PART I

Theoretical Framing

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Questions, Approaches, and Cases

Ethnic movements have (re)surfaced with the most recent round of democratization in Latin America, Southern Europe, Asia, and Africa. While these movements vary considerably, they have collectively challenged prevailing ideas about citizenship and the nation-state. In particular, they have questioned the idea that the nation-state, as currently conceived and constituted, serves as the legitimate basis for extending and defining democratic citizenship rights and responsibilities. Alongside an older set of demands for equal inclusion and access for all ethnic groups, we increasingly find demands for the recognition of group rights and ethnic self-determination.

The emergence of these movements in Latin America is particularly striking. While ethnic-based movements have a long history of organizing, protesting, and mobilizing in Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe, there has been no comparable pattern of ethnic-based organizing in contemporary Latin America, until recently.[1] Indigenous people in Latin America have mobilized in the past, but rarely to advance ethnic-based claims and agendas. Indeed, the cultural pluralism literature often identified Latin America

[1] Latin American history is dotted by famous, although scattered, rebellions, including the famous 1780s rebellion led by Tupak Amaru and Tupak Katari. As social historians continue to excavate history from dusty and faraway archives, we continue to learn of numerous localized rebellions coupled with ongoing forms of what Scott (1985) has popularized as "everyday forms of resistance." Yet, these rebellions remain the exception in Latin American history. They certainly did not emerge as national or sustained movements. And by the early twentieth century, movements rarely mobilized around indigenous-based claims. See Urioste (1992: 35) for examples of indigenous rebellions in the Bolivian Andes, C. Smith (1990) for rebellions in Guatemala, and Maybury-Lewis (1991) for a discussion of Chile, Argentina, and Brazil.

as the exception, the region where ethnic political debates, mobilization, and conflict did not occur.[2] It is no longer possible to sustain this position.

During the course of the last third of the twentieth century, significant and unprecedented indigenous movements emerged throughout the Americas.[3] An indigenous uprising shut down roads, occupied churches, and cut off commerce in Ecuador in June 1990 – marking the presence and strength of Ecuador's organized indigenous population and emerging indigenous agenda. An indigenous march covered 650 kilometers from the lowlands of the Bolivian Amazon to the highland capital of La Paz later that same year. Indigenous people in Chiapas confronted the Mexican state on New Year's Day 1994 and subsequently articulated a set of ethnic-based demands. Mayan Indians in Guatemala coordinated the Second Continental Meeting of Indigenous and Popular Resistance in 1991, an event that coincided with the founding of various Mayan organizations.[4] International forums celebrating indigenous resistance and culture flourished in 1992, followed by the United Nations' (UN) decision to call for an International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995–2004) and to finish work on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Moreover, indigenous leaders throughout the Americas have taken a more active role in debating policy, shaping institutional design, and running for political office. In Colombia and Ecuador, for example, indigenous rights were discussed in constituent assemblies in 1990–1991 and 1997–1998, respectively. In Ecuador, Bolivia, and Guatemala, indigenous movements have fielded political candidates in local and national elections. And throughout Latin America, movements have played a key role in discussions about land reform, land use, bicultural education, and census taking, among other issues. Indeed in 1997 and 2000, indigenous movements in Ecuador were among the primary actors that took to the streets and successfully toppled two different presidents.

In short, in Latin America rural men and women are coming together as Indians in regional and national organizations and making claims denied

[2] See Huntington and Domínguez (1975); Young (1976); Horowitz (1985); and Gurr and Harff et al. (1993).

[3] Afrolatins have also organized throughout Latin America. For competing views on racial cleavages and their politicization, see Degler (1971); Fontaine (1985); Graham (1990); NACLA (1992); Winant (1992); Hanchard (1994); Wade (1997); Marx (1998); and Nobles (2000).

[4] The Second Continental Meeting later expanded its focus to include the resistance of Afrolatins alongside that of the region's indigenous peoples and popular sectors.

them as Indians. This is happening just as more traditional labor and peasant-based organizations have declined in organizational strength. For just as workers, women, leftists, and others have become less prone to engage in movement organizing and protest politics, we have found a burst of widespread protest among indigenous peoples in the region. It is not that Indians have not organized in the past. However, they have not organized along ethnic lines to promote an explicitly indigenous agenda. With the contemporary formation of indigenous movements in Latin America, indigenous peoples are contesting the terms of citizenship. They are demanding equal rights; but they are also demanding recognition of special rights as native peoples – with claims to land, autonomous juridical spheres, and the right to maintain ethnonational identities distinct from, but formative of, a multinational state. As such, they are opening up the debate about what citizenship entails – particularly in a multicultural context.

