

Indigenous movements in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru

Xavier Albó, CIPCA, Tallinn, October 2008

Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia are the three countries with the largest relative and absolute indigenous population in all South America. Along with Mexico and Guatemala, they constitute the main concentrations of “witness” peoples (Darcy Ribeiro) throughout the American continent. It can therefore be relevant to see how these indigenous peoples remain alive and willing to play an active role in the political arena of their countries.

I will describe it in the first three countries which, at the core of the Central Andean region, shared centuries of common history first as part of the Tawantinsuyu (Inca empire), and afterwards as part of the same Spanish Viceroyalty, before they became modern independent states, in the XIX Century.

After a brief summary of the basic facts of their indigenous population, this paper will describe their intertwined history with a narrative style and a special emphasis on more recent developments taking into account the incidence of consecutive globalisation waves into their territories, resources and ways of life as well as the main proposals and achievements of these movements in relation to the political role of indigenous in the State¹.

1. Basic data

The backbone that ties these three countries together from north to south is the ANDEAN mountain range, which, centuries ago, was also the main area of the Inca empire (Tawantinsuyu), the capital of which was Cusco (Peru). At that time this Andean area was also the most populated and developed one and up to now this is also the region with the highest concentration of indigenous population, most of which keep their ancestral Quechua and Aymara languages. Their settlements are mainly located between 1,500 and 4,500 meters high, sometimes along sharp slopes from mountains beyond 5,000 and even 6,000 m. down to deep valleys and canyons within a single

¹ This paper summarizes the main conclusions of my book *Movimientos y poder indígena en Bolivia, Ecuador y Perú* (La Paz, CIPCA 2008).

community. Developing one of the main historical world civilisations amidst these corrugated and difficult ecological environments was indeed a unique achievement.

The second main region is the narrow Pacific COAST, which was also densely populated before the Conquest especially in the area which is now Peru, rich with archaeological remnants. The Spaniards arrived there first in 1532, from Panama, and established their own capital in Lima, as the head of a Viceroyalty which covered all the area of these three modern countries and beyond. Open to the seas and to global immigrations and influences since colonial times this region is now the most populated and prosperous one both in Ecuador and Peru; but not in Bolivia, that lost it to Chile in the 1879 war. In the Coast most indigenous local population was rapidly assimilated so that this region is now less relevant for our topic, except for the continuous immigration of highlanders (called *serranos*) many of which become again assimilated after a few generations.

Eastwards the three countries have also a flat and warm TROPICAL LOWLAND region, within the Amazonian basin and, in southeast Bolivia (Chaco), also within the La Plata basin. Hundreds of smaller indigenous groups, from a great variety of cultural and linguistic groups lived there; only a few of them developed some kind of local “kingdoms”. The Colonial invaders were less interested on these regions without substantial mining and manpower resources. Besides cattle and agricultural farms, the main effort there came from Jesuit, Franciscan and other missionaries inspired in the well known experience of “christian reducciones” started in nearby Paraguay. European and other entrepreneurs were really interested in this region only since the late XIX Century when new international commodities became attractive, such as quinine, rubber, timber, new commercial crops and, more recently, oil.

The clear cultural differences between these three regions, some times lead also to discrimination mainly from coastal people against the *serranos*. In Bolivia this happens rather in both directions between highlanders, known also as *collas*, and Amazonian lowlanders, called also *cambas*.

Counting indigenous with universal criteria is an issue still not agreed upon, as we will see in the following recent CENSUS DATA.

The 2001 Bolivian census shows that 62% of the 8.3 million total population claim to belong to some indigenous group: 31% are Quechua, 25% Aymara (both in the Andean region) and 6% belong to about 30 small groups in the eastern lowlands. This is the highest concentration in South America

In Ecuador the 2001 census asked the question differently, through more generic categories more used by non indigenous. Out of 13 million inhabitants, 77% identified themselves as *mestizo* (mixed blood) and only 7% as indigenous, while the local indigenous organisations claim that the real figure for the latter should be between 35 and 45%². Most of them are Quichua³, both in the Andean and Amazonian region, plus other nine minority groups in the lowlands.

The 2005 Peruvian census (with 26 million people) decided not to include this kind of question; Mexican anthropologist Bonfil Batalla would call that a “statistic ethnocide”. So, we can only rely upon a 2001 national sampling survey which, using a self-definition question similar to that in the Bolivian census, shows that 30% consider themselves Quechua, 4% Aymara and 3% members of other 65 small lowland ethnic groups.

Most people assume that all these indigenous groups live in their rural territories, and as a matter of fact many local censuses count them only in these places, especially in the lowlands. However this assumption is misleading. Nowadays, as a result of migration, there are more indigenous in the cities (including those in the Coastal region) than in their rural territories; quite a few, including many indigenous leaders, keep moving along both locations.

