INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Juan Houghton and Beverly Bell
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INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS
IN LATIN AMERICA

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SUMMARY

In the final years of the 20th Century and the dawn of the 21st, indigenous movements have been changing the face of Latin America. Who are these peoples? What are these movements that refuse to be excluded from social discourse and political developments, and which are causing so much concern among Latin American governments? As discussed in this paper, the movements are expressions of the desire of 45 million people.\(^1\) They aim to force legal and constitutional recognition of their rights as peoples, as well as of their right to administer their own territories, governments, and justice systems autonomously and collectively. To achieve these ends, they must confront economic and political processes that frequently deny their diversity, their sovereignty, and their right to live on their own lands. Their challenges are now multiplied because of growing economic integration, with increased attempts by corporations to take over their land, water, biodiversity, agriculture, oil, gas, and other resources.

This paper will discuss the history of indigenous organizing in Latin America, the contexts in which indigenous movements are acting today, the key objectives and strategies of the movements, the defining characteristics and organizational structures of the movements, and the primary initiatives in which they are involved. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of strategic needs.

\(^1\) While powerful indigenous movements are also changing the social and political landscape in North America, this paper only addresses Latin America.
I. INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN A CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

Social movements, also known as popular or people’s movements or struggles, have existed across time and space. Today they are experiencing a surge in visibility and in organization. From the Dalits (the so-called untouchables of India) forcing the question of caste onto center stage at the World Conference against Racism in 2001, to the protests which broke down the World Trade Organization talks in Cancún, Mexico in 2003, organized sectors of dispossessed peoples are asserting their identity and their political agenda. Movements of organized people are bringing issues to public attention in ways never before seen, such as through the 100,000-person World Social Forum in India this January. They are employing new organizing models, especially across borders, as in local nodes of small farmers and peasants organized in dozens of countries through Vía Campesina. New strategies of coordinated protests – such as the millions of people across the globe who simultaneously protested the U.S. occupation of Iraq on March 20 of this year – are giving force to the cascades of demands for change. Questions of subjecthood are also shifting: As in the call popularized by Jubilee South, a coalition of anti-debt groups throughout the Third World, “Nothing about us without us,” those directly impacted by the problems are pushing their way to the table, demanding that they not be “represented” by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or well-connected individuals who are not from their group and accountable to the group.

A primary factor in the dramatic surge of movements in recent years is neoliberal globalization. Sometimes referred to as profit- or corporate-driven globalization, the unfettered flow of transnational capital is changing people’s lives and environments in

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2 In this paper we use the term social movements exclusively to refer to popular social movements, that is, consisting of subalterns. Other social movements, such as that of artists for freedom of expression, may be middle-class or multi-class.

Social movements are defined here as “mass-based, popular movements which strive to make systemic-level change through political action. They are composed of individuals and groups who are directly impacted by the problems they address. An explicit and coherent identity is an important element of a movement; even if participants do not all employ the same name, they all claim membership in it. Another element is shared overarching objectives and priorities. The ideology, strategy, tactics, and organizing culture of the constituents are similar, though there may be variations amongst them. Social movements must be large in scope, extending beyond the local community to a national, regional, and/or international level and commanding the support of huge numbers of constituents. They are owned collectively, extending beyond the control of one individual or organization. The groups’ analysis and proposed solutions typically surge up from the bottom, from the members’ own experiences.” From Beverly Bell, Social Movements and Economic Integration in the Americas, Center for Economic Justice, 2002.

3 Neoliberal globalization, or neoliberalism, refers to the aggressive series of free-trade economic initiatives now dominating national and global economies. It includes policies such as privatization of public resources, elimination of national industrial policies, deregulation of the private sector, and no regulations on transnational capital.
unforeseen ways, from the destruction of Brazilian rainforests to produce McDonald’s beef and Tropicana orange juice, to farmers losing control over ancient seed stocks in Mexico, to skyrocketing HIV/AIDS growth rates in Thailand due to increased travel by foreign businessmen and a corollary rise in prostitution. In low-income countries, the impacts of the set of neoliberal policies are threatening the health, culture, autonomy, employment, agriculture, and human rights of those already vulnerable – that is to say, the great majority. Along with the incomes of a few billionaires, relative poverty is also skyrocketing. But mostly, neoliberal globalization is associated with shrinking: reduced health of land, air, and water; diminished local control over land, agriculture, and seeds; less access to social services; reduced control of governments over their own trade policies; less job security; fewer health and environmental safety for workers; diminished local production; dwindling food security, less democracy… the list goes on.

Anger over their lack of power, poor quality of life, and inequality has mobilized slum dwellers, maquiladora workers, mothers, campesinos, and others into a new political force. While various movements’ demands and campaigns tend to be single-issue – e.g., no more electricity cut-offs or no toxic dumping by multinational corporations – the underlying logic is cross-cutting.

Ironically, globalization itself – in this case, the set of elements often referred to as “globalization from below” – has facilitated many new possibilities for more effectively promoting alternative agendas. The communication rendered possible by the Internet has been an invaluable tool. So, too, has been popular access to media coverage through the spreading phenomenon of independent media such as Independent Media Centers. New networking venues, such as the World Social Forum and their regional and local affiliates, have been critical. The new transnational coalitions convened by sector or by issue are another direct result of globalization, through the increased traffic of people and ideas across national borders.

The urgency of the issues is coupled with radical vision and models of organizing. Old loyalties are rupturing, as is respect for leadership which has not made a clean break with the dominant economic model. Labor unions and progressive political parties, which in many countries have not broken with traditional structures of power, have lost clout to new structures. Commitment to preserving or recapturing a world where life, human relations, and the earth are non-commoditized has captured the public imagination; that idea has launched both a firm rejection of the status quo and creative searches for new possibilities. As Trevor Ngwane, popular leader from Soweto, South Africa, says: “We do not want to accommodate ourselves to the capitalist system.”

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND GLOBALIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The key force which rocked stable neoliberal rule in Mexico one decade ago – and which catalyzed similar “anti-globalization” movements around the world – was organized Mayans in Chiapas. There, a poorly armed group of indigenous men and women formed the most charismatic guerrilla organization of the twentieth century, vitalizing the struggle against neoliberalism all over. In the mid-1990s, the U’wa people of Colombia shocked the world when they announced that they were ready to die to protect their lands from drilling by Occidental Petroleum Company. In Ecuador, indigenous groups mobilized to bring down two presidents in less than one term. In Bolivia in 2000, a coalition of indigenous people and other civil society sectors forced the government to overturn a plan to sell the nation’s water – beginning in Cochabamba – to the Bechtel Corporation. In that same country three years later, an indigenous-led uprising brought down the government in large part on the basis of its planned exportation of natural gas. In Chile in the past couple of years, two Mapuche women elders have blocked the damming of the Bio Bio River and the encroachment of one of the largest transnational energy companies of Spain by their refusal to sell their land. Maya Lenca people blocked three of Honduras’s major highways in February of this year – but only to traffic from multinational corporations and the government.

Organized indigenous people were the primary force behind the opposition which caused governments of Mesoamerican countries and the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) to rescind their open support of the Plan Puebla Panamá free trade pact in 2002. They were central to the massive organizing against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) ministerial meetings in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2002. In fact, the single greatest challenge to the proposed FTAA is not coming from students or workers, but rather from marginalized, impoverished, largely illiterate communities of indigenous peoples.

The National Intelligence Council, a branch of the CIA, announced in 2002 that the continent faces a new threat – that of indigenous resistance movements. In a report entitled, “Global Tendencies 2015,” the National Intelligence Council pointed out that, “Such movements will increase, assisted by transnational networks of indigenous rights activists, supported by well-funded international human rights groups and environmentalists.”

For the purposes of this paper, Latin America refers to all the countries on the American continent from Mexico southward, plus the Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean.

The concept of Latin America in this work is problematic because it is foreign to the struggles of indigenous movements. This concept is an expression of Iberian colonization in the 15th and 16th centuries. A “Hispanic-American culture,” as the descendents of the Spanish saw themselves, gave way to the idea of the “Latin American people” defended by progressives in the second half of the 20th century. That in turn gave way to the recognition of hundreds of distinct American peoples... the enormous majority of which groupings are indigenous, non-Latino peoples.

This was a set of infrastructure and investment projects in Mesoamerica. Still, many of the projects continue.

Why are indigenous peoples positioned at the center of the Americas-wide movement against greater economic integration? And why are they such a threat to the powers that be?

Increased foreign investment, and therefore increased profits, depends upon the exploitation of natural resources: rivers, forests, spaces for roads, etc. In Latin America, the greatest concentration of unexploited resources sits within indigenous territories. Most plans for privatization to multinational corporations – usually with the backing of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and IDB – are aimed at indigenous areas. The rights, territories, and autonomy of indigenous peoples, therefore, again find themselves in contestation with national and international forces. Throughout Latin America, as throughout the world, indigenous peoples are facing new threats to the survival of themselves as peoples and to their communities, agriculture, and natural resources.

For this reason, today many of the strongest political mobilizations and the most developed plans for economic alternatives are emanating from indigenous movements. Growing indigenous self-organization and mobilization threaten not only the access of big business to natural resources, but also perceived public order and the hegemony of national governments.

**INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

It might appear logical that Latin American indigenous movements would be a tidy subset of the social movements in the region. There are certainly shared goals and demands, notably in challenging economic integration, and similar behavior towards the state, multinational corporations, the international financial institutions (IFIs), and proposed trade initiatives. But there is a strong distinction between indigenous and non-indigenous movements. In part this is due to the traditional marginalization of indigenous peoples by other sectors, even other subaltern sectors, even other progressive struggles. Bertha Caceres of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras says, “We [Maya Lenca] have always been left out and put down by most popular movements in the region.”

There is a deeper reason as well. It is that, in general, indigenous movements demand the construction of power, land, and justice outside the framework of the state. They want, for the most part, to consolidate their own governments. Most social movements, on the other hand, propose progressive or radical modifications within the totality of national documents.

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8 Author’s interview, Honduras, 2000.
polity and civil society. Stated otherwise, indigenous movements most commonly
demand full and separate societies, while social movements express interests and
necessities within the national society.

This is not to say that there is not overlap between the two. Indigenous peoples and
movements participate in some larger social change configurations, such as Vía
Campesina and the Convergence of Movements of Peoples of the Americas (COMPA).
But for the most part, the objectives, programs, ideologies, and organizational structures
are distinct.

Given the critical role of indigenous peoples and their lands and resources in the plans for
neoliberal globalization – and their role in opposing that paradigm of globalization – a
deeper understanding of the goals and strategies of indigenous movements is vital. This
in turn will hopefully give way to a better understanding of possible alternatives.

This report concludes with a short summary of strategic needs of indigenous movements.
It is critical to support and strengthen these movements, as indigenous sectors – would-be
pawns in the war of globalization – are essential to any solution. As they organize to
assert their agency and to defend their lives and the earth, they are posing the greatest
challenge of any sector in Latin America to the plans of multinational corporations, IFIs,
trade pacts, and local governments. To quote Gustavo Castro Soto of the Center for
Economic and Political Research for Community Action (CIEPAC), “From here comes
the greatest hope that another world is possible.”
II. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN LATIN AMERICA:
DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

International government bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS), as well as most social scientists, agree with the definition that indigenous peoples and populations in the Americas use for themselves. It is those contemporary human groups who have historic continuity with societies that existed before invasion and colonization by European powers in the 15th and 16th centuries. Throughout the past centuries, indigenous peoples have maintained a consistent presence in their territories and kept themselves distinct from the linguistic, cultural, legal, and social structures of dominant society. They have consolidated social and cultural practices and organization that they seek to preserve, practice, and transmit to future generations.

According to statistics used by indigenous organizations – usually contrasting with those figures published by governments and international organizations – the indigenous population of Latin America currently comprises 40 to 45 million people, grouped in almost 600 distinct societies, located in almost every country. (Even in Uruguay, where most researchers say that indigenous groups have been annihilated, some insist that Charrúa communities continue to survive.) This equals 8 to 9 percent of the full Latin American population, which is estimated at 520 million people. In Brazil alone, there exist 215 native peoples and 186 native languages. In Peru, there exist 72 peoples – 65 of which are in the Amazon – who belong to 16 linguistic groups. In Colombia there are 92 peoples whose members speak 65 different languages. Mexico has 70 peoples with more than 60 languages. Bolivia is host to 37 peoples, 32 of which live in the lowlands of the Amazon. In Ecuador, there are more than 40 Quechua peoples as well as 7 other nationalities.

The Economic Commission for Latin America, associated with the United Nations, cites the following figures:10

9 The term indigenous populations is a strictly demographic characterization, and is used primarily by governments. The concept of indigenous peoples, on the other hand, includes a political perspective that gives these groups the character of nations without a nation-state. This distinction is discussed in the next chapter.