This book explains the uneven emergence, timing, and location of indigenous protest in contemporary Latin America: why indigenous movements have emerged now and not before; and why they have emerged in some places and not others. In the process, it speaks to several broader debates: How does state formation (un)intentionally shape political identities and the salience of ethnic cleavages? Under what circumstances can social actors mobilize around new political claims? What is the relationship between ethnicity and democracy? And how are ethnic movements trying to push new democracies in a postliberal direction?

A Meso-Level Approach: National Projects, the Reach of the State, and Unintended Consequences

To explain the timing and location of indigenous organizing in Latin America, this book begins with a simple but all-too-often overlooked observation about identity politics. Institutions matter. In particular, in the era of the nation-state, it is the state that fundamentally defines the public terms of national political identity formation, expression, and mobilization.[5] Insofar as states are the prevailing political units in our world and insofar as

[5] Tilly (1984) observed that social movements are fundamentally framed by their relationship to the state. He observed that the move from local fiefdoms to nation-states shifted the terrain of political action. It encouraged actors to scale up their actions from local to national levels. The point being made here parallels Tilly's key insight but focuses more specifically on the identities that are privileged rather than the scale and target of social mobilization.

they extend/restrict political citizenship and define national projects,[6] they institutionalize and privilege certain national political identities. In turn, they provide incentives for actors to publicly express some political identities over others. In this regard, states try to shape, coordinate, and channel public identities.

In analyzing identity politics, it is therefore logical to use the state as the point of departure. In particular, this book sets out to analyze how Latin American states attempted to structure society – its identities, interests, and preferences – by taking a careful look at a complex of state institutions: citizenship regimes. The latter have played a disproportionately important role both in shaping and later reflecting state-projected nationalisms. As discussed at length in Chapter 2, citizenship regimes define *who* has political membership, *which* rights they possess, and *how* interest intermediation with the state is structured. The state, in general, and citizenship regimes, in particular, play a key role in *formally* defining the intersection between national politics, political membership, and public identities. As citizenship regimes have changed over time, so too have the publicly sanctioned players, rules of the game, and likely (but not preordained) outcomes.

However, the state and citizenship regimes cannot be studied in an institutional vacuum; nor can publicly sanctioned identities, rights, and modes of interest intermediation be taken at face value. For as several key works on the state have highlighted, while we must analyze the state, we *cannot* assume that states are competent, purposive, coherent, and capable. Nor can we assume a preconstituted society that will respond predictably to institutional change.[7] To the contrary, we must analyze states and state projects in light of the *reach* of the state – understood in terms of the state's actual penetration throughout the country and its capacity to govern society. For the reach of the state can vary considerably. Not only is the state virtually absent in many areas nominally governed by it but the state's proclaimed control over governed areas is often undermined by weak and incapable institutions.

[6] See for example, Deutsch (1953); Weber (1976); Gellner (1983); Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983); Hobsbawm (1990); and Anderson (1991). For a review of the vast literature on nationalism, see Breuilly (1993).

[7] O'Donnell (1993); Fox (1994a and 1994b); Joseph and Nugent (1994); Migdal, Kohli, and Shue (1994); Migdal (1998 and 2001); Scott (1998); Yashar (1999); Herbst (2000); Harty (2001); and Stoner-Weiss (forthcoming) have all highlighted that states are key political institutions whose capacity and institutionalization vary among countries *and* subnationally.

Consequently, state projects do not necessarily translate into stated outcomes. With respect to national projects and political identities this means that publicly sanctioned identities do not necessarily equal private identities and preferences. People can and do have several identities and can express those identities in different forums. This is not just a pluralist or postmodern insight. It is also one that Geertz (1963) advocated in his discussion of new nation-states confronted with diverse ethnic populations. He noted that states need to encourage ethnic groups to adopt a shared civic identity before the state and to express their ethnic identities in more private forums. One does not have to agree with Geertz's policy recommendation to agree with his insight that this is possible.