2. Entangled processes

Although these indigenous groups belong now to three different countries, their common history, culture, language and political ruling before and during the Colonial era both in the Coast and in the Andean region, lead to entwine their processes within a single narrative even for more recent times.

Colonial period

The generic labelling and levelling of all these peoples as “indigenous”, is the result of the earlier globalisation occurred with the discovery, conquest and colonial regime, installed after 1492. Moreover, Columbus’ mistake led to name them “Indians”, as if all they had come from distant India. Their previous identifications as Shuar, Guarani, Qulla, etc. were progressively reduced and diluted into such generic and discriminating labels. With this colonial globalisation they were not regarded any more as specific

² See the 2006 UN *Rapport on Ecuador* by the Special Relater on the situation of human rights and fundamental liberties rights of indigenous.

³ Dialectal variations explain why in some places this name is spelled *quichua* and, in others, *quechua*.

peoples each with their particular history, culture and identity. Their deeper identities underwent a camouflage and gradual reduction further mystified by the “Indian” quid-pro-quo. According to Wieviorka, this was the beginning of modern racism.

However indigenous peoples were not fully dominated. Besides frequent local rebellions, around 1780-83 a general uprising which covered more than 2000 kms. from Cusco to northern Argentina and Chile shook the Colonial system. It was led by traditional authorities such as Tupaj Amaru and his wife Micaela Bastida around Cusco and the Katari brothers near La Plata (Sucre) and Potosí, and by plebeian leaders like Julian Apasa, who took the war name of Tupaj Katari, and his wife Bartolina Sisa, around La Paz. They were finally defeated by combined Spanish and Creole forces but this Indian uprising awakened creoles to realize that their independence from the Spaniards was possible. Up to now the memory of this uprising is quite alive in all indigenous mobilisations. Among the many smaller tropical lowland groups some became fully colonized with occasional rebellions, a few - mainly the Shuar in Amazonian Ecuador and the Guarani in Bolivian Chaco - were part of the “war frontier” never fully conquered (like the Mapuche in southern Chile), and not a few remained “undiscovered” yet or at least isolated until mid XX Century and even later.

Neo-colonial republics

The Independence, accomplished between 1810 and 1830, did not really liberate these indigenous populations in spite of the fact that they constituted the great majority of the three new Republics. Moreover, since mid XIX Century a new “liberal” globalisation wave worsened the indigenous situation. Communal lands were “liberated” to the market in the name of individual freedom which, according to the new liberal ideology, implied also private property. So, appealing to “liberty”, new big private landholdings appeared and their former communal owners became hacienda servants under neo-feudal labour arrangements. Social darwinism added a pseudo-scientific façade to the old racism and discrimination: indigenous peoples were supposed to be racially less fitted than whites and therefore the best way for them to progress was under a white landlord. On top of this, new international markets required alpaca wool, rubber (connected with the new automobile industry) and other items, and this let the new white-mestizo creole elites to take for themselves even more indigenous lands. In colonial times communities were the last rampart for the survival of

indigenous cultures and ways of life. Yet at that time, in the name of liberty, even this bastion began to collapse.

As a result in the late XIX century indigenous rebellions multiplied and in some cases these led also to temporary alliances between risen indigenous and new political parties. Yet, when the latter succeeded and came to power, they behaved like their predecessors grasping more communal lands. Bolivian history is filled with this kind of circular processes from 1850 to 1932.

Related with these processes just described, is the emergence of the new socialist left, after the Mexican and Russian revolutions both in 1917. At the beginning these new urban revolutionaries, led by Peruvian Mariátegui, father of the first communist parties in South America, put their eyes on indigenous peoples as the poorest and the most exploited ones within the poor lower class. This was a good support for this exploited indigenous population. Thanks to it the first indigenous/peasant organization was born among the Quichua of Ecuador in 1926 (FEI, Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios) and in 1936 the first [quechua] “peasant” unions appeared in Cochabamba. In spite of the pioneer Mariátegui discourse, Peru followed this trend only in 1946 in the Coast, expanding to the Andes only in the late 50’.

There were however two shortcomings in this new approach. The first one was that the specific cultural and ethnic identity of these various peoples was not well recognized. In spite of some rhetorical early statements⁴, indigenous were considered relevant only or mainly from a class perspective. For this very reason some of these new organisations preferred the category “peasant” even if their affiliates were also Quechua. The second limitation was that the communist or socialist parties which supported these organisations and movements became dependent from the Soviet Union (and later, the Chinese) Communist party, and therefore international issues and struggles from the top were given a priority much higher than those more local issues like the indigenous question.

From Indians to peasants

The main evolution under these constraints was the quest for AGRARIAN REFORMS, first in Bolivia 1953 and much later (and lighter) in Ecuador and Peru.