The table does not include the indigenous populations of El Salvador, Belize, Puerto Rico, Guyana, Suriname, or Argentina, and there is a significant underestimation in Nicaragua, Paraguay and Guatemala. Numerous researchers have underscored serious problems with all census data and estimates of indigenous people in every country, due to both technical deficiencies of the censuses and to the theoretical and political disputes on the indigenous condition. The challenges to accurate numbers range from not acknowledging an indigenous population as in Puerto Rico, to the actual manipulation of census data, to indigenous people making themselves invisible as a strategic response to the history of colonization. See
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Census Data or Estimates (by Hopenhayn and Bello)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indigenous Population</th>
<th>Percent of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>Census Estimates</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>3,058,208 (a)</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>5,600,000</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>744,048</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>998,385 (b)</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>3,800,000</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Census Estimates</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>3,476,684</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>4,600,000</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>48,789 (c)</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Census Estimates</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>5,282,347 (c)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>10,900,000</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>67,010 (c)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>194,269</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Estimates</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>9,000,000</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>314,772 (d)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Population 6 years and older.  
(b) Population of 14 years and older.  
(c) Population of five years and older.  
(d) Indigenous census.

The proportion of the indigenous population to the full population of various countries is significant. Some examples are Bolivia, where 80% of the population is indigenous, Guatemala with nearly 60%, Peru with 40%, Ecuador with 35%, Mexico with 12%, Chile with 10%, and Panamá with 8%. The regions of Mesoamerica (southern Mexico and Central America) and the Andes (extending from northern Chile and northeastern Argentina to southwestern Colombia, passing through Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador) have the highest percentages of indigenous people. In fact, five countries in Mesoamerica and the Andes contain almost 90% of the whole indigenous population in Latin America: Peru (27% of the whole), Mexico (26%), Guatemala (15%), Bolivia (12%) and Ecuador (8%). Their fundamental economic activity is agriculture. Most of the remaining ten percent are dispersed throughout the Atlantic Coast of northern South America, and the regions of Orinoquia, Amazon, Mato Grosso, Gran Chaco, Araucania and Patagonia, which are areas of jungles, tropical forest, and desert. Their primary economic activities are fishing, hunting, and gathering, along with small itinerant agriculture.\(^\text{11}\)

Indigenous societies of Latin America include hunters and gatherers of the plains and jungles of Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil. These groups – like the Akulíyá, Beíco de pau, Canela, Kumiai, Mura, Barasano, Desano, Shura, and Aoreo societies – number between several hundred to several thousand peoples each. Ethnicities like the Nasa, Embara, Wayúu, Mapuches, Pipil, and Zapotecos include...

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hundreds of thousands of members in each group. Other indigenous societies are the
great agrarian ones of Mexico and Guatemala – like the Maya – and the Andean areas of
Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador – like the Aymará, Quechua, Náhuatl, and Quiché – with up to
several million peoples each. Many groups are divided by national borders, such as the
Amorúa which straddle Colombia and Venezuela; the Campa in Peru and Brazil; the
Chiriguanó in Bolivia, Argentina and Paraguay; the Embera peoples in Colombia,
Ecuador, and Panama; the Kikapú in Mexico and the United States; the Yanomami in
Brazil and Venezuela; and the Yurutí in Colombia and Venezuela.

Expropriation of indigenous lands; the construction of dams, highways, and mega-
development projects; the deterioration and stagnation of campesino communitarian
economies; and armed conflict, have all begun to cause significant displacement of
indigenous peoples to urban areas. In Chile, 80% of indigenous people reside in the
metropolitan area of the capital. In recent decades, waves of indigenous people have
begun to populate Lima, La Paz, Mexico City, and Guatemala City. Still, the great
majority of indigenous people of Latin America lives in rural areas and maintains strong
relationships of exchange and dependency with the land and its natural resources. This
fact is one significant reason why land struggles, as discussed later, are of highest
importance for indigenous peoples.

Political, territorial, cultural, and economic attacks continue to be strong, and in fact have
heightened in the context of free-market globalization. Peoples whose numbers are very
small – 1,000 or fewer – are especially vulnerable to vicious attacks from government,
World Bank- and IDB-promoted development, and corporate investment. In Colombia,
the armed conflict threatens 53 Amazonian peoples because of forced displacement and
recruitment into the army; Amazonian peoples in Peru experienced a similar situation in
the last decade. Through the forced migration to cities and towns, the indigenous are
being consumed by dominant cultures. Expropriation of land is also forcing communities
to adopt new economic activities, principally petty commerce, which is changing their
traditional social structures and encouraging cultural absorption.

Still, the majority of indigenous peoples, as a result of fights for territorial control, have
reversed the overall process of extermination – fierce until the 1960’s and 1970’s – and
are now beginning to augment their numbers.
III. FROM SUBORDINATED CITIZENS TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ORGANIZING AS INDIGENOUS

Indigenous movements’ dramatic entry onto the world political scene began in the early 1960’s during the global wave of national liberation processes. In Africa and Asia, the process expressed itself as decolonization struggles against colonial administrations and metropolitan armies. In Latin America, it took the form of revolutionary movements, accompanied by massive awareness-raising and protest around ethnic and political subordination. Within this were the seeds of indigenous nation-building.

In the 1970’s, subordinated peoples throughout Latin America consolidated themselves into popular social movements. Diverse sectors found unity in their domination by oligarchies and ruling classes. The term ‘popular’ implied a homogeneous identity among all those subalterns fighting against economic and social marginalization, and for full entitlement and rights. The overarching political demands took priority over the heterogeneity of the various peoples composing the movements.

In this period, indigenous demands in Latin America first surfaced within the context of the larger, undifferentiated social movement. Under a broad framework of worker-campesino alliance, indigenous peoples and campesinos – joined in the same organizations – commenced land occupations in Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico. Even in countries like Guatemala, Peru, and Bolivia, where indigenous people constitute the majority, the struggles were characterized as campesino. Indigenous-specific demands, such as for linguistic and cultural rights, were included in the struggles only secondarily.

In the past two decades, two new indigenous demands have marked a separation of indigenous peoples from the big-tent social movement: the right to self-government and administration of justice; and the right to territory as a physical, cultural, and political space in which indigenous peoples can exercise control and government, not only own property.

Aside from rendering indigenous organizing more visible and more group-specific, these demands have also clearly differentiated indigenous movements from social movements because the site of struggle is not governance by nation-states. Instead, indigenous movements began questioning the very structure of power. Their desire has not been to

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modify their relationship with the dominant government, but rather to create their own government.

Rejecting categorization as an ethnic minority or a simple cultural entity, indigenous societies began to consider themselves *indigenous peoples*, which means politically and culturally differentiated groups inside nation-states. They understand the term to represent a socio-politico-cultural unity with their own territories and right to self-determination. They further understand that: (1) they have rights *because* they are peoples, and not because the states in which they live have delegated that power to them; and (2) that the very right to constitute this community is what allows them to have and to exercise *all* rights.\(^{14}\)

It is important to note that organizing to gain recognition as peoples has gained traction through the passage in 1989 of Convention 169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Convention 169 is the most relevant international legal tool on the issue. Not only does it recognize the existence of indigenous peoples, as the title and terms show, but it also recognizes the existence of peoples’ own legitimate governments, territories, and legal systems. In addition, Convention 169 demands respect for ancestral economic and cultural systems and consultation with indigenous authorities before establishing economic projects in their territories. Though Convention 169 specifically states that the use of the term peoples should not be interpreted in international law, it nevertheless has opened the way for the term to be used in several international instruments. The Proposed UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the draft of the American Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples being debated in the Organization of American States (OAS) have similar articles, stating that indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination and therefore, are free to decide their own economic, social, and cultural development.\(^ {15}\)

**INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS**

The term “indigenous movement” is misleading. Though it is common to speak of “an” indigenous movement in the singular, this unification hides the ethnic diversity and awareness-raising processes that individual indigenous societies have gone through. Even the idea of an American Indian only exists as an ideological construct; most indigenous peoples are resistant to being aggregated in a way which denies their diversity. To be Indian is only acceptable as a category which references the colonized


\(^{15}\) See the International Labor Organization, www.ilo.org/ilolex. Convention 169 replaced Convention 107, the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, which represented indigenous societies as backwards and as the objects of cultural and economic integration plans. In addition, in various national laws and constitutions, the recognition of indigenous societies has been expanded to include the idea of *peoples*, although governments continue to state reservations about the implications of such recognition. The governments of Chile, Panama, and the United States have not signed onto Convention 169 and are opposed to the use of the term *peoples*, and various governments that have signed the Convention are not willing to accept the idea that the existence of *peoples* implies the right to self-determination.
characteristics which all indigenous peoples in the Americas share. Nevertheless, certain commonalities exist as a result of parallel processes of adjustment to similar economic and legal changes within nation-states.

Two central themes have characterized indigenous movements since the 1980’s. The first has been a growing collective political consciousness of their identity, their subordinated situation, and the need to articulate their demands and rights. Second has been the development of political and cultural actions to guarantee the existence of indigenous societies.

This moment in organizing corresponds to the decline in Marxist national liberation movements, the crisis of nation-states, and the spike of globalization. Indigenous movements have moved from ideological decolonization, processes of nationalization, and traditional political parties to a new phase. This phase is characterized by the search for indigenous power that can serve as both the parallel to the power of the state and a challenge to transnational capital.

Since the 1990’s, indigenous movements have grown consistently to become important political actors in regional struggles to resist the domination and globalization that threaten cultures and peoples. In countries like Chile and Colombia, indigenous mobilizations for territorial autonomy highlight the urgency to transform ethnocentric and Western political regimes. In other places, like Mexico, Bolivia, and Ecuador, indigenous movements are the principal and most powerful forces of mobilization and resistance against the state, the dominant economic elite, and the interference of multinational corporations. In Ecuador and Mexico, indigenous movements have combined a demand for the rights of indigenous nationalities and peoples with the demand that they exercise citizen rights in order to influence national politics on its own terms (with electoral capacity, economic weight, etc.). The uprising in Bolivia of 2001-2002 showed the contrast between the big-tent social movement strategy calling for economic rights, water, gas, and land of the coca growers and the urban poor (led by Evo Morales); and a strategy demanding the formation of an indigenous government autonomous from state government (led by Felipe Quispe).

In all cases, indigenous movements, organized in a variety of ways, have become an essential force for changing the unjust economic and political relationships of exclusion that weigh so heavily on the Latin American people. (A notable exception has been the Andean indigenous societies in Peru, where large Quechua and Aymará populations continue to subordinate their ethnic demands to those of citizen and campesino interests.) In the past decade, indigenous peoples have been gaining strength amongst their organizations, as well as in international and legal venues.

The most relevant political characteristics of Latin American indigenous societies and movements are that: (1) they are subaltern sectors, that is, non-dominant in modern nation-states; and (2) their actions are intended to assure their survival within their
autonomous cultural models, social institutions, and legal systems. This second point is highly significant because many indigenous peoples have sustained their cultural and legal models, but have been annihilated. Their traditions alone could not sustain them in the face of often genocidal and ethnocidal forces. On the other hand, many others have survived physically but at the cost of repudiating their cultural and social systems.

Within the larger demand of autonomy, indigenous movements are consistent in demanding: (1) the passage and/or enforcement of international laws through which states must guarantee their rights as indigenous peoples – in particular, Convention 169 of the ILO; (2) legal and constitutional recognition of ethnic and cultural identity and human rights; (3) full social, economic, and territorial rights, including control over their own lands and resources; (4) demilitarization of indigenous territories and an end to their occupation by armed forces; (5) an end to the displacement of indigenous peoples from their lands; (6) an end to fumigation and bombing threats; and (7) the fulfillment of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous peoples and the American Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the OAS.

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IV. INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS IN A CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

If Latin American indigenous movements were born out of national liberation struggles, they came of age under neoliberal globalization.

Natural resources are raising the expectations and hopes of businesses, especially extractive enterprises. Globalization has increased, in previously unsuspected ways, the risks for indigenous peoples living on lands that contain strategic resources for market exploitation: water, oil, gas, forests, minerals, biodiversity. Increased foreign investment and increased profit depend upon the exploitation of natural resources. And these natural resources are predominantly found on indigenous lands. As the Chilean political scientist Sandra Huenchuán Navarro says, “Though indigenous people don’t know it, the most powerful determining factor of their destiny is the New York Stock Exchange or transnational companies’ logic of global investment.”

