might rationally see autochthonous organization as the best option.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Another option could be incorporation into the political Left, not clientelistically, but on the basis of ideology and program. However, the Left in all four countries remains politically weak and marginal.

Citizenship and Difference. Each of the theoretical approaches to democracy discussed in the Introduction starts with the premise of equality: democracy presupposes equality among citizens. It is true that pluralism as a theory, and liberal democracy as a practice, demand only political equality while tolerating economic and social inequality. But, as pointed out earlier, even Dahl has come around to the view that the full development of democracy requires substantial economic equality. The other theorists examined are either attempting to specify what it would take to achieve more equality (e.g., Gould, Young) or depicting how a democracy could work under conditions of greater equality (e.g., Habermas, Barber).

Equality, however, may not suffice if majority rule leads to the oppression of minorities. That is why liberal democratic theory has always centered on the rights of citizens and limits on government authority. Paradoxically, though, the problem is exacerbated in a typical liberal democracy (e.g., the United States) where members of well-defined minority groups have less power than other citizens. This is precisely the situation in which Young (1990) advocates a “politics of difference,” recognition and support of groups (e.g., women, racial minorities) which manifest cultural characteristics fundamentally different from those of the dominant sectors (e.g., affluent white males). The goal, again, is to get to equality. The problem with this approach is that in the absence of equality, oppressed groups will lack the means to successfully demand equality.

The problem is even more acute in the four countries we have been examining. Their societies are highly unequal, so that the majority of the population, instead of ruling as they might under conditions of perfect equality, are systematically oppressed. Can the politics of difference be useful here? Again, from a position of weakness, an oppressed majority may lack the means to impose its will.

On the other hand, eschewing the politics of difference and demanding equality for individual citizens may yield no better results. The weak are in no position to successfully demand equality.

There are two ways out of this conundrum: from the top and from the bottom. The top-down solution entails convincing the dominant groups that it would be in their enlightened self-interest to promote more equality. An example of this would be the argument of *indigenismo* that the best means of integrating the indigenous into the nation is to work through, rather than against, the indigenous cultures. Like *indigenismo*, top-down reforms can have profound effects on the distribution of power in society, but they are unlikely to result in a revolutionary transformation. Those who rule decide that they can best keep ruling by being more flexible. Clearly, such thinking has prevailed on many occasions in Peru, from the adoption by Leguía of many elements of *indigenismo* in the 1920s, to the promotion of peasant community development by the Velasco government in the 1970s. It remains to be seen whether Peru’s problematic transition to democracy will be enhanced by similar reformist thinking, or whether repressive responses to the ongoing insurgencies will trump democratizing reformism.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, not since 1954

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<sup>24</sup> The announced intention of President Fujimori to seek reelection in 2000 appears to assure a continuation of the present *democradura de cholos* that has meant harsh repression for radicals, exclusion for opponents, and benefits for supporters.

has there been any sign of such reformist impulses among ruling circles in Guatemala.<sup>25</sup> In Ecuador and Bolivia, there have occasionally been reformist governments, but the basic weakness of the state and the instability of successive regimes have prevented the systematic adoption of reformist policies.

The bottom-up solution entails attempts by oppressed groups to increase their power by means of organization, solidarity, and a willingness to endure repression. CONAIE in Ecuador exemplifies this approach, refusing to depend on the generosity of the government and organizing, instead, to make demands on the government. Many Bolivian and Guatemalan indigenous organizations display a similarly militant spirit, though less successful than the Ecuadorans in achieving unity. In Peru, in contrast, attempts to forge autonomous, militant popular organizations have been crushed between Sendero Luminoso and the Army. Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens found, in their comprehensive study, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (1992), that meaningful democratizing reforms such as suffrage expansion have historically depended on the existence of strong popular organizations demanding such reforms. Top-down reform without popular pressure does not suffice.

Popular pressure without government willingness to reform is also ineffective. In Guatemala, the continued dominance of hard-liners in government has meant a repressive response to popular demands. In Bolivia and Ecuador, the weakness of the state has rendered impossible any coherent response to popular pressure. In Peru, popular pressure itself has been either repressed by counterinsurgency, or coopted by clientelism. In none of the four cases do we find a match between an effective indigenous popular movement and a government ready and able to respond affirmatively. Without such a match, it is difficult to see how indigenous movements will succeed in enhancing democratization.

In all four cases, indigenous people remain grossly underrepresented in the legislature, and among political leadership on the national scale. Until indigenous people can move from organization to effective electoral mobilization, they will be unable either to take advantage of the democracy that exists, or to push for a deepening of democracy.

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<sup>25</sup> The decisive victory of rightist candidate Alfonso Portillo in Guatemala's 1999 presidential election (coming on top of the voters' rejection, earlier in 1999, of constitutional amendments that would have recognized Guatemala's plurinational character, with turnout low in both elections) suggests that the Maya organizations still lack the capacity to organize and mobilize a decisive mass of voters.

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