⁴ For instance, the 1931 program of the communist party of Peru (one year after Mariátegui’s premature death) recognizes the Indians’ right “to create their own culture, to be educated in their own languages” and even “to organize themselves as independent governments - the Quechua and Aymara republics - in a tight alliance with workers”.

These timing difference needs an explanation. Whereas in the 1920's Peru and Ecuador led the formation of socialist-oriented indigenous-peasant organisations, in the next decades Bolivia headed more radical changes as a result of its defeat in the Chaco war (1932-35) against Paraguay. That was an economic war between two oil multinationals, one allied with Paraguay and the other with Bolivia. Bolivia lost it and as a result there was a deep identity crisis which pushed to a kind of re-foundation of the State. The main lines of such a change were already set up by the 1938 Constitutional Assembly but its implementation was much slower with a long zigzag between the conservative status quo and the innovators through elections, coups and finally the 1952 bloody National Revolution led by the MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario), which combined Marxist, nationalist and populist approaches).

As a result Bolivia institutionalized several major social, political and economic structural changes much earlier than the other Latin American countries except Mexico. The more significant ones were the nationalisation of mines (at that time, about 80% of all exports), the agrarian reform, the universal right to vote (women, illiterate and Indians included) and the broadening of basic education for all. As a result the central state gained substantial strength both economically and politically and most of the popular population segments felt finally included for the first time since Independence and, hence, became proud or at least conscious of being an active part of the Bolivian *Nation*. This was the beginning of the "State of '52", as it is known, which lasted somehow until 1985, although its democratic rights and institutions were cancelled since the military came to power after a coup in 1965 and, in the midst of many ups and downs that cannot be described here, remained there until democracy was finally reinstalled in 1982.

Indigenous groups, which in the 50's were about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total population, were among the main winners, at least in the Andean region, and therefore became very fond of the MNR. But, inspired by the Mexican Revolution - which ruled that country since 1917 - and in accordance with the main stream sociological and political trends of the 50's, the MNR rhetoric avoided the "indigenous" and ethnic concepts and proposed instead the *campesino* (peasant) as the politically correct one. Likewise the main goal of the reform was not to restore communal lands but rather to return or grant family and individual plots of land to "peasants". In the same vein, communities became *peasant syndicates* (or trade unions) within a nationwide Confederation which was very active in the implementation of the Agrarian Reform. All rural education and the military

obligatory service were offered only in Spanish as the key tools to “civilize” Indians, and so on...

One decade later Ecuador had a “decaffeinated” Agrarian Reform in 1964 and an even weaker second one in 1973. Peru had its own, led by a military group somehow inspired in the Yugoslavian model, only in 1969. But these were already a late response, supported by the U.S., to Fidel Castro’s Revolution in Cuba in 1959.

In all cases this kind of modernisation was seen then as the right approach to overcome discrimination based on racial criteria. At that time most social scientists and politicians, rightist and leftist alike, feared that claiming specific rights as “Indians” was too dangerous, because the class condition could be changed but the “racial” one could not (as it happened with the black movement in other countries). Except for anthropologists, the distinction between “ethnic”, “cultural” and “racial” was either misunderstood or unacceptable. The best way to build the Nation-State in these multicultural countries was considered to be through the fiction of the new “mestizo” State and Society. But mestizo meant that indigenous should adopt the cultural traits of the dominant white-mestizo segments; not vice versa.

...And back to indigenous peoples

However indigenous peoples had another feeling. At the beginning many did expect that becoming “peasants” and just “Bolivian”, “Peruvian” or Ecuadorian” they could get rid of many humiliations and racial discriminations. Yet in the late 60’s some Aymaras began to question these assumptions: getting rid of their indigenous condition they could “throw the baby out with the bath water”... They re-discovered that they were and wanted to remain Aymaras (they preferred this denomination rather than the generic “indigenous” or “Indian” ones). Recalling their longer memory they adopted the name of *Kataristas* in a reference to the anti-colonial rebellion of 1780. Soon afterwards, in 1972, Quichuas from the Ecuadorian Andes created also a new organisation called *Ecuvarunari* a Quichua syllabic acronym that means “the rising of Ecuadorian Indians” (literally: *runa-kuna* ‘persons’).

At the other edge, peoples from the Amazonian forests, who never underwent this process of becoming “peasants”, began also to awake and organize themselves in new ways to react against the invasion of their territories by new extractive enterprises. This began in 1964 with the Shuar in Ecuador and with the Amuesha/Yánesha in Peru in 1968; and around 1980 all the Amazonian groups had joined this effort and formed

CONFENIAE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities [notice this concept] of the Ecuadorian Amazon) and AIDSEP (Interethnic Association for Development in the Peruvian Jungle). This same year 1980 ECUARUNARI and CONFENIAE joined forces and formed a national organization first called CONACNIE and since 1986 CONAIE (Coordination of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuadorian). Indigenous from the Bolivian lowlands followed the Peruvian model and in 1982 - when military dictatorships ended and democracy returned - created CIDOB (Indigenous Confederation of Eastern Bolivia).