Throughout the Americas, indigenous peoples are losing economic and social ground. Their fragile control over their lands, waters, and other natural resources is loosening. Both academic researchers and indigenous organizations show that market-driven global processes are increasing environmental deterioration and poverty in indigenous communities, blocking the viability of sustainable indigenous communities and societies.

In response, indigenous peoples are mounting new forms and levels of resistance and organizing. While the primary objective of indigenous peoples is to consolidate their autonomy, still the political and economic conjuncture brought on by globalization has forced them to engage in new fights.

A SECOND CONQUEST

Indigenous peoples’ experience of the nation-state and dominant society is first and foremost one of systematic exclusion and dispossession. Globalization has multiplied this experience exponentially, involving as it usually does agreements that nation-states, corporations, and financial institutions forge with each other without the input or consent of civil society groups.

National governments are taking it upon themselves to negotiate natural resources on the international market with little concern about whether these resources are on indigenous,

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black, or peasant lands. These projects are often negotiated behind the backs of indigenous peoples, in open violation of Convention 169 of the ILO, through which indigenous peoples have the right to be consulted before decisions that affect their territories or natural resources are made.

Many indigenous people perceive “globalization” as a euphemism for a second colonization. The following statement from the “Abya Yala Indigenous Peoples’ Mandate,” from a continental congress of indigenous peoples in Quito in 2002, is typical of dozens more emanating from indigenous federations and gatherings in recent years. This one, directed to the ministers for economic issues in the Americas, states:

It has come to our attention that, representing various countries, you are meeting to design a project for Latin American integration. However, we who were the first inhabitants of these lands, and therefore the hosts, have not been notified, much less consulted. Because of this, we consider your presence to be suspect and unwelcome.

In one of countless similar examples, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) called free trade pacts “a new crusade to re-colonize our territories, our cultures, our consciences, and nature itself.” The “Declaration of Chilpancingo”, produced at the National Gathering of Indigenous Mexican Peoples and Organizations in Mexico in 2002, talked about trade pacts “which turn over our sovereignty to large national and transnational capital, turn their backs on the interests of the majority, and seek to maintain a homogeneous nation, rejecting the plurality and diversity of our peoples.”

Among trade pacts, the FTAA has been the primary generator of attention and opposition. The “Abya Yala Indigenous Peoples’ Mandate” also speaks for much of the opposition to the FTAA:

The FTAA will lead to greater destruction of the environment [which will cause us] to be evicted from our own territories. We will be led down the path of submitting to the privatization of water and the generalized use of genetically modified foods. Labor rights and working conditions will deteriorate. The living conditions and health of our peoples will worsen as the privatization of social services is accepted and implemented. Many small- and medium-sized businesses that are still surviving will go bankrupt. Democratic rights in society will be further limited. Severe poverty, inequality, and inequity will increase. The ancestral cultures and ethical values we still have will be destroyed. They will

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Forty-eight indigenous organizations participated in this gathering, including one of the most representative groups in Mexico (ANIPA) and the most influential regional groups.
even end up dismantling nation-states and turning them into incorporated colonies. What kind of integration are you trying to tell us about when, as your plans are carried out, we are being disintegrated and eliminated? What kind of integration are you proposing if the basis of your proposal is competition, the desire to accumulate and obtain profits at any cost, inequity, disrespect for peoples and cultures, and the desire to make us all part of the market, part of rampant consumerism? What kind of integration are you proclaiming if the first and foremost relationship of human beings is to mother earth, and you do not have such a relationship? ²²

Similar statements have been made by: the National Encounter of Mexican Indigenous Peoples and Organizations,²³ the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE),²⁴ the Interethnic Association of Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDESEP), the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) in the Congress of the Indigenous Peoples of Colombia (November 2001) and in the International Seminar Against Neoliberalism,²⁵ the National Indian Council of Venezuela (CONIVE), Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Cuenca Amazonia (COICA), the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), the General Kuna Congress of Panamá, various Chilean and Bolivian organizations, and the Pan Amazonian Social Forum.²⁶

In most countries of Latin America, structural adjustment²⁷ has meant moving economies back to reliance on raw materials, through the extraction of natural resources by multinational companies, sometimes in association with local business, and with the willing help of governments. This renewed “raw materialization” of global Southern economies has meant aggressive takeover of indigenous land and resources. Green markets, carbon dioxide sinks, genetic information, oil, gas, and water are all subject to rapid privatization processes led by national governments and to sale on the stock market.

²² The “Abya Yala Indigenous Peoples’ Mandate”, Op. Cit. The summit where the statement was released took place in the context of the Continental Days of Struggle Against the FTAA on the same date. CONAIE of Ecuador, CONAMAC from Bolivia, COICA and CSUTCB from Bolivia, the Kuna Youth Movement of Panamá, ONIC from Colombia, and sectoral and regional organizations from Mexico and Chile were present at the summit.

²³ National Encounter of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations, “Chilpancingo Declaration,” September 12-13, 2002, Chilpancingo, in Latin America in Movement (ALAI) Sept 9, 2002. Forty-eight indigenous organizations participated in this gathering including the most representative organization in the country (ANIPA) and the most influential regional organizations.

²⁴ See Boletín ICCI-ARY Rimay, No. 30 - 50.


²⁶ A good register of statements from indigenous organizations on this topic can be found on the websites of the Latin American Information Agency, ALAI (http://alainet.org), of Adital (www.adital.org.br), of the International Agency of Indigenous Press, AIPIN (www.redindigena.net/noticias/boletines), and of COICA (www.coica.org).

²⁷ Structural adjustment refers to the series of economic reforms which are imposed by the IFIs in exchange for loans and aid.
In the Amazon, wood, pharmaceutical, and oil extraction is increasing. The Plan Puebla Panamá promoted the construction of highways and railroads, the development of oil and electricity industries, and the creation of a huge free trade zone in an area, Mesoamerica, which is so rich in resources and biodiversity. The highlands and eastern area of Bolivia are affected by gas and water projects. Two million hectares of the Ecuadoran Amazon have been ceded to oil companies, and 50 percent of the Colombian Amazon is considered by oil companies available for direct contracting.

In Nicaragua, the Korean transnational Kumkyung has a 30-year concession on the forest resources of the Awas Tingni indigenous people. In Madre de Dios in Peru, in the Colombia Pacific, in the southern region of Chile, at the Amazonian borders of Brazil, and in Guyana – all indigenous territories – forest plantations are growing. The increase in tree plantings is intended to maintain a stock of exploitable trees to keep world paper prices low and to continue lowering the price of vegetable oils used by transnational food companies. This, in turn, has turned entire indigenous regions previously dedicated to agriculture, as in the case of Mapuche lands in Chile, or to sustainable forest harvesting, in places like Chajerado and Embera lands in Colombia, into areas used only for short-term and intensive forest extraction.

Multinational and local mining companies – gold, copper, ferro-nickel – have transformed indigenous lands in Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia and Panamá. There is a permanent war being carried out against indigenous communities residing on these and other lands – Yanomami, Curripaco, Baniva, Kuna – by gold miners and illegal armed groups who force the indigenous to pay them taxes even as they play the role of private guards for these transnational businesses.

A new round of displacement of peoples from their resource-rich lands is one result. A recent study on the impact of globalization on indigenous territories by Chilean political scientist Huenchuán emphasizes this. In the first instance, over the past centuries many indigenous peoples were forced off of their lands and took refuge in “places that were often considered hostile ecosystems but are areas of high biological diversity and have an ecological importance far beyond their immediate boundaries.” Now that many of these lands have been targeted by multinationals for resource extraction, indigenous communities are again being forcibly removed en masse.

The neoliberal model in Latin America has another new face that is even more painful for the indigenous: the Andean Region Initiative, also known as Plan Colombia, and Plan Dignity in Bolivia, with their exorbitant price tags (including $1.3 the US government approved for Plan Colombia in 2000). These initiatives involve wars against the

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28 For more information, see Center for Economic Research and Communitarian Participation and Action, (CIEPAC), http://www.ciepac.org/ppp.htm
29 Colombian Oil Company (ECOPETROL) Land Map, Bogota, February 2003.
30 For example, garimpeiros, the Brazilian term for gold miners who do semi-industrial dredging of the river beds of the Amazon and the Orinoco, were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Yanomami indigenous people in 1993.
opposition, as well as a chemical war against mostly indigenous people who grow coca and poppies for survival – and, in the case of coca, for sacred purposes as well. In addition to disrespected the cultures whose cosmologies are based on the coca leaf, the aerial spraying of Round-Up damages environmental and human health. The spraying occurs in selective areas where the governments wish to control insurgent movements as well as indigenous lands and resources. In Colombia, for example, there has not been fumigation of one single hectare of land controlled by the death squads run by the Colombian military. There is also a notable militarization of the entire continent with the installation of dozens of new national and U.S. army military bases on indigenous lands. Indigenous and campesino peoples and movements experience repression in the areas affected, as well as increased poverty.

The so-called drug wars are also effective in accelerating displacement of indigenous peoples and campesinos from resource-rich lands. This has occurred as much through direct military action against communities as through aerial fumigation of the food base of communities whom the military wishes to push out.

Moreover, the wars secure US corporate investment in the region, as US initiatives provide weapons and financial resources to countries that accept a growing US military presence and adopt a policy of protecting US investments. In Bolivia, for example, Plan Dignity has been effective not as a challenge to drugs, but as a challenge to popular opposition to privatization of state-owned natural resources. The militarization of these and other countries in Latin America has paved the way for expansion of neoliberal globalization.

**RESHAPING AUTONOMY STRUGGLES**

Under the current terms of economic integration, national sovereignty itself has become virtually expendable, its power often trumped by laws of international trade pacts and the demands of international financial institutions (IFIs). The weakening of roles and positions of nation-states accentuates the internal economic crises of individual countries and the social and political instability of the whole region.

This creates a new context for self-determination for indigenous peoples. States’ unwillingness to “represent” the interests of their civil societies – in this case indigenous peoples – has decreased their legitimacy and strengthened throughout the continent the idea of autonomy that indigenous peoples have been defending for centuries. As the states’ inability to respond to society as a whole provokes increasing crises in their claims of representation, and ability to govern, indigenous peoples have begun an inverse process. They are relying on their history and social structure, on recent political developments, and on the clarity with which they have promoted the consolidation of indigenous governments and jurisdictions. Indigenous governments have gained legitimacy in spite of the difficulties, and laws are enforced in autonomously-run areas more effectively than where standard governmental legislation exists.

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The abdication of national sovereignty, then, has opened a space for popular sovereignty. Where neither federal governments nor laws protect or represent people and their lands, indigenous peoples, campesino communities, and peoples of African descent are bursting onto the scene to take on local, regional, and national power.

Indigenous peoples have historically had to build their political entities inside nation-states, which mediated and still mediate many of their relationships with the world. While a decade ago, they took their concerns only to the state, now they must also go to the international arena. At one level, the margins of their political power are expanded as they deal directly with multilateral organizations like the World Bank, the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), the Ibero-American Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (a multilateral organization created by the Ibero-American heads of state, also known as the Indigenous Fund), and the Andean Community of Nations, which approach them looking for consent on projects and consensus around political operations. They also have to deal with corporations who negotiate local investment and resource exploitation projects directly with local indigenous leaders.

Yet, because of the asymmetrical power at work, indigenous peoples find themselves subordinated to new forms of governance. Gains in autonomy are in danger of being quickly lost to the World Bank, IDB, and other multinational institutions that are now able to impose policies and initiatives directly on indigenous communities, organizations, and lands. The legal changes imposed by the trade and investment organizations are coupled with the coercive power that comes along with loans and development aid. Structural adjustment-driven decentralization has opened the door for the direct incorporation and absorption of some indigenous communities into the scenario of dependence, indebtedness, and business associations that are all increasingly threatening indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples’ desire to govern their own territories, combined with their poverty and isolation, render them vulnerable to these programs, which operate on the same policy imperatives that are heavily pushed by the region’s governments, and often with even more socially and economically devastating impacts.

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33 IFIs, which have traditionally focused on lending to national governments, are increasing their involvement with NGOs, as well as with state- and provincial-level governments. The World Bank and IDB, especially, are developing direct relations with indigenous organizations, through such initiatives as the World Bank’s consultations on political operations. Via institutions like the Ibero-American Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, the World Bank and the IDB are also giving grants and training “experts” in indigenous organizations.
V. ORGANIZING STRUCTURES

Stavenhagen et al. (1985) propose a classification of indigenous organizations (attempting to include the full set of movements) according to the orientation of their activities. They label organizations of indigenous governments and authorities *federative*. They call a second category *sindicalist* (what most refer to as civic organizations), which includes both union-type groups and any others that adopt the typical non-governmental form of organization. The last grouping, political parties (not explored here) are called *ideological* organizations. There also exist intersections between the groups, such as the Confederation of Peoples of Kichua Nationality of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI), which is both an ideological organization and a confederation of local indigenous governments.

**INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS AND AUTHORITIES**

Indigenous movements are growing expansive networks of communitarian power and authority.

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, the central figures of indigenous movements were leaders and intellectuals, educated primarily in Western and Christian schools, who returned to their communities to organize struggles for civil and citizen rights and the recovery of usurped land. They were the spokespeople and the agitators. In the current moment, the phenomenon of individual leaders has given way to *structures* of self-government. These governments define and regulate social, economic, and cultural matters of the community, such as land distribution, application of justice, and community norms.

There are governments of the elders of each family or clan, such as the council of *lonkos*, among the Mapuches in the Southern Cone; governments inherited or designated by processes of divining or selecting magical-religious figures, such as the *caciques* and *curacas* of the peoples of the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon; collective governments elected by families or by all those of age, such as *cabildos* in the Andean pueblos of Bolivia and Colombia; governments of the wisemen and traditional doctors of communities, like the *sailas* among the Kunas of Panamá and Colombia; governors or community presidents who inherited colonial structures, as in Andean and Mesoamerican communities; and chiefs of clans, as among the Wayúu in Colombia and Venezuela and the Ngobe in Panamá.

**Local Councils**

At the local level, the enormous majority of indigenous governmental organizations are mono-ethnic. In the Amazon-Orinoco area of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and the Guayanas, however, governmental forms are multi-ethnic due to the exogamous character of many peoples and their patterns of dispersion. One

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example in this area is the ethno-linguistic complex of Vaupés (the confluence of people of the western Tukano macro-family that lives in Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia and parts of Peru); here the forms of familial authority join them to other communities of different ethnicities that govern parts of the same rivers.

**Provincial Councils**

The majority of local indigenous movements and organizations are grouped together in councils or associations of authorities with presence and jurisdiction in provinces within a country. Always closely associated with lands and territories, this is the most extensive form through which indigenous movements are organized. At this provincial level, governing forms may either be mono-ethnic and centralized (especially in the Andean or mountain areas of South America), or multi-ethnic and decentralized in jungle areas.

Some examples in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean include the Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP) in Belize, the Bribrí Cabagra Indigenous Association in Costa Rica, the Miskito Communitarian Nation of Nicaragua, and the Kuna and Ngobe-Bugle General Congresses in Panamá. Relevant groups in Mexico include: the Council of Nahua Peoples of the Alto Balsas, the Council of Tlapaneco Peoples of the Guerrero Mountains, the Union of Indigenous Communities of the Isthmus (UCIRI), the Chinarante Indigenous Council, and the Traditional Council of Indigenous Peoples of the state of Sonora.

In South America, this type of organization is especially evident. In Colombia, the provincial councils – of the Cauca (CRIC), the Vaupés (CRIVA), Tolima (CRIT), Caldas (CRIDEC), Antioquia (OIA) and the Chocó (OREWA) – all went from being non-governmental civic organizations to associations of authorities recognized by the Colombian government. Equally relevant are the provincial federations in Ecuador, like the Confederation of Peoples of Kichua Nationality of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI) and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE). In Bolivia, one finds the Central of Moxeño Regional Councils, the Coordination of Ethnic Peoples of Santa Cruz de la Sierra (CPESC), and the Subcentral of Cabildos of the Indigenous Territory of the Isiboro Sécure National Park (TIPNIS), among others. In Brazil, the Council of Waiapi Villages (APINA), the Terena Indigenous Association of Cachoeirinha, the Indigenous Council of Roraima, the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Trauca and Jordao, and the Union of Indigenous Nations of Acre and South of the Amazon (UNI-AC) are the most representative. In Peru are the Aguaruna Huambisa Council, the Federation of Native Communities of the Corrientes River (FENCONACO), the Native Federation of Madre de Dios River and Streams (FENAMAD), and the Union of Ayamará Communities. In Paraguay, there is the Coordination of Indigenous Peoples of the Pilcomayo River Basin, and in Argentina the Lhaka Honhat Aboriginal Communities Association and the Andean Indigenous Regional Organization of northern Argentina. The Mapuche Group of Temuco (KONAPEWMAN) in Chile completes the panorama.

In a context where there are no strong national organizations or processes, the organizations of indigenous authorities within large sectors of Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia
express the voice of the weakest groups and serve as spokespeople for the whole nation. The Interethnic Association of Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDESEP) has so much political weight that it speaks at a national level even though it does not represent groups throughout the country. Though AIDESEP is only one of the members of the Permanent Coordination of Indigenous Peoples of Peru (COPPIP), it is hard for COPPIP to act without AIDESEP participation. In Brazil, the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB) includes most of the indigenous peoples of the country and is the most representative. In Bolivia, the Indigenous Confederation of the East, Chaco, and Bolivian Amazon (CIDOB) is in an internal crisis because of the participation of its leaders in the anti-indigenous government of Sánchez de Lozada, but it continues to be the main national organization.

**Nation-wide Councils**

The tendency to form provincial governments as a base for indigenous movements has given way to mergers creating national convergences and organizations. These are multi-ethnic and inclusive by definition, and their political practices are based on diversity and consensus. Their activities drive the formation of indigenous parliaments and similar structures. Organizations differ according to how many people they represent and the area they cover.

National indigenous authority is most consolidated within Ecuador and Colombia. In Ecuador, the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE), formed in 1986, includes indigenous federations like the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadoran Amazon (CONFENIAE), the Confederation of Peoples of Kichua Nationality of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI), and CONAICE. CONAIE is clearly the largest, most representative, and most inclusive organization. Because of the political centrality it has attained in Ecuador, CONAIE as become a reference point for the whole indigenous movement of Latin America. An older organization is the National Confederation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Black Organizations (FENOCIN), which has a marked tendency to maintain the popular alliance between indigenous and non-indigenous sectors so popular in the 1980’s.

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), which includes about 40 organizations and councils of regional authorities of 92 peoples, is the second broadest and most representative indigenous organization in Latin America. Its composition is somewhere between that of a popular alliance and an ethnicity-based group. Meanwhile, the Movement of Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO), which in the 1980s was among the first to compose itself specifically to defend the rights of indigenous nations, maintains its influence among six peoples of the Andean region. A new Colombian organization, the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC) – which grew out of ONIC and whose members belong to both organizations – also demands rights of representative organization and has a growing international presence because of its participation in the powerful Amazon-wide network (discussed later in the chapter), Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Cuenca Amazonia (COICA).
The National Indian Council of Venezuela (CONIVE) serves as the legitimate voice of all the provincial organizations of that country, all of whom are members thereof. While the political strength of CONIVE is still limited, it is growing through an open alliance with the Bolivarian revolutionary program being promoted by President Hugo Chavez. CONIVE has a presence in the Venezuelan national congress, where one of its leaders is vice-president.

There are other groupings that call themselves national, but that are not strong enough to include and truly represent the voices of the region or the peoples therein. This is the case with the Confederation of Autochthonous Peoples of Honduras (CONPAH), that has been bringing indigenous peoples together for more than 10 years, but whose actions would be more representative if it worked more closely with the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). This is also the case with the National Coordination of Indigenous Peoples of Panama (COONAPIP), which as a coalition has not been able to gain more visibility than have the Kuna, Embera, and Ngobe-Bugle National Congresses individually. In Mexico, the situation of the National Indigenous Plural Assembly for Autonomy (ANIPA) is similar, as is that of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI). Both were born out of the Zapatista movement in Mexico and out of the activities in 1992 that commemorated the 500-year anniversary of the European invasion. Though ANIPA brings together local, state, and provincial organizations of 54 to 56 indigenous peoples, many of which are also part of CNI, neither of the two groups can claim to be the representative of Mexican indigenous peoples whose most authentic voice continues to come from the regionally-based processes of the Zapatista phenomenon. Though it is not in fact nation-wide, the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of the Qullasuyo (CONAMAQ) in Bolivia is growing in strength and representation because of its defense of the demands of the Tawantisuyu (a traditional Inca confederation) and because it brings together the indigenous authorities of the highlands.

The National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Argentina (ONPIA) continues to take shape through the Working Table of Original Peoples, in which the Indigenous Organization of the Argentinean Republic is a key member. The Mapuche and Kolla organizations have also been dynamic participants.

Another organization worth mentioning is the Coordination of Organizations of the Maya People of Guatemala Saq'b'ichil (COPMAGUA). In Guatemala, Mayan peoples make up 60% of the population, but COPMAGUA is just beginning to be consolidated. Important civic and territorial Mayan organizations compose COPMAGUA, including the Council of Mayan Organizations of Guatemala which emerged in order to participate in the peace process with the National Guatemalan Revolutionary Union (URNG), the armed guerrillas. Nevertheless, other non-Mayan Guatemalan peoples, like the Garifunas and the Xincas, are not part of this process and have had to represent themselves. The relationship of COPMAGUA with the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordination (CONIC), as well, is still to be resolved.
International Councils

Though an international indigenous movement per se does not exist, in some instances the agendas of national indigenous councils and authorities are merging across borders. The leadership of the incipient mergers has shaped the broader political framework for contemporary indigenous movements. That leadership consists principally of the Bolivian coca growers’ movement led by Evo Morales, of the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE) in Ecuador, and of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) of Mexico. Their demands against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and neoliberalism – as well as for the building of autonomy and territoriality, ethnic recognition, and changing political regimes – have become the agenda of indigenous movements all over the continent. In Bolivia, Morales and the primarily indigenous coca growers have led coca growers’ unions and associations, while setting a continental example in opposing the privatization of water and energy resources. They have also expressed public commitment to the Cuban revolution and the Bolivarian revolutionary process in Venezuela. Their actions and positions have turned their movement into a reference point for international opposition to the United States’ anti-drug plans. This movement has also one of the primary voices advocating the transformation of political regimes by indigenous peoples. For its part, CONAIE in Ecuador has played an important leadership role in the World Social Forum and in the struggle against the FTAA, becoming a voice for indigenous people in anti-globalization arenas and an advocate for a continental indigenous agenda. The EZLN movement has signified, on an international level, the restoration of dignity to all things indigenous, clearly and visibly promoting indigenous autonomy and territoriality while defending political ethics.

A significant international indigenous organization which still maintains its grassroots base in each country it represents is the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Cuenca Amazonia (COICA). COICA was formed in 1995 and brings together regional and national organizations of nine countries of the Amazon. Some of the member organizations are: the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC); Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB) of Brazil; the Regional Organization of Amazonian Indigenous Peoples (ORPIA-CONIVE) of Venezuela; Interethnic Association of Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDESEP) of Peru; the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadoran Amazon (CONFENIAE) of Ecuador; the Amerindian Peoples’ Association of Guyana (APA); the Organisative van Inheemsen in Suriname (OIS); and the Federation of Amerindian Organizations of Guyana (FOAG). As an umbrella group, COICA primarily promotes issues of biodiversity and climate change in international arenas.

Other organizations like the World Council of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, the Regional Coordinator of Indian Peoples (CORPI) in Peru, the Indian Council of South America (CISA), and the International Indian Treaty Council, which began in the 1980s, continue to act on the international scene – especially in arenas of international organizations, most notably the UN. These networks of indigenous activists played a very important role twenty years ago before there were other interlocutors coming directly
from and mandated by the communities, before the existence of associations comprising networks of indigenous governments which could speak for themselves.

A new international initiative is currently in gestation. At the next Social Forum of the Americas, in Quito in July, the most important indigenous organizations will hold a Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples. There they intend to establish a permanent coordinating body of indigenous peoples of the Americas, which will also establish links with the World Social Forum and strengthen alliances with other sectors and networks. As the materials of the convening organizations say, “to accomplish the objectives of the indigenous movement which are taking a qualitative leap in the international camp, we will develop our own, autonomous body.”

Because peoples are facing new sets of problems related to neoliberal globalization, indigenous councils and organizations have begun participating in cross-border networks whose scope goes beyond indigenous issues. National indigenous movements such as the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordination (CONIC) of Guatemala are part of peasant farmer networks like Vía Campesina. Base groups such as the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) are members of networks fighting the FTAA such as Hemispheric Social Alliance. Others form part of environmental networks like Amazon Alliance, the World Alliance of Indigenous, and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests; as one example, COICA and several of its member organizations participate in Climate Alliance. Indigenous movements are present in popular coordinating networks that define themselves as anti-neoliberal. The Council of All Lands of Chile, for example, is a member of the Convergence of Movements of the Peoples of the Americas (COMPA).

**CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS**

While most indigenous movements in Latin America are focused on gaining self-government for their members, this does not mean that indigenous civic organizations have disappeared. On the contrary, indigenous councils and governments have fostered the emergence and growth of sectoral indigenous organizations. They are cultural, investigative, and educational in nature; their foci span production, environment, economic, women, youth, and human rights issues.