Hence state projects must be assessed against the reach of the state. Where the state has unevenly penetrated society, local enclaves provide an arena for "private" identities to find public expression. We have found this dynamic with the Muslim Brotherhood throughout much of the Middle East, the Basques in northern Spain, and Catholics in Northern Ireland. We will find that indigenous peoples in Latin America also operate in this kind of context: states have privileged certain identities and interests but have been too weak to impose them. While in the Amazon, state weakness is a function of the relative absence of the state. In the Andes and rural areas in Mesoamerica, it is a function of the varied capacity of the state to penetrate into these localities and displace preexisting forms of governance. In all these areas, a certain kind of local autonomy remained – one in which ethnic identities remained salient, local authority structures evolved, and actors learned to maneuver between local ethnicities and national identities.

What can one take away from this brief discussion? For it started off by asserting the centrality of states and concluded by noting their partial and at times unintended impact.

- States privilege certain political identities – particularly through different forms of citizenship regimes. In this regard, political identities are historically contingent, institutionally bounded, and open to change.
- The reach of the state, however, shapes the degree to which states successfully impose these political identities throughout society. National projects can produce fractured responses, precisely because states confront complex societies that do not always share common experiences vis-à-vis the state. In this regard, political identities are not entirely malleable.

- Where the reach of the state is uneven, in particular, local enclaves can persist and alternative political identities and authority structures can coexist subnationally with national projects that suggest otherwise.
- By extension, where new rounds of state formation challenge (intentionally or otherwise) the autonomy of these enclaves, we should not be surprised to find resistance and, where possible, mobilization.
- In this regard, historical sequencing matters. We can assume neither that states nor societies persist independently of one another. Hence, we need to look at how states interact with society and, in turn, how society responds to and/or resists state efforts.

In short, this book argues that political identities are historically contingent, institutionally bounded, and open to change. States (and those in power) set the stage but societies do not always conform to the script. This is because even if the state can define the terms of public interaction, it cannot impose preferences or displace identities; for political identities are neither fixed nor completely malleable. Indeed, they operate differently in different arenas and at different times. The question then becomes, why do *some* identities and interests become more important at some times and not at others, in some places and not others. And when and why do those politicized identities translate into political action?

To explain changes in identity politics (in this case, the contemporary emergence of indigenous movements in Latin America), this approach leads one to hypothesize that important institutional changes might have politicized identities in new and unintended ways. This is precisely what this book finds. In the context of Latin America's indigenous movements, I argue that contemporary *changes in citizenship regimes* politicized indigenous identities precisely because they unwittingly challenged enclaves of local autonomy that had gone largely unrecognized by the state. However, I will also argue that we cannot simply infer mobilization from motives, a point drawn from scholarship on social movements and contentious politics.[8] Indeed, one must also consider two additional factors, the *political associational space* that provided the political opportunity to organize and the *transcommunity networks* that provided the capacity for diverse and often spatially distant indigenous community to scale up and confront the state. This book develops this three-pronged argument conceptually (Chapter 2), theoretically (Chapter 3), and empirically (Chapters 4–6).

[8] See McAdam (1982); McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996); Tarrow (1998); and McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001).

Prevailing Explanations

This meso-level approach differs from the prevailing theories of identity politics. It is neither bound by local primordialism, on one end of the spectrum, nor transnational constructivism, on the other. Rather, the approach developed here consciously seeks to find a middle ground in which institutions become the historical referent for, but not the contemporary composer of, political identities. I argue that this mid-range comparative approach is more compelling, precisely because it can explain change over time and variation among cases, something that the prevailing explanations cannot (yet) do. Here I critically review five explanations that have been marshaled in recent years to explain identity politics, in general, and ethnic politics, in particular. While each approach is provocative, I find that none of them provides the adequate point of departure to explain change and variation. This is because they lack a temporal and/or spatial understanding of political identities and their relationship to the state. To these approaches I now turn.

Primordialism[9]

Primordialism is the prevailing argument most commonly voiced in policy and lay circles – although decreasingly so in academic circles where it has largely been discredited. Primordialists assume that ethnic identities are deeply rooted affective ties that shape primary loyalties and affinities. While it is not assumed that all ethnic identities lead to conflict, it is assumed that actors possess a strong sense of ethnic or racial identity that *primarily* shapes their actions and worldview. Accordingly, individuals and communities commonly advance and/or defend ethnically derived concerns – particularly when they perceive a disadvantage or long-standing abuse or ethnic slight. The emergence of indigenous organizations and protest are therefore understood as a natural expression of integral ethnic identities. Identities are fixed. They are locally rooted. They are often understood as immutable.