The new paradigm was already everywhere except in the Peruvian Andean region where both the State institutions and many local people still preferred to call themselves peasants or some times *serranos* (highlanders). Two main factors seem to explain this. The first one is the long internal war that this country and region suffered in the 80's and early 90's between the leftist armed group *Sendero Luminoso* (The Shining Path) and the Peruvian army. About 70.000 persons died - 75% of them speakers of Quechua, Ashaninka or other native languages - and many escaped from their communities. Hence the key issue all these years was just to survive; not to think of new conceptual identifications and organisations.

The second one, initiated much earlier but later accelerated by the first factor, is the massive migration to Lima and the Cost, where local identities get easily diluted; when these migrants come back to their former rural communities in the highlands try to persuade their relatives and friends to be "modern" and to forget their indigenous origins.

Notice that, except for the Peruvian Andes, all this ethnic awakening appeared years before ethnic issues gained high visibility around the world after the fall of the wall in Berlin (1989), the end of the socialist model in Eastern Europe, and also before the ILO and the UN approved their documents in favour of indigenous peoples in 1989 and 2007. All these innovations, as well as other issues arisen by the feminist movement and others that advocate the right to be "different" or by the Green Movement and others concerned with environment, help to accumulate more arguments and allies to the indigenous movements here described. But chronologically these recent innovations at the international level cannot be the cause of our indigenous emergence.

In the following years both in Ecuador and Bolivia indigenous organisations consolidated and their influence within the State grew to the point that they came to be

part of Government and Congress and even became one of the main actors in the re-making of the State through Constitutional changes.

In Bolivia, since the fall of military dictatorships and the return to democracy through a confused period from 1978 to 1982, *kataristas* became the hegemonic group within the National Peasant Confederation, renamed CSUTCB⁵ in 1979. This renewed organisation became more independent from governments and, without losing its previous class approach, added a new and strong ethnic profile to it. Kataristas argued that their reality and struggle should be seen and taken care of with “two eyes”: as peasants who were a substantial portion of the “exploited *class*”, along with miners and other labour movements; and as Aymaras, Quechuas, etc., along with all the other “oppressed *nations*” within the *neo-colonial* State. They formed also the first indigenous parties, still more symbolic than real, and thru them they got their first national deputies.

The “insurgent” and the “tolerated” Indian

At a continental level, a substantial break-through occurred in the 90’s, when the international context was already somehow more favourable. It can be seen as a permanent dialectical struggle between the *indio alzado* (insurgent) and the *indio permitido* (tolerated), to use two common Latin American metaphorical expressions.

As for the insurgent Indian, in 1990 some similar events occurred both in Ecuador and in Bolivia. In Ecuador CONAIE was already well established throughout the country and, in response to the general lack of attention to indigenous claims, in May 28 1990 they gave a pre-announced but “un-believable” surprise to all with what some analysts call “the ethnic earthquake”. That morning a multitude of indigenous established a sit-in occupying one of the main churches in Quito and the next days thousands and thousands began to blockade all the main roads throughout the Andean region and held massive assemblies in several cities. They did not have a very specific issue to negotiate but it was a general and diffused expression of disgust for the lack of sensibility of the society and its authorities. Their main slogan then referred to their need to be accepted and included: “Never again a country without Indians”. This was the first of eight or more similar events in the following years, each time for more precise issues.

⁵ Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia.

Bolivia (an even Peru before the Shining Path war) had already this kind of blockades, some stronger and wider than others, from years before. In the late 80's the main conflict in Bolivia was between repressive forces and coca leaf producers (migrated from the highlands in search of an alternative way of survival) in the tropical area of Cochabamba, who, without being cocaine producers, were caught in the middle of an ambiguous international "war on drugs" as its first (weaker and less guilty) target. Their mottos were "Coca is not cocaine" and - in Quechua - "Kawsachun coca wañuchun yanki" (Long live to coca, dead to Yankees). This same 1990 another "first" happened in Bolivia: the 40-days march "for territory and dignity" of about eight hundred lowland indigenous men, women and children from twelve ethnic groups all the way to La Paz. Since then this issue remains high in the national agenda. In 1992 Amazonian Indians from Ecuador did something similar.

All these mobilisations happened shortly before the well publicized official celebrations for the V Centennial of Columbus arrival to this continent (October 1492). Everywhere indigenous organisations wondered whether they had anything to celebrate or they should rather complain and protest for such a celebration. But in their first continental gathering in Quito, Ecuador, in June 1990, they finally decided that this event could be a good launch pad to share experiences and to strengthen their identities and organisations both within and without. Hence, along with other peasant, black, urban workers and other grassroots organisations, they adopted the slogan "500 years of resistance". So 1992 became a landmark for a more continental and even global approach to their movement.