**Cultural Associations**

One form of civic organization is cultural associations. Groups defending and promoting indigenous culture are especially strong where populations have experienced dictatorships, which took away the possibility of any political expression and left only space for cultural and symbolic issues. Guatemala is one example, with strong Mayan groupings; the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala (ALMG), the National Council of Mayan Education (CNEM), and the Center for Studies of the Mayan Culture (CECMA) are the most well known for their “proposals and demands for rights that have been of fundamental importance for Mayan languages, the strengthening of culture, and
especially the transformation of cultural identity into one axis of political identity."

Similarly, the military dictatorship in Chile of the 1970’s and 1980’s spawned and left behind dozens of civic organizations to promote communication and languages; these were the only spaces possible for asserting the Mapuche Nation’s right to exist. They include the Jufken Mapu Center for Mapuche Communications, the Liwen Center for Mapuche Studies and Documentation, and the Mapuche International Liaison. In Mexico numerous cultural associations are the legacy of political rights gained in the 1910 Mexican Revolution. These include the International Agency of Indian Press (AIPIN), the Association of Indigenous Language Writers, the Center for Training for the Self-Development of Indian Peoples (CECADEPI-RAP), the Organization of Indigenous Doctors of the state of Chiapas (OMIECH), the Academy of the Mixteca Language, and the Center for Research on the Purépecha Culture, among others.

**Human Rights Groups**

Human rights groups play a vital role. Without a doubt, Guatemala, Chile, and Mexico are where the work is most important and well-known. In Guatemala, the Mayan Defense Counsel, the Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation (which has international recognition for the Nobel Peace Prize associated with it), and the National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA) have been the highest-level actors in the process of documenting the thousands of crimes committed against the Mayan population by the military dictatorship, especially under the government of Ríos Montt in the 1980’s. In Chile, the Toqui Lientur Collective organizes all kinds of activities to protect and defend the human rights of the Mapuche people. There are also communication centers and information networks like the Mapuche Xeg-Xeg Development and Communications Corporation, Mapuexpress, and Mapuche Report. In Mexico, dozens of human rights organizations emerged after the indigenous uprising in Chiapas, primarily to defend the processes of autonomy that the Zapatistas are developing in their communities. Some that stand out are the Committee to Defend Indigenous Freedom and the Communitarian Network for Human Rights in San Cristóbal.

**Women’s Organizations**

Women’s organizations are experiencing a surge in growth because of deepening gender consciousness throughout Latin America. The Continental Linkage of Indigenous Women has thus far held three continental gatherings (Ecuador 1995, Mexico 1997, and Panamá 2000). CHIRAPAQ of Peru hosted a convening of 300 indigenous women from throughout the Americas in April of this year. The National Coordination of Indigenous Women of Mexico, the Council of Mayan Women of Guatemala, and the Organization of Aymará Women of Kollasuyo in Bolivia are additional examples. The Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE), the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), and the National Indian Council of Venezuela (CONIVE) all have women’s branches, which are bringing a gender lens to political, economic, and social issues facing indigenous peoples. Within other countries such as Honduras, women are beginning to organize as women within larger indigenous organizations. Even if they do

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not break out into autonomous groups, women are recognizing that their concerns will not necessarily be addressed by the broader movement without their gender-focused advocacy.

**Production Associations**

Indigenous production associations are a relatively new phenomenon, because the nature of indigenous production – small-farmer activities on small land parcels – was traditionally considered campesino production. In the Bolivian highlands, as in many other locales, cooperatives and other production organizations were considered campesino despite the large indigenous presence; this changed with the founding of the Sole Union Confederation of Campesino Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB) in 1979. CSUTCB is the most representative production association in that it groups together almost all of the indigenous campesinos of the Andean area of the country. Another is the National Confederation of Coffee Grower Organizations (CNOCC) of Mexico. Boosted by the fair trade movement, it has associations and member cooperatives in all of the Mexican states.
VI. CHARACTERISTICS AND STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL ACTION

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL ACTION

The strategies and actions taken by indigenous peoples’ movements have several cross-cutting characteristics.

1. They are massive actions – road blocks, uprisings, marches, occupations – in which most or all family members and community members participate regardless of their age or gender. These are not movements of leaders, or political figures, or militants.

2. They are direct and presence-oriented, with a preference to all being at the proverbial table over representation by a few. The effectiveness of the actions are usually judged by their visibility and their ability to stay in public places for indefinite amounts of time.

3. Instead of emphasizing the demand that the state supply their needs, indigenous peoples’ movements are more focused on taking autonomous action to construct the systems that nurture community. These include small-scale economic projects, regional food and agriculture networks, and community health and education systems.

4. The organizing methods and set of demands of indigenous movements are usually not limited to specific needs or interests. Instead, they exist within the totality of the interests and the problems of the communities and the entire people. There are few sectoral indigenous movements – that is, movements that come together to fight for specific rights such as identity, economic justice, or social rights. When sectoral movements do arise, they are often subsumed quickly by the communities’ and organizations’ attention to the well-being of the whole.

5. Critical decisions are not made by leaders or governors; all members of the community generally participate. Decision-making models are typically plebiscite or consensus. This entails daily consultation within the communities to define political issues, actions, etc. Since the movements are usually multi-ethnic, their political practices are based on the recognition of diversity of perspectives and positions.

6. Cosmological language marks membership and identity within an indigenous people. What may appear to be a local or specific issue to outsiders is, for indigenous peoples, connected to the universal and to Mother Earth.
STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING POLITICAL POWER

Resistance
This includes the full set of actions taken to keep indigenous cultural, economic and political systems from being absorbed by national systems and groups. Fundamental to this strategy is to create space for autonomous social, economic, and cultural reproduction at the margins of the market and the state. Some indigenous organizations talk about two kinds of resistance: one that is passive – keeping their language alive, reproducing the culture and ties of community organization, etc. – and another that is active – defending their economic and social systems from the presence of the state and transnational corporations.

Direct Action and Mass Political Pressure
This includes mobilizations, road blocks, sit-ins and marches. The actions are directed especially at changing the policies and processes of national government and the global economy as they impact indigenous communities, lands, and natural resources.

Visibility
Indigenous peoples’ movements work to change the generalized ignorance of national society about their realities. Coming from a history of political, social, and cultural marginalization, the effort to ensure that they are seen, and that they are seen as being distinct from the dominant culture, underscores everything they do.

Electoral Participation, Public Administration, & Advocacy in the Dominant Political System
This is a strategy of engagement, seeking to influence and participate in mainstream government. This strategy involves contradictions. Within their autonomous government, indigenous peoples prioritize communitarian principles such as participatory budgets and planning, ongoing consultation, and community assemblies. Yet to insert themselves at regional- and national-level government, indigenous peoples must work through political parties and broader movements which have very different political processes. There exist other unresolved conflicts, such as the lack of indigenous experience in dominant scenarios of “representation,” tensions between the interests of social and indigenous movements, and tensions between “national” interests and indigenous interests.

Lobbying in Multilateral Arenas
This strategy is growing in scope because of the appearance of numbers of indigenous “specialists” or “experts” in meetings with multilateral organizations like the Agreement on Biological Diversity, the UN Indigenous Forum of Social and Economic Council, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the World Bank, the IDB, and occasionally the Andean Community of Nations and the Ibero-American Fund for the

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Development of Indigenous Peoples. There are small armies of these specialists who may be recognized to some degree by their organizations and individual names, but who do not directly represent the indigenous movements. They are part of autonomous networks promoted by governments and international organizations.

**Forming Alliances and Participating in International Grassroots Networks**

This can be an important strategy to gain added strength. Not only are indigenous movements connected to different kinds of networks, but because the diversified issues they face cross-cut with many of those addressed by social movements, they also play a role of helping the networks connect with each other. Indigenous movements are gaining political space and visibility while serving as liaisons between environmental, anti-globalization, anti-neoliberal, agricultural, and cultural networks.

**Constituting Indigenous-Based Movements and Political Parties**

This strategy takes two forms. One is that usually taken by political parties; that is an option for the institutional path. In Colombia, for example, the Indigenous Social Alliance and the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia have the limited goals of lobbying Congress while winning local elections. The other strategy involves initiatives taken outside the system, using extralegal actions. However, due to the fact that indigenous demands and strategies are in such sharp contrast with the prevailing models of the state and economy, indigenous peoples in general have had to use these strategies complementarily, adopting methods of both legal and extralegal struggles. An example is the EZLN which, as an insurrectionary movement, challenges the power of the state while inspiring local autonomous government parallel to that state. But the EZLN relies on the Mexican Constitution to justify its actions of armed resistance. The Pachakutic New Country Movement in Ecuador aspires to lead the state through primarily institutional actions, including elections. The Pachakutic Movement in Bolivia (with the same name and indigenous base as the Ecuadoran group) uses legal means, but regularly promotes extralegal actions in a very open manner. For example, their members participated actively in the unarmed rebellion of October, 2003 which led to the demission of then-President Sanchez de Lozada. Like the Movement to Socialism in Bolivia, they use methods which include economic blockades, sabotage, and popular uprising. But in fact the Movement to Socialism and Pachakutic parties – both Bolivian and Ecuadoran – have always defended the legality of their actions, presenting them as fitting within a legal framework.

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37 For more extensive reading, see Lee Van Cott, Donna. “Institutional Change and Ethnic Parties in South America,” in Análisis Político, No. 48, January, 2003, Bogotá.
VII. SITES OF STRUGGLE: AUTONOMY, TERRITORY, POLITICAL POWER

Central to indigenous mobilization is a denunciation of the monoethnic and ethnocentric character of current states. The first and central demand of indigenous movements is the constitution of multiethnic or plurinational states. In the case of struggles for multiethnic states, indigenous peoples recognize the existence of a single state but demand that the different peoples have autonomous control over their territories, government, and judicial system. Struggles for plurinational states demand the recognition of various independent nations in federal or decentralized forms. Both imply a challenge to the very idea of a homogeneous state.

These struggles are beginning to take shape as relevant demands and actions. Here we discuss four strategies through which indigenous peoples and movements in different places are gaining ground toward the common goal of governmental and territorial power, of autonomy from non-indigenous state control. The strategies, which often overlap and feed each other, are: forcing changes in the legal system and the national constitution; creating parallel government; claiming space within dominant government through elections; and working toward regime change at a national level.

IN PURSUIT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT: FORCING LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

A critical realm of struggle for indigenous movements has been forcing changes to the laws and constitutions of the state so as to provide greater space for indigenous autonomy; the 1990’s witnessed a burgeoning of such changes. Five examples follow.

Ecuador

The Ecuadoran indigenous movement in general, and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) in particular, have strongly put forth the need for a plurinational state. The indigenous-specialist journalists Chavez and Salgado define this as “a decentralized political-administrative structure that would be culturally heterogeneous and open to the self-representation of all social sectors, particularly those that have been marginalized or excluded for reasons of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, etc. from the state structures and from socio-economic development.”38 In 1991, a massive indigenous rebellion, the Inti Raimi Uprising, occurred. Huge numbers of indigenous people took over Quito for several weeks and forced the government to sign a public agreement with CONAIE granting recognition to indigenous peoples and convoking a constitutional assembly.39

39 See Macas, Luis. “Ecuadoran Indigenous Movement: A Necessary Evaluation,” in Boletín ICCI-ARY Rimay, Year 3, No. 21, Quito, December
These achievements eventually led to a new constitution in 1998, in which Ecuadoran indigenous peoples were able to get the state to formally declare itself multicultural and plurinational. However, this new constitution has not translated to real change,\textsuperscript{40} as indigenous peoples have continued to be subjugated by the state. In January 2003, CONAIE presented to Congress the Law for the Exercise of the Collective Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Congress approved the plan for the coexistence of governments, with equal weight given to the indigenous and non-indigenous governments. When President Gustavo Noboa vetoed the law, the indigenous movement concluded that the only government could be theirs. The Pachakutik New Country Movement of Plurinational Unity (a political party that grew out of indigenous mobilizations) and the larger indigenous movement adopted the position that a plurinational and democratic state could only be built by a government with a popular and indigenous base.

\textit{Nicaragua}

Almost two decades ago, in the context of the Sandinista revolution, the Miskitos were able to include in the Nicaraguan constitution the right to special norms that would allow the broad exercise of their rights of self-government. The constitution was changed to communal forms of land ownership, communal use and enjoyment of water and forests on these lands, and the free election of indigenous authorities and political representatives. In addition, the state cannot now authorize concessions or contracts for the exploitation of natural resources in the autonomous regions of the Atlantic Coast except with the approval of the Regional Autonomous Councils.