Primordial arguments have found their greatest renaissance among chroniclers of the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia, Burundi, Rwanda, and Israel/Palestine. In the first two cases, it is argued that political regimes repressed a deeply rooted sense of national identity. The subsequent breakdown of repressive political institutions enabled submerged ethno-national identities to resurface; and with that rebirth, nations have

[9] Geertz (1963); Isaacs (1975); van den Berghe (1981); and Stack (1986).

naturally aspired to establish their own nation-state. In the latter three cases, the ongoing conflict is analyzed as a consequence of historic antagonisms, whether within or between states. As the press would have it, there is long-standing animosity going back as long as anyone can remember that explains the ongoing and brutal conflict between primordial groups in Burundi, Rwanda, Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and just about anywhere where ethnic conflicts appear.

Yet, primordial arguments fall short. First, they cannot be empirically sustained. Detailed case studies and comparative analyses have revealed the constructed and changing nature of ethnic identities. Identities are not fixed nor do they have natural affinities. In Latin America, for example, *Indian* is not a natural category. It is a category imposed by colonial powers; it does not recognize the diversity (and at times historical animosity) among indigenous communities. To forge an indigenous movement in the contemporary era, activists had to convince people to expand their self-identification from Quichua, or Shuar, or Totzil or something else to *Indian*. This was not a given. And in the process of organizing and protesting, those identities, interests, and preferences were open to further change. The situational and evolving terms of ethnic identities and political mobilization have been convincingly demonstrated and widely accepted by anthropologists and social historians. Consequently, one can argue that primordial *sentiments*, to use Geertz's term, are strong in some cases; but the historical explanation of that sentiment is weak.

Moreover, the primordial approach sidesteps the fundamental question of why these identities emerge as a central axis of action in some cases and not others. Ethnic/national identities and conflicts are not reclaimed everywhere, even when there are moments of political opening. Hence, even if democratization allows for the greater expression of ethnic identity, this does not mean that individuals assume that political identity. And where they do, it is not apparent that they do so for primordial reasons (as opposed to strategic ones, as discussed next). The cases of Latin America are most instructive here. Earlier rounds of democratization did not lead to the emergence of indigenous organizations or ethnic conflict – even when indigenous identities were clearly significant at the local level. Indeed, a basic claim of this book is that the politicization of ethnic cleavages is a new phenomenon in the region. Finally, even if we assume that ethnic loyalties are given, unchanging, and deeply rooted (an extremely dubious assumption to begin with), primordialist arguments provide little insight into why, when, or how these identities translate into political organizing and action

in some cases and not others. For even if ethnicity is the primary identity that affects where one lives, how one votes, and where one spends money, it does not mean that individuals will join political organizations and mobilize on behalf of their ethnic group.

In short, the emergence of ethnic movements and conflicts speaks to the salience of ethnic identities; but primordial arguments fail to problematize when, why, and where identities become politically salient and the conditions under which they engender political organizations.

Instrumentalism

Instrumentalist or rational choice analyses challenge the primordial assumption that ethnic identities as such motivate collective action. Instrumentalists begin by assuming that individuals have fixed preferences, are goal oriented, act intentionally, and engage in utility-maximizing behavior.[10] These assumptions lead instrumentalists to ask a) why individuals choose to organize (along ethnic lines) and b) why they choose to act *collectively*, particularly if in the absence of doing so they can still enjoy collective benefits. This last point has been elaborated most skillfully by Mancur Olson (1965). In other words, while they question primordialism's assumptions about the naturalness of identity and the group, they share an assumption that preferences are fixed. But whereas primordialists assume that groups seek to maintain the integrity and autonomy of the group, as such, instrumentalists tend to analyze the maximization of *other* goals: generally economic resources, power, and/or security. To explain why individuals choose to act, therefore, they assess the costs and benefits alongside the positive and negative incentives. In other words, one needs to look at individual intentionality and its collective consequences.

Instrumental approaches to collective ethnic action have addressed a variety of dynamics: ethnic mobilization in Africa (Bates 1974), language choices in the post-Soviet world (Laitin 1998), ethnic conflict (Fearon and Laitin 1996; Bates, Figueiredo, and Weingast 1998), and feelings of belonging (Hardin 1995). These authors, in turn, have articulated a provocative set of arguments. Bates focuses on modernization and the ways in which it provides new opportunities for political entrepreneurs who seek to secure

[10] For important statements on the relationship between rational choice and ethnicity, see Rabushka and Shepsle (1972); Bates (1974); and Bates and Weingast (1995). For sympathetic but critical elaborations see Laitin (1986 and 1998); Hardin (1995); and Fearon and Laitin (2000).