From the other site, all these events had an unexpected positive reaction in several governments, partly as a result of the new international context mentioned above. This is the *indio permitido* (tolerated) perspective. So, in Bolivia, during the 1990 march for territory President Paz Zamora decided to meet them along with other high level authorities in a place where the marchers were resting in the jungle. Finally he had to accept their demands and even ratified the ILO 169 Convention approved just two years before in Geneva. His responses were fast in part to avoid international criticism while he was negotiating substantial grants abroad.

From 1993 to 1997 a new government, led by 'Goni' Sánchez de Lozada, made further concessions. Goni, along with Jeffrey Sachs, had been one of the key executers of a thoroughly structural change initiated in 1985, with a harsh shock effect, to introduce the globalized neo-liberal model in Bolivia, which was already implemented

in many other countries of the world. This meant the end of “the State of 52”. But after eight years he needed to make this model “more human” and, advised by a U.S. political marketing company, he selected the Aymara katarista Victor Hugo Cárdenas as his Vice-President candidate. With that new image they won the election and started several measures which at the same time were good for structural changes the Government was pursuing and also palatable to the indigenous and other popular groups. For instance, in 1994 the constitutional acknowledgement of Bolivia as a “multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural” state, bilingual and intercultural education and decentralization mainly of small rural municipalities (“Popular Participation” Law) were approved; and in 1996, the INRA Law formalized the legal figure of indigenous territories (or TCO).

In Ecuador CONAIE had another successful general uprising in 1994 as an immediate reaction when rightist president Sixto Duran and his Parliament approved, quickly and without previous consultation, a law of rural development which gave all facilities to big landowners endangering instead indigenous family parcels and community lands. Under this pressure from the *indio alzado* Duran had to share the negotiation table with a small Indian lady - Nina Pakari - and she, supported by her organisation, made the Government change the law again. With this experience the CONAIE, along with other non indigenous allies, decided to create in 1995 their own political party called Pachakutik, the name of a pre-colonial Inca king, which also means ‘the one who changes time-and-space’, reinterpreted then as ‘revolution’. This way Ecuadorian indigenous organisations also combined a more insurgent way with another one within the established rules or - as they use to say - civil “disobedience” and “obedience”. The main challenge these newly tolerated indigenous had to face was their participation in a Constitutional Assembly convened in 1998, after a national political crisis. In spite of the general conservative atmosphere of that convention, Pachakutik was able to join forces and criteria, and prepared its proposals through a mobile “Alternative Constituent Assembly” throughout the Ecuador. The party got a 10% of the constituents and, the treatment of indigenous issues in the new Constitution was much better than what could be expected. At that time this text was considered the best ever approved on this topic in Latin America⁶.

⁶ Barié, Cletus Gregor. 2003. *Pueblos indígenas y derechos constitucionales en América Latina. Un panorama*. México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano y Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los

Nothing alike appeared in Peru so far except in the Amazon where local indigenous groups and organisations never questioned their ethnic identities. The Shining Path conflict waded slowly after its main leader Abimael Guzman was captured in 1992 by Fujimori. But this President had an authoritarian, populist and modernizing approach which did not allow for significant openings to the indigenous questions. However - and significantly enough - this same Fujimori was the first one to mention the “pluri-cultural” quality of the State in his 1993 Peruvian Constitution (something explicit now in practically all Latin American constitutions). In that case this was no doubt a reaction to the new international atmosphere and perhaps even part of a strategy within the neo-liberal economic model: provided that global economy is well controlled from above, something has to be granted to these extinguishing indigenous to keep them pacified; this was the minimum unavoidable for the *indio permitido*. Beyond that the rule, from above and from below, was the former “peasant” rationale to “civilize Indians”, except for a few local expressions mainly in the Aymara region next to Bolivia.

3. *Becoming to power within the State*

In the 2000's further steps up were taken. Victor Hugo's Vice-Presidency in Bolivia and the successful role of Pachakutik in the new Constitution of Ecuador had made the possibility of being part of the State structure quite visible both to the governing elites and to the insurgent indigenous.

Bolivia

In Bolivia insurgent coca producers, lead by a young Aymara - Evo Morales - where the first ones to realize that the Popular Participation law of 1994 opened them a new scenario to gain formal recognition and power within the State. They quickly organized a new party, skilfully dribbled Electoral Court moves to stop them and, in 1996, they gained most municipalities not only in the coca producing area but also in other rural areas of Cochabamba. In 1997 they tried again at the national level and obtained four deputies, Evo among them. The next elected government, headed by former military dictator Banzer, tried to ensure the USA support with his program “zero coca”, a program followed up by his successor Tuto Quiroga when in 2001 Banzer became sick

and had to quit. Repression mounted up in that tropical area but organized resistance did too.