\textit{Mexico}

The Mexican indigenous movement has reawakened the interest for legal and political recognition through the rebellion and armed resistance of the EZLN. The EZLN uprising helped to push new processes toward the restructuring of the state, generating an internal crisis in the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which lost hegemony over the unions, campesino groups, and indigenous organizations that were attracted to the new ways of thinking. After 70 years of controlling the government, the PRI was defeated in the 2000 elections. The EZLN has been able to achieve a higher profile for indigenous peoples and to reconstitute the Mexican social movement. This process reached a peak with the signing of the San Andrés Sakamchen Accords in February 1996, in which indigenous existence, territorial rights, right to self-government, rights to natural resources, and right to its own justice system were all recognized by the federal government.\textsuperscript{41} With these accords, the indigenous question was placed in the center of

\textsuperscript{40} See the Scientific Institute of Indigenous Cultures, “Political Construction and Historical Reconstruction: The New Challenges of CONAIE,” in Boletín ICCI-ARY Rimay, Year 4, No. 36, Quito, March 2002.

\textsuperscript{41} After its early 1994 uprising, the EZLN opened up a space for negotiation with the government of President Ernesto Zedillo, which sought to put an end to the armed conflict through the Commission of Concordance and Pacification (COCOPA). For more information from a Zapatista perspective, see EZLN, Anxieties of the Dawn, Editorial Caminos, La Habana, 2001.
the national political agenda, and there was consensus among public opinion that there could be no reform of the Mexican state without a solution to the indigenous question.\textsuperscript{42}

Just as in Ecuador, however, the search for constitutional recognition and legislative changes encountered roadblocks. In April 2001, the Congress of the Union, at the request of the government of President Vicente Fox, approved a constitutional amendment that contradicted the content of the San Andrés Accords. The National Indigenous Congress (CNI) and the National Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy (ANIPA) denounced this lack of compliance with the Accords,\textsuperscript{43} and the indigenous movement took concrete measures to move forward with its agenda. Making use of Fox’s own statements about the validity of the San Andrés accords and of constitutional provisions for indigenous autonomy, the indigenous movements maintained that the San Andrés Accords had legal validity, and they expanded the number of autonomous municipalities. This exercise, nevertheless, does not have the same strength in all the Mexican states,\textsuperscript{44} and – despite constitutional provisions for indigenous autonomy – continues to be called an insurgent activity by the state.

\textbf{Colombia}

The Colombian case is different from those of Ecuador and Mexico. Unlike Ecuador, Colombia’s indigenous population makes up less than 2\% of the total population of the country. Unlike Mexico, armed uprisings have been insignificant in indigenous politics. Nevertheless, two factors have allowed indigenous peoples to gain significant rights in the country’s constitution. First has been political pressure from progressive parties that arose from the peace negotiations in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, when indigenous peoples gained significant recognition in cultural, political and territorial matters.\textsuperscript{45} Second has been the opportune political participation in the National Constitutional Assembly of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) and the Movement of Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO), which participation also emerged from the openings created by the peace negotiations. In the assembly, an alliance between ONIC, AICO, and a group of political parties forced the inclusion within Colombia’s new 1991 constitution of a large chapter of social guarantees and rights for indigenous peoples. In this way, indigenous peoples guaranteed legal recognition of the nation’s multiethnic character, of indigenous territorial entities, and of special jurisdiction. In the following decade, indigenous peoples were able use the legislative process to win even more legal rights.


\textsuperscript{44} Indigenous people in Oaxaca experience problems between communities and with political parties which have made their autonomy experience very difficult. See Sarmiento, Sergio, “El movimiento indigena y el gobierno de Fox”, en \textit{Rebellion}, Julio 2002. www.rebellion.org.

\textsuperscript{45} Between 1987 and 1991, the Colombian government signed demobilization accords with the M-19 Movement, the Revolutionary Workers’ Party, the Popular Army for Liberation, and the indigenous Quintin Lame Armed Movement. The guerrillas of the 1980s transformed themselves into legal parties which allied with indigenous peoples.
Most of these rights, however, stayed on the books. Similar to the experience of the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE) and the EZLN, it quickly became clear that formal recognitions alone were not going to change the full political reality. The continued violations of indigenous rights, lives, and autonomy led to ongoing mobilizations of indigenous protest in Colombia throughout the 1990’s. In 1996, more than 35 simultaneous actions of indigenous organizations resulted in the issuance of presidential decrees that established the National Roundtable for Consultation and the Human Rights Commission of Indigenous Peoples. These two groups have functioned very little, however. Indigenous people have felt left with no option but to continue to mobilize and march for the fulfillment of their legal rights.

**Venezuela**

Hugo Chávez became president of Venezuela in 1999 as a result of the crisis of the traditional political parties and the ascent of grassroots social movements. This produced various changes in the Venezuelan political system that were formalized in a 1999 Constitutional Assembly that produced the new so-called Bolivarian Constitution. This new constitution includes a body of rights similar to those that exist in Colombia and to those agreed on in the San Andrés Accord of Mexico. Venezuelan indigenous peoples are benefitting both from ethnic recognition and agrarian reform. Article 119 of the Venezuelan constitution recognizes the existence of indigenous communities and people “and their original rights to the lands they have ancestrally and traditionally occupied.” This recognition at the level of the constitution, giving original land rights prevailing status over later titles for lands that were usurped, is unique in the continent. Implementation of the agrarian reform is in process, though has been slowed by the force of national and international opposition to Chavez’ government.

**ESTABLISHING PARALLEL GOVERNMENTS IN INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES**

The struggle for transformation of the structures of the nation-state has prompted various indigenous movements to create their own congresses and governments. In the 1990’s, making use of the constitutional reforms and the gains made from most governments ratifying Convention 169 of the ILO, there was an explosion of proposals and advances for such parallel structures.

Indigenous governments are now being established all over the continent, creating a new institutional reality. They include: the Miskito of Nicaragua; the Lencas (and African descendants) in Honduras; the indigenous peoples of the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordination (CONIC) of Guatemala; the Kunas of Panamá; the Aymarás of Bolivia; the Mapuches of Chile and Argentina; the Indigenous Territorial Entities of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) and the Movement of Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO) in Colombia; the autonomous unicapitalities and the Good Government Councils promoted by the Zapatistas, ANIPA, and the National
Indigenous Congress (CNI) in Mexico; and the indigenous municipalities of Ecuador led by the Confederation of Peoples of Kichua Nationality of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI).  

The autonomous governments may be recognized by the national constitution and/or federal government or not. The majority do have recognition, in one form or another, from the state.

When the state does grant recognition, its incentive is generally because it has trouble successfully exercising its role of distributing income and guaranteeing social services (education, health, housing, and transportation). A state’s recognition of indigenous governments requires the latter to replace the functions of the state, especially at the municipal level and in protecting the natural resources of their communities.

Even for those that do have recognition, however, their legitimacy does not flow from the state. As for those that are not recognized: indigenous peoples claim that autonomous government is their right, and thus reject that any of their governments are illegal. All assert the primacy of their own rights in their territories, arguing that their right and legitimacy come before the state. Here “before” has two meanings: in terms of time, and in terms of importance.

Whether constitutionally and/or legally recognized or not, the parallel governments all clash with and question current systems and institutions. Under either circumstance, indigenous ability to govern the territories is still limited by the laws of the state, or by political actions of the dominant government. Legally recognized or extrajudicial, the formation of the governments is an act of resistance to keep indigenous cultural, economic and political systems from being denied or eliminated by national or global systems and organizations. The communities and leaders question the ability of nation-states to make decisions about plans, investments, and projects in their territories. The indigenous governments are usually only the jumping-off point for other actions that indigenous peoples are taking to recover their rights.

Below are five examples of different processes and outcomes in autonomous government. The Colombian, Mexican, and Honduran cases, in differing ways, are instances where the state was forced to broaden indigenous spheres of control. The Chilean case involves openly illegal actions, and the Peruvian case has repeatedly been taken to court.

**Mexico**

The Zapatistas maintain that their autonomous municipalities are acting within the law because of Convention 169 and because they maintain that their legitimacy flows from the campesino-indigenous revolution of 1910. In strict terms of legality as established by

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47 For follow-up on statements on resistance and territorial autonomy, see Latin American Information Agency, ALAI (http://alainet.org/), Adital (www.adital.org.br), and International Agency of Indigenous Press, AIPIN (www.redindigena.net/noticias/boletines/index.html).
the state, the Zapatistas are breaking the law. Yet they claim that they – not the Mexican state or ruling party – are the inheritors of Zapata and the revolution.

The EZLN, with the support of ANIPAZ and National Indigenous Congress (CNI), created five Good Government Councils. These are regional groupings that bring together approximately 30 autonomous municipalities in the state of Chiapas to unilaterally implement the San Andrés Accords and exercise broader territorial control. The Councils, which the Zapatistas call caracoles or snails, have self-government responsibilities that include mediating conflicts between the municipalities and making sure that laws are being enforced in the Zapatista rebel communities. The individual Zapatista autonomous communities continue to have the exclusive functions of administering justice, community health, education, housing, land, work, food, commerce, information, culture, and local transit.

Outside of Chiapas, other communities have followed suit in spite of threats against them by reactivated paramilitary groups. For example, the Convention of Indigenous Peoples of Northern and Northeastern Mexico, held in Sinaloa August 15-17, 2003, adopted a policy of de facto autonomous governments. In Mexico City, the indigenous community of San Pedro Actopán declared its right to autonomy.

Though state-sponsored attacks continue to be vicious, both federal government and some state-level governments have acknowledged the legality of indigenous autonomy. National government has formally accepted that the Good Government Councils are constitutional. The state of Chiapas accepts that autonomous municipalities are an expression of the actual state of affairs, that real control is held by the Zapatistas. The state government of Michoacán announced that it would support the establishment of the autonomous communities of the Purépecha Nation.

**Colombia**

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) has set about applying the de facto Indigenous Territorial Entities even though regulations have not yet been written. ONIC members assert that, beyond the right to be different, they have the right to govern themselves in their own territories. As such, the Nasa indigenous peoples in the department of Cauca have developed community protection and territorial control by strengthening the alguaciles, or indigenous civic guards, who organize massive actions to neutralize the presence of armed forces in their territory. Though the national government has been carrying out a “total war” policy against the guerrillas, the Nasa peoples – armed and unarmed – have managed to create spaces of dialogue with them.

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48 This decision was formalized on August 8-10, 2003, in a process wherein the EZLN turned power over to the mobilized autonomous communities just as they had promised at the time of the uprising.


One example is the Territory of Coexistence, Dialogue, and Negotiation in the indigenous territory called La María, a space in which different actors involved in the conflict have the possibility for open meetings, humanitarian accords, and exchanges about conflict resolution. In another case, the indigenous authorities also successfully demanded that the non-indigenous mayor of the Caldono leave and that he pass on control to a collective government of communities. In recent elections, an indigenous mayor was elected there and now exercises power not with a municipal council, but rather an assembly of indigenous authorities.

Other exercises in self-government in Colombia are directly associated with the management and control of natural resources. Some federal laws recognize the environmental authority of indigenous peoples, but others say that only the Minister of Environment has authority. In either case, indigenous peoples have in certain areas prohibited the national government from assuming any role. For example, in 1997 the government of the Embera Katio people issued a special law regarding the management of wood resources in their territory (which is also a national park) because the state entity in charge of doing so had been negligent. The Chamies and Embera Dovida peoples have adopted a similar position, despite the tension of the national government wanting to manage the national park which sits on indigenous land.

**Peru**

During the decade of the Fujimori dictatorship, campesino rondas, or militias, were formed by the government to confront the Shining Path guerrillas. Rondas were civilian groups which included many indigenous peoples, who were armed and controlled by the army to carry out actions of territorial control. They clashed with dissident armed groups and were responsible for many of the crimes of that time. The indigenous participation in the rondas reduced autonomous activity to very precarious levels, because the rondas were subordinate to the Army and to the National Office against Terrorism, DINCOTE.

Today, in spite of the legacy of the Fujimori dictatorship and the aggression of the Shining Path, some individual autonomy has been revitalized. The Native Federation of Madre de Dios River and Streams (FENAMAD) in the Madre de Dios Department of Peru is carrying out what it calls “preventative actions of vigilance and territorial control” as well as actions to evict invading settlers. The activities are especially directed at stopping the mining and logging activity in their territories. These are essentially internal mobilizations in which delegates from all of the communities participate. They make speeches about their rights to the lands, and then proceed to dismantle the illegal infrastructure. These actions are happening in the context of the “democratization” being promoted by the Toledo government.