Since 2000 the neo-liberal economic model, installed since 1985, began to collapse mainly due to increasing popular reactions against the lack of social sensibility of local and multinational enterprises in the way they were handling natural resources. The first general protest was for the drinking water service in Cochabamba. Next was natural gas. From long before, land, wood and other natural resources were conflicting issues in the lowlands. Social protest was mounting up. Each protest pushed others in different sectors, like pieces of dominoes, and Morales, along with his new political party, finally named MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo), became the main catalyser of all this dissent even among other social and political sectors both rural and urban, including the main traditional left parties who were off since 1985.

In January 2002, there was a general rebellion of Cochabamba coca producers after an unfortunate decree by President Quiroga forbidding any legal internal coca market for them. Some people died and this was the argument for the main traditional parties who alternated power since 1985 to expel Evo from his Parliament seat. But this made him grow much more to the point that five months later in the next national elections he and his party MAS became second only 1.5% below Goni Sanchez de Lozada, the winner. However in late 2003 Goni had to renounce and escape from the country after he tried to stop a general popular rebellion (linked with the natural gas issue) particularly strong in El Alto (the poor counterpart of La Paz, which is 74% Aymara) killing 70 unarmed civilians, most of them rural and urban Aymaras. After two short interim constitutional presidencies, new elections were called and Evo+MAS won with an unheard of 54% of votes, far away from the second - former president Quiroga - who reached only a thin 28%. Evo Morales became the first elected indigenous president in all America.

After almost three years this experience remains something unique and creative but also conflictive in many ways. A systematic analysis of it would require much more time and space. I will only give a short summary of its main political issues. The fact that Evo was the first Indian President drew from the beginning much symbolical capital, raised hope and pride among the poor and Indians, drew international curiosity and solidarity, but also put together many internal enemies among the traditional elites which felt endangered for this new alternative.

The main bet to ensure structural change in the political scene was a Constitutional Assembly in Sucre from August 2006 to December 2007. Its 255 elected members represented better than ever the multicultural reality of Bolivia but only a few were lawyers and many were not shrewd politicians. 56% came from some indigenous group; 54% were MAS affiliates, while the main opposition force controlled only a 24% and the other 22% belonged to 14 minor political groups. At the beginning the majority tried to push their view by all means even without having the 2/3 legally needed to approve the final text. Making alliances, the majority reached 62% and the opposition 29%. Too much time was lost in long and slow - some times rich other times sterile - discussions. In the last months there were frequent conflicts near the Assembly facilities due to militant outsiders who, associated with wealthier non indigenous elites mainly from Santa Cruz (the largest city in the lowlands), tried every thing to abort the Assembly. At the end constituents moved to other safer locations and approved the text with enough legal quorum but without the participation of the harder opposition who had walked off two months before.

That text is like a baby born with the help of forceps. The baby remains alive but still needs intensive care. Up to now the referendum for its final approval has been postponed once and again because of open and growing conflict with opposition forces particularly strong in Santa Cruz and the other three lowland departments that they control. Their main goal is to get “full autonomy” in their strongholds mainly for political and economic reasons: they lost the political hegemony but keep the main economic resources of the country and fear to lose the advantages they have up to now if they have to share these with the rest. These core reasons are now amplified with regional, social and even racial considerations since they are “white, tall and speak English” (as their beauty miss candidate explained some time ago)...

On the other side, the new Constitution's founding statement is that Bolivia is a “unitarian plurinational state”. It is plurinational because it is constituted by many “indigenous-originary-peasant peoples and nations” which existed since precolonial times and only now will be fully recognized. The name “nation” here should not be understood as if each of these peoples would be willing to become a separate state like in several new European countries. But it could imply certain collective rights for each people. For example: partial internal autonomy within their territories to develop their cultural ways of living; acknowledgement of juridical pluralism and other features already recognized by their recent U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

(September 2007), which in Bolivia has been already accepted as a national law. On the other hand the State is declared to be also “unitarian” (as always has been) and takes measures to make it strong as the only way to keep the country together with “well living” (*suma qamaña* in Aymara) and internal equity and also with external sovereignty in the control and use of its strategic natural resources, seen from the solemn Preamble on as the sacred *Pacha Mama* (Mother Earth) that cannot be sold out nor profaned. This emphasis and a strong unitarian State shows that former MNR’s “State of 52” is still a source of inspiration for the Government and its constituents. These are some of the main concepts of this Constitution. The present text maintains the popular and sometimes baroque flavour of the constituents rather than abstract conceptualisations than only initiated professional lawyers can understand. It still reflects the final hurries to have it approved and therefore it could be polished. But aborting this Constitution to begin all over again as if nothing had happened would be a political and historical error.