**Chile**

The Mapuche peoples are in a different situation. After the 1990 departure of President Pinochet, whose government carried out a crusade to expropriate indigenous land,

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51 According to the Truth Commission report published in August 2003, 75% of the 69,000 victims from the last ten years of the conflict spoke Quechua.
indigenous people began a massive campaign to recover usurped lands. Nearly 1,000 actions, led by the *lonkos* (traditional authorities), have been reported. Their positions of autonomy are based primarily on the claim that an independent Mapuche nation is being occupied by the Chilean state in violation of agreements made between a 17th century indigenous leader, Arauco, and the Spanish Crown. They justify their massive occupation of farms in the courts, where they are accused of terrorism, by citing their legitimate right to defend their property. The actions are inspired not by the law but by their identity as a Mapuche nation.

**Honduras**

The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) have demanded autonomy, achieving some results, such as a change in municipal borders to give the Lenca peoples legal control over their territories. In 1994, the first municipality in the country in which all of the land is collectively owned and administered by an indigenous council was created: San Francisco Opalaca, in the department of Intibucá. In the following years, six more new municipalities were created.

**POWER WITHIN THE DOMINANT STATE STRUCTURE**

Another primary strategy at play among indigenous peoples and movements is working within the electoral system to gain power, and then using that political space to devolve power to autonomous indigenous governments. This has opened another door, besides the de facto one discussed above, for claiming political and territorial control. Elections have allowed indigenous peoples to take over management of their municipalities and regions.

This electoral space was primarily created during the decentralizing reforms of the 1990’s when direct municipal and regional elections were instituted in Colombia (municipal in 1998 and departmental in 1991), in Bolivia (municipal, 1995), and in Venezuela (municipal, 1989). Indigenous parties were particularly successful in winning the governorship of the departments or states. This occurred especially in several Andean regions (Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru) where indigenous people are the majority.

Generally, indigenous administrations transfer their traditional forms of consultation, decision-making, and action into the municipalities they administer. These forms tend to

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52 Information from Mapu-Link indicates that hundreds of Mapuches have gone to jail, dozens have been wounded, and several have been murdered by the *Carabineros*, or Chilean police.
55 In other instances, as in some regions of Colombia, indigenous communities have been co-opted by their own elected leaders.
be massive, direct, and through plebiscites, which implies changing the representative model of the Western state. The core issue is the recovery of constituent power for the communities.

As elected local and regional indigenous governments respond to imperatives from the community, they are transforming policing, environmental, public health, social control, and natural resource management functions. In certain instances they have rejected the privatization of water (Bolivia), oil exploitation (Colombia), the presence of government forces (Mexico and Colombia), and the building of highways (El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico).

National governments are responding to the growing legitimacy of indigenous governments by trying to impose their modus operandi of government. They are trying to subjugate the principles of indigenous administration (*ama quilla, ama llulla, ama shua*, a Quechua statement meaning “Don’t be lazy, dishonest, or a thief”) to fiscal policy and the rationalization of payment of the public debt. At the same time, the Andean Community of Nations, the World Bank, the Ibero-American Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, and national governments have all designed funding initiatives to force their own idea of government on the communities. These initiatives have been met with strong indigenous opposition.

The differing perspectives on government were exemplified in a June 2003 workshop that the aforementioned multilateral institutions organized with indigenous leaders from Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Venezuela. At the workshop, the ideological clash became apparent when the World Bank and the Indigenous Fund insisted on concepts of government based on “anti-corruption,” “transparency,” and “governability” – core elements of the agenda of multilateral organizations (based on modernization of the state apparatus, reduction of public expenditure, and fiscal savings to guarantee repayment of the debt). In contrast, indigenous documents insisted on such terms such as “communities,” “authorities,” and “participatory budgets.”

National government-led spaces created to include indigenous representatives and to supposedly build consensus on indigenous policies have similar objectives: to guarantee the national regime’s ability to govern. In Peru, President Toledo formed the National Commission of Andean, Amazonian, and Afro-Peruvian Peoples, CONAPA. In Chile, there is the Corporation for Indigenous Development, CONADI. In Ecuador it is the Development Council of the Nationalities of Ecuador (CODENPE) and the Development Project of the Indigenous and Black Peoples (PRODEPINE). In Colombia, the current government has been trying to implement a form of “Indigenous Ministry.” These initiatives are seen by most indigenous groups and movements as attempts at cooption, and have been denounced as illegitimate.

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57 These include programs for education and consensus-building on indigenous development plans and policies, indigenous education and training, and leadership formation projects, such as the School for Government, Interchange on Development Experiences, and Consensus Building between indigenous peoples and member countries of the European Union.
THE STRUGGLE TO CHANGE POLITICAL REGIMES

Most recorded initiatives for ethnic recognition by indigenous peoples are accompanied by efforts for regime change. The Bolivian case is most illustrative.

*Bolivia*

In the last five years, the indigenous movements have developed an intense struggle to defend and enforce ethnic, economic, and political rights. Various actions opposing economic globalization put one indigenous leader, Evo Morales, at the threshold of the presidency of the Republic in 2002. (He was defeated by only 2% in presidential elections). These actions have also reversed various laws and privatization processes. In early 2000, indigenous and other inhabitants of Cochabamba confronted the Potable Water Law, which paved the way for the privatization of all of Bolivia’s water; the first phase was the sale of the city of Cochabamba’s water to the Bechtel Corporation. In what became known as the “water war”, the movement in Cochabamba managed to reverse the sale. This opened the way for the indigenous peoples’ marches in the eastern part of the country, the road blocks in the coca-growing area, and later the campesino-led March for Life and Sovereignty in April 2001. The March for Life and Sovereignty called for changes in the agrarian law to guarantee land to campesino and indigenous farmers, and to restore the national patrimony of fossil fuels, telecommunications, energy, and transportation, all of which were privatized in the 1980’s. It also proposed convoking a Popular Constitutional Assembly to reach consensus on changes to the constitution of the country. Most of the participants in these activities were from the Coordination for the Defense of Water and Life or were coca producers.

The indigenous-led March for Popular Sovereignty, Territory, and Natural Resources was held during the 2002 electoral process and used the slogan, “Constitutional Assembly with the Participation of all Social Sectors and without the Mediation of Political Parties.” This was part of the context in which the congress appointed an unstable Sánchez de Lozada government that then had to govern with a strong presence of indigenous assembly representatives. The crisis produced by the sale of natural gas in August-September of 2003 caused a new uprising of indigenous people in the Andean area. The uprising was led by the Pachakutic Movement, the CONAMAQ, and the Sole Union Confederation of Campesino Workers of Bolivia and later included also the Bolivian Labor Central, indigenous groups from the eastern part of the country, coca growers, and the indigenous-driven Movement to Socialism (MAS). The uprising forced the resignation of the president and the formation of a transition government in October 2003. The movement again demanded a constitutional assembly and a change in the political regime and the economic model. The new president initially accepted these demands.

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In summary, throughout Latin America the struggle for ethnic recognition has advanced in the past few years but has been held captive to legal formalities. Indigenous peoples have responded by designing actions to change political systems – an effort that has led to limited success. Despite the hand-off in national power, indigenous peoples have experienced little real improvement in their lives. The frustrations and lack of sufficient gains have, at the same time, led to an explosion of activities to establish indigenous governments at the local level.
VIII. SITES OF STRUGGLE: GLOBALIZATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

As discussed, in the economic arena, Latin American countries are experiencing changes in the functions of their lands due to the expansion and opening of markets and the inclusion of new raw materials in industrial processes. Economic projects of multinational corporations in collaboration with national governments, which are primarily extractive projects that lead to environmental degradation, food scarcity, and forced displacement, are putting indigenous peoples at risk.

The current wave of plunder of indigenous lands and resources – and, as a corollary, autonomy – has not occurred without a response. The Zapatista uprising began in 1994 only months after President Carlos Salinas de Gortari modified Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution to allow sale on the open market of communally protected lands, or ejidos, and the same day that the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect. In Ecuador, parts of Colombia, and Bolivia, the resistance and rebellion of indigenous people have, as Huenchuán states, “put hemispheric governability at risk.”

Throughout Latin America, indigenous movements are standing up for their rights to their territories, ethnicity, and culture. They are working to guarantee natural resources and the material conditions necessary for collective survival: to land, biodiversity, water, food security and energy resources. They are also striving to resist the new attacks on their sovereignty by multinational corporations and the governing elites. Moreover, they aim to resist losing their rights to an aggressive campaign by the United States and some national governments to militarize the continent.

Below are some examples of struggles against neoliberal globalization and its impacts.

Mobilizing against Free Trade Pacts

Throughout the years of this decade, the Plan Puebla Panamá – the development initiative primarily reliant on the exploitation of indigenous lands and resources from the Mexican Isthmus down to Panamá – was a flashpoint for indigenous opposition. Indigenous peoples – organized through such groups as Union of Indigenous Communities in the Northern Zone of the Isthmus (UCIZONI) in Mexico and the Civic Council of Popular

59 “It was not a coincidence that the amending [of Article 27] happened a few months before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect since the ejido could have become an obstacle to the intensive agriculture programs designed to generate important income for transnational companies of the North. Neither was it a coincidence that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation rose up that same day. On January 1, 1994 as the Mexican people woke up looking to the North, the indigenous army forced them to look South to the poorest and most depressed state of Mexico, Chiapas.” Mantilla, Alejandro, Considerations on the political demandibility of the right to land,” in For the Right to Land, Plataforma Combiana DESC, pp. 193-194, Bogotá, 2002.

and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) – launched a well-coordinated campaign of public education, popular mobilization, direct action, and international publicity aimed at stopping their governments and the multinational corporations. By 2002, indigenous ire had made the pact too politically costly. The government of President Fox – the plan’s primary proponent – purged all reference from its official discourse, and removed its official Plan Puebla Panamá website.

Some of the same indigenous organizations in Central America are now engaged in fighting the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), using some of the same strategies. In June of this year, a coalition of organizations, dominated by indigenous and campesinos, will be launching two days of coordinated actions against CAFTA and the FTAA in five Central American countries. In Bolivia and Ecuador, indigenous movements are strongly resisting bilateral accords. In Bolivia the protests against the privatization of water and gas occurred under the general banner of opposition to any free trade pact.

Far and away the principal point of opposition by indigenous movements is the FTAA as exemplified by the multitude of declarations referenced earlier. Indigenous peoples are both organizing within their own areas and movements to put pressure on their national governments, and connecting with international networks such as Vía Campesina and the Continental Campaign of Struggle against the FTAA to mount international opposition. In October of 2002, for example, it was indigenous organizations and movements – led by the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE) and the National Confederation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Black Organizations (FENOCIN) – who led the raucous opposition at the FTAA Ministerial meetings in Ecuador. (In 2000, these same groups led an uprising which almost ousted President Jamil Mahuad due to his acquiescence to free trade and structural adjustment initiatives which were devastating the poor.) Throughout 2003, the Confederation of Peoples of Kichua Nationality of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI) engaged in sustained and varied acts of resistance against the government of President Lucio Gutiérrez and the economic policies of the government, including his acceptance of the FTAA. In February of 2004, ECUARUNARI continued this opposition by leading a week-long general strike.

Though the name is not often invoked, the totality of these struggles also expresses an opposition to the initiatives of the World Trade Organization, which serves as the international legal foundation for free trade pacts and policies.

**Mobilizing to Defend Land**

Within the neoliberal logic, rights associated with indigenous territories should be eliminated to give way to regional integration and denationalization processes. The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) points out,

> [T]he loss of sovereignty – which means the advent of strictly private laws and courts with supranational jurisdiction – accompanies the sale of indigenous lands on the market. The articles in various constitutions that protect communally-held
indigenous lands have to be abolished so that the lands can be expropriated.\textsuperscript{61}

Land is a problem without a complete solution that continues to generate regional and local mobilizations, as well as legal actions to obtain titles. This is in evidence today in Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela. Direct actions have been launched in Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, and Bolivia. In Bolivia, the Third March of the Indigenous of the East in 2001 organized to stop the conversion of territories into forest plantations, and obtained lands for indigenous and campesino farmers of the northern Amazon area. Meanwhile, in Salta and Jujuy, Argentina, people are strongly organizing against the practice of selling large plots of land by business interests without regard for the fact that indigenous people live on the land.

In Paraguay, large cattle ranchers are taking over lands of the Ayoreo-Totobiegosode and opening up illegal roads in the jungle; indigenous peoples are engaged in daily actions to occupy and recover land. They are doing the same in Brazil, where miners and ranchers are invading the lands of over 12,000 Makuxi, Wapixana, Ingárikó, Taurepang, and Patamona people.\textsuperscript{62}

In 2003, the Awas Tingni was able to get the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the OAS to declare the Nicaraguan government a violator of human rights for not recognizing their ancestral lands. Moreover, the court ordered the government to pay indemnization for the damages incurred for denying the Awas Tingni’s right to property and adequate legal protection.