However each time the Government tries to convoke the pending referendum on the new Constitution, the lowland autonomist leaders, known also as *cívicos*, answer with a new move. So, in May-June 2008 they held and won with high percentages four illegal and therefore uncontrolled local referendums for their audacious statutes of autonomy, which would require constitutional changes to be applicable. The Government answered with a legal referendum in August to ratify or revoke (a) the President/Vicepresident and (b) the highest authority in each Department. The President/Vicepresident were ratified by 67%, including ‘yes’ scores from 41 to 53% in the rebel departments, where their local authorities were also ratified but with lower scores (53 to 63%). In other words, most people want some sort of agreement between both political projects.

With such a wide support the Government tried again to summon his pending referendum, and this time the autonomist “civic” [!] leaders of these four departments began a systematic and simultaneous occupation and even destruction of Government institutions, sometimes accompanied by open fights, persecution and, in Pando, also the September 11 massacre against marching MAS peasant and indigenous groups. The conflict became so serious that the Presidents of the newly founded UNASUR (Union of South American States) met immediately to give a clear joint support to the Bolivian Government and to blatantly condemn these anti-institutional “civil coup d’Etat”, as they called those violent actions. As a result these last two weeks several international missions came to Bolivia and, with their support and that of other local facilitators,

intensive high level talks are being made to find basic agreements from both sides. We all hope a happy end to this long saga for a more inclusive, pluralist and solidary Bolivia.

Ecuador

In the 2000 elections CONAIE and his party Pachakutik improved his score up to a 14% of votes and the fifth place in the race, in alliance with a secondary candidate. But the winner - Jamil Mahuad - failed in the way he tried to implement the neo-liberal model. Several banks broke down, the country adopted the US dollar as his national currency, and a popular/military rebellion, massive but peaceful, put him out of office installing instead a triumvirate one of which members was Antonio Vargas, then president of CONAIE which played an important role in the rebellion along with a group of low rank military led by Lucio Gutierrez and several urban leftist groups. This way an Amazonian indigenous became co-president but only a few hours since the Chief Commander of the Army did not accept this solution and handed the Presidential banner to former Vice-President, a wealthy entrepreneur who continued and deepened Mahuad's model.

Indigenous felt betrayed but kept building their organised forces up. A few months later in the next local elections they gained 5 out of 22 provinces nationwide and the absolute majority of rural *juntas parroquiales* (the lowest ranking municipalities). Next January 2001 CONAIE along with all other rural organisations - indigenous or not - made their largest and more harshly repressed uprising under the new inclusive slogan "nothing only for indigenous". At the end it pulled out from the Government important concessions not only for them but also for the general population.

With this success in the 2003 general elections Pachakutik made a deal with presidential candidate Lucio Gutierrez (the military who led the 2000 rebellion). They won the election and within this coalition Pachakutik took care of four important ministries, two of them headed by indigenous: Nina Pacari as chancellor and Luis Macas as Minister of Agriculture. Yet, once in power, Gutierrez changed his discourse and continued the previous economic model in a more populist way. This caused a deep and lasting division within the party and the indigenous movement: the main Andean historical leaders left the coalition but Antonio Vargas, several local leaders and most of the Amazonian branch of CONAIE and remained with Gutierrez (who was also Amazon-born). In this region this was the beginning of a long and serious split between

two branches known as *vía empresarial* (for their support and joint ventures with the oil enterprises) and *vía de resistencia* (for their opposition to such enterprises). Some time later this split generated also a division of CONAIE into these two ways and even a similar division in COICA (Coordination of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon Basin), the highest level instrument which coordinates Amazonian indigenous organisations of eight low land countries. Multinational oil interests supported by that neo-liberal populist government succeeded in dividing the previously powerful indigenous organization.

CONAIE and especially Pachakutik never fully recovered from this traumatic experience. Even when in 2005 Gutierrez was also dawning by a huge urban popular rebellion, CONAIE's participation was almost null and rather some Amazonian indigenous groups remained loyal to him. At the end of 2006 new general elections gave the Presidency to formerly unknown candidate Rafael Correa, a leftist economist from the Coast but with long experience also in the Andes; he even speaks some Quichua. Correa is well committed to social change in favour of the poor but he became suspicious of indigenous organisations, partly for his political and theoretical approach, partly for their meagre performance with Gutierrez, and perhaps also for some personal misunderstandings. As a candidate, Correa offered the Vice-Presidency to Luis Macas, the main historical leader of CONAIE. But Luis, still wary for his bad experience with Gutierrez, refused and suggested rather that Correa should be his Vice-President...

Correa is very close to Evo and several other presidents in the left side of the Latin American current political spectrum. He is aware and keeps in mind recent innovations in Bolivia but at the same time tries to learn also from our mistakes. Soon after his inauguration he summoned also a new Constitutional Assembly which has successfully been concluded and approved in a referendum without the problems of the Bolivian one. Given the crisis of indigenous organisations mentioned above, the participation of CONAIE in this Assembly was - paradoxically - less visible than in the previous one of 1998. However the new text improves the 1998 one also in these indigenous topics. Echoes of the Bolivian one appear already in art. 1. "Ecuador is a... unitarian, intercultural and plurinational... State". It appeals also to a vital relation with "Mother Earth" and summarizes its utopia of harmonic development as *Sumak kawsay*, the Quichua equivalent of Aymara *Suma qamaña*: 'well living', that is, in harmony with Nature and among all humans, with inclusion and equity. It keeps and complements the collective rights of indigenous "communities, peoples and nationalities" in the line

initiated already in the 1998 Constitution. The list of such rights grows from 15 to 21; adding, for instance, the recognition of indigenous consuetudinary law. But, for the reasons already mentioned, all these topics are less central and developed than in the Bolivia new Constitution.

Peru

Obviously this country does not show the level of indigenous presence in the State structure achieved by Ecuador and Bolivia. Yet, in the 2000's, some relevant but still small signs towards the recovery of indigenous conscience are occurring. No doubt changes in the neighbouring Andean countries are influencing, some times quite explicitly through invitations and exchanges. Four areas are particularly pertinent:

The first one is in the democratic strengthening of the municipal level, by means comparable to the Bolivian Law of Popular Participation. This began with Fujimori in the 90's but developed mainly the next decade with Alejandro Toledo, elected in 2002. Two innovations helped this change: opening the political spectrum to local associations and the acknowledgement of three local municipal levels. These instruments made local people's roles and demands more visible and relevant and, with it, their deep identities emerged as well.

The second one is the unforeseen reaction of many communities to the unrestricted facilities given by Fujimori to numerous international extracting enterprises. In the Amazon AIDSESEP lead the local reaction to the penetration of oil companies. But the main novelty was the expanding opposition of Andean communities against so many powerful mining companies who began to contaminate and hamper their daily life. Between 1990 and 1997 mining inversion in Peru increased 2,000%, second only to Chile in Latin America. Several local organized protests jointed their forces and in 1999 they founded CONACAMI (National Confederation of Communities Affected by Mining) which represents already about one thousand complaining communities. The interesting point is that the way they make their demands is not only as a technical environmental issue but also as an infliction of their rights as indigenous communities within the ILO 169 Convention. They re-discovered that being indigenous their rights were better covered than being seen simply as regular citizens or peasants. This way CONACAMI along with AIDSESEP and with the support of some international NGO's become the spearhead of the national recovery of this indigenous conscience at the national level and they are also leading a new five-national alliance of indigenous

organisations called CAOI (Coordination of Andean Indigenous Organisations). This becomes another outstanding example of *glocalisation*, that is, of colliding global and local interests and of a new alternative globalisation from below, from local grassroots organisations.

The third area begins to slightly influence the State sphere as such. In the 90's the World Bank and other international agencies entered also in the new interest on indigenous and other specifically endangered groups and started two projects in Ecuador and Peru especially targeted to eliminate poverty among indigenous and black populations. As a response, in 1998 Fujimori finally created a State instance first called SETAI (Technical Secretary for Indigenous Affairs) and later renamed CONAPA (National Commission for Andean-Amazonian-Afroperuvian Peoples) by Toledo. This was designed as the national counterpart of the Bank to channel these international resources. After his inauguration Toledo - himself with clear Indian physical traits but not cultural ways - made a symbolic on top of the world famous Machu Picchu ruins and, wearing Inca garb, promised to foster the coming out of indigenous peoples in Peru and throughout the Andean countries. The First Lady, a Belgian anthropologist who speaks Quechua, was delegated to implement this and to encourage the creation of new indigenous organisations. This official support plus several administrative problems impeded a good relationship between these and other grassroots organisations mentioned in the previous paragraph. However the "indigenous" issue was already stated within the official agenda.

The fourth sign appeared in the 2006 elections, when Ollanta Humala won surprisingly the first electoral round, with a sweeping success in the Andes and Amazon regions. Humala, a military with Andean roots and some sort of millenarian Inca ideology, cannot be matched with Aymara grassroots leader Evo Morales in Bolivia (who explicitly supported him). But this success meant that things and symbols are also changing in Peru. In the second round all forces jointed against him and former APRA leader and President Alan Garcia became President for a second time. He is now a newborn neo-liberal closer to the USA and to the right-sided Latin American regimes and unlikely to foster indigenous movements in spite of what is happening in neighbouring Ecuador and Bolivia. But this is not the end of history...