**Mobilizing to Defend Water**

In 2000, as mentioned, indigenous peoples, campesinos, and workers in Cochabamba, Bolivia rose up to such a degree that the government was forced to renege on the sale of their water to the Bechtel Corporation, in a deal that had been heavily promoted by the World Bank. (Today, Bechtel is suing the Coordination for the Defense of Water and Life for $25 million in lost income.) The Forum on Dams and Rivers is an indigenous-dominated coalition from throughout Mesoamerica which is confronting privatization of water and damming of rivers. At the Mesoamerican Forum – another broad-based coalition led by the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and other indigenous and popular groups – in the summer of 2003, hundreds of organizations identified control of water resources as a key site of struggle. There, Honduras and Nicaragua were highlighted for attention because the IDB is conditioning its loans to these countries on programs to privatize water. This led to the beginning of an indigenous-led campaign to boycott the IDB.

Significant struggles for water have also been led by the Embera Katio people in Colombia against the Urrá hydroelectric facility (1996-2002) and the regional aqueduct of Urabá (2001-2003). They organized the occupation of lands that were to be flooded. Expelling officials from the Ministry of the Environment, the Embera Katio people

\textsuperscript{61} National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), Op. Cit.
\textsuperscript{62} See bulletins of International Agency of Indigenous Press (AIPIN).
managed to stop the operation of the hydroelectric facility for more than six months until they were able to negotiate with the national government. Likewise, the Mapuche Pehuenches’ opposition to continued construction on the Ralco hydroelectric facility in the sacred Bio Bio River of Chile has become an emblematic case of indigenous peoples’ struggle to defend their natural resources, to reject the commercialization of life, and to oppose transnational corporations – in this case Endesa of Spain. Using direct action and political protest, COPINH has stopped five of nine IDB-backed hydroelectric dams on national rivers.

**Mobilizing Against Energy Projects**

In Bolivia in August and again in September 2003, people rose up, blocking highways, marching, and sitting in to protest the privatization of gas. What had been the Coordination for the Defense of Water and Life turned into the Coordination on Gas, demanding the re-nationalization of gas and oil and the ouster of the government of President Sánchez de Lozada.

In Colombia between 1997 and 2002, the U’wa peoples held demonstrations and blocked highways; combined with intensive lobbying in the United States and Europe to defend their sacred territory, these actions forced Occidental Petroleum to leave the area and return its oil concession to the Colombian state enterprise, ECOPETROL.

In Peru, the Camisea gas mega project in the Urubamba River Basin has been met with protest actions from Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Cuenca Amazonia (COICA), the Interethnic Association of Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDESEP), the Permanent Coordination of Indigenous Peoples of Peru, the Matsigenka Council of Urubamba, and the Regional Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Central Jungle of Peru (ARPI). The protests temporarily paralyzed the project in August 2003; provoked the withdrawal of the companies who were implementing and financing the project, such as Citibank; and created an international uproar. The U.S. government’s Export-Import Bank also rejected financial backing.

**Mobilizing to Defend the Sacred Coca Leaf**

The U.S.-backed “drug war” in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia is forcibly eradicating the sacred coca (a leaf, distinct from cocaine, which has traditional spiritual uses) while opening indigenous lands and resources up for investment. The central demands of indigenous peoples are to suspend the militarization of their territories and to find a negotiated solution to the coca issue that includes cultural dimensions – respect for a plant that is sacred to indigenous peoples of the region – as well as social and political dimensions – support for rural economies, support for agricultural products that can compete with the heavily subsidized agricultural products of northern countries, and promotion of agrarian reform. In El Chapare in Bolivia, for example, indigenous people have manifested their opposition by taking over highways and blockading cities on dozens of occasions, repeatedly paralyzing the country. Colombian indigenous people have sustained confrontational actions; for instance, all of the indigenous organizations of
the Amazonian piedmont in Colombia participated in the 1996 coca grower’s strike, and in 2002 joined in sustained protests, demonstrations, and fora of denunciation.

**Mobilizing for Food Security and Against Genetically Modified Organisms**

Organizational weaknesses, combined with state repression, have limited indigenous peoples’ abilities to defend their ecosystems, biodiversity, access to genetic resources, ancestral knowledge, informed consent, and sustainable development. Still, indigenous movements throughout Latin America are heavily engaged in promoting the establishment and recovery of seed banks for traditional crops, and in opposing genetically modified (GMO) crops. Indigenous movements in Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala have destroyed fields planted with GMO crops. The predominantly indigenous Forum for Cultural and Biological Diversity in Mesoamerica hosts seed exchanges each year, where indigenous and peasant farmers bring their non-GMO-tainted corn and other seeds to expand the protected stock. At the same time, other groups are applying pressure in international arenas where rules and regulations related to GMOs have been advancing.

Indigenous movements – joined with their campesino allies in such international venues as Vía Campesina, Cry of the Excluded, and the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC) – have raised a loud cry of “WTO out of Agriculture.” A central demand of indigenous advocacy and protests against the FTAA and the WTO has been the right of communities to grow their own food without it being undermined by free trade. Indigenous movements have brought this call to the FTAA ministerial meetings in Quito in 2002 and the WTO ministerial meetings in Cancún in 2003, as well as to many regional trade meetings.

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63 Though indigenous participation was centered in U.N. human rights organizations at first, the 1992 Summit on Land in Rio de Janeiro (where heads of state from all over the world met to adopt common policies on climate change, biodiversity, and water management) opened up a process for indigenous peoples to participate more in organizations and instruments related to development issues and environmental problems. Since then, indigenous peoples have been participating in multilateral organization spaces like the Commission for Sustainable Development, the Agreement on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Panel/Forum on Forest Resources, the Agreement on the Struggle Against Desertification, and the Fund for the World Environment.
IX. STRATEGIC NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

As discussed above, indigenous movements’ strategies move along many parallel tracks simultaneously. These include, among others: defending their land and resources from the predations of transnational capital; establishing autonomy on their own lands; intervening in national and international venues to change policy and gain legal recognition of their rights; and cooperating with non-indigenous movements towards shared goals. A common theme in all cases is building their own capacity to carry out all these strategies, so as to reduce their dependence on outsiders. Most of these strategies require significant resources for grassroots organizing, technical and legal expertise, travel and communications, etc. Below is a description of strategic needs common to most indigenous movements in Latin America.

TERRITORIAL CONTROL

Territorial integrity is essential to indigenous movements. This includes not only the ownership of land but the ability to exercise sovereignty over its management, protection and development. The strategic needs associated with this objective are huge; many of the needs below are subsets of this issue.

STRENGTHENING FOOD SYSTEMS

The majority of indigenous people are agriculturalists, and strengthening their economic and cultural self-sufficiency is intimately tied to food production. Specific assistance is needed in the reclamation of ancestral food systems, creation and strengthening of autonomous food systems (local production and commercialization), and organic fair trade marketing at international levels.

DEFENSE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Control of natural resources, including water, oil and biodiversity, is a key battleground between indigenous peoples and transnational capital. NGOs and international networks should build long-term relationships, providing accompaniment and defense of those living where the resources are in jeopardy – and doing so long before situations become critical. Specific needs include: (a) study and education about indigenous territorial rights and laws in different areas; (b) monitoring and analysis of investment, infrastructure projects, and all economic initiatives that affect indigenous territories; and (c) creating or strengthening Geographic Information Systems, with corresponding training of indigenous organizations for their management.

M Mass Mobilizations

Mass mobilizations and sustained protests are a key strategy for indigenous peoples’ own defense, but they are extremely resource-intensive. Where indigenous peoples carry out such mobilizations, they require technical support, publicity and, above all, funding.
**Policy Change**

Indigenous peoples need to strengthen their ability to effect policy change. At national levels this involves struggles for democracy and for legal recognition of ethnic, social, and economic rights. In both national and international venues, indigenous people’s intervention is imperative for policy change regarding biodiversity, water, energy resources, food security, human rights, climate change, and coca cultivation. This means effective presence with the IFIs, the UN, the OAS, and international treaty negotiations such as trade treaties and the Convention on Biological Diversity. To effect these changes, indigenous authorities and organizations need support in developing their capacity to intervene for themselves and position themselves as legitimate spokespeople in national and international arenas.

Organizations which work with indigenous peoples can play a central technical and financial role, but must be sensitive to the leadership of representative organizations and indigenous authorities. Indigenous peoples also need support in challenging the inter-governmental organizations’ practices of promoting an elite group of indigenous “experts” who do not represent indigenous communities.

**Defense of Life and Human Rights**

Leading or participating in indigenous movements, and defending ones land and sovereignty, can be physically dangerous in countries with severe or imminent human rights crises and systematic violations of legal protections (Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Chile, to name a few). The accompaniment of leaders and threatened or at-risk communities, and the documentation and follow-up of legal cases and processes, are vital to stop impunity and to create an environment in which indigenous peoples’ struggles can continue.

**Training**

In order to understand and intervene in national and international arenas, indigenous authorities and leaders require autonomously-led knowledge- and skills-building. Such training, in issues such as governmental institutions, processes of negotiation, and contemporary economic systems, should be designed and implemented by indigenous groups and organizations. Organizations which work with indigenous peoples can support this process by promoting locally run schools and trainings on key issue areas, with funding, technical support, and information as requested.

**Institutional Strengthening**

As existing indigenous movements, organizations and authorities expand their roles and political presence, they require capacity-building in a variety of forms. These may include financial and technical support for strategic planning and establishing teams to negotiate with the state, multinational corporations, and inter-governmental organizations.
NETWORKING AMONGST INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

Indigenous organizations lack the resources to adequately develop relationships and networks with their indigenous counterparts throughout Latin America, and to build and sustain permanent relationships critical for developing strength. There is an urgent need for indigenous peoples to strengthen the spaces where they gather regularly and where they coordinate with their representative organizations. Support for travel to international indigenous gatherings is critical.

NETWORKING WITH OTHER PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS

Similarly, there is a need for indigenous peoples to be more integrated into the international grassroots networks and fora where key strategies related to globalization are constructed and core tactics implemented. Financial support for travel and participation in popular movement venues and mobilizations can greatly strengthen the indigenous agenda in the larger struggle.
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NETWORKS

Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Cuenca Amazonia (COICA)
Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA)
C.C. 17-21-753 Calle Luis de Beethoven No. 47-65 & Capitán Rafael Ramos / Quito / Pichincha / Ecuador
Tel: (593-2) 240-7759, (593-2) 281-2098 / Fax: (593-2) 281-2098
Email: info@coica.org, haji@coica.org
Website: http://www.coica.org/
Contacts: Sebastián Haji Manchineri, President; Rodrigo de la Cruz, Advisor

Indian Council of South America (CISA)
Consejo Indio de Sudamérica (CISA)
C.C. 498 Av. del Sol 1407 / Puno / Puno / Perú
Tel: (51-54) 71-11-26
Email: evocat@puebloindio.org
Website: http://www.puebloindio.org/CISA/cisa.htm

International Maya League
Liga Maya Internacional
C.C. 584-1100 Esquina noreste del Parque de Vargas Araya 50m al este, casa blanca con verjas negras / San Pedro de Montes de Oca / San José / Costa Rica
Tel: (506) 224-79-74 / Fax: (506) 225-54-24
Email: aqabal@sol.racs.co.cr

Indigenous Parliament of America
Parlamento Indígena de América
C.C. 4659 Antiguo Banco de América, Piso 9 / Managua / Managua / Nicaragua
Tel: (505) 222-58-10, (505) 222-23-80 / Fax: (505) 222-58-10
Website: http://www.asamblea.gob.ni/frameenlaceparindigena.htm

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64 Included are organizations referenced in this report, as well as others of relevance. A more complete list can be found in the website of the Network of Indigenous Information, www.redindigena.net.
KEY INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Argentina

Indigenous Association of the Republic of Argentina (AIRA)
Asociación Indígena de la República de Argentina (AIRA)
Balbastro No. 1790 / Buenos Aires / Buenos Aires / Argentina C.P. 1406-148
Tel: (54-11) 49-82-60-54, (54-11) 49-21-17-89
Email: guanucoaira@yahoo.com.ar
Website: http://www.fortalecer.org.ar/osc_ficha.asp?idorganizacion=1106
Contacts: Rogelio Guanuco, President; Francisco Burgos, Secretary; César Currulef, Coordinator in Patagonia

National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Argentina (ONPIA) (in composition by the Mesa de Trabajo de los Pueblos Originarios)
Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de Argentina (ONPIA)
Tel: (54-11) 4258-2518, (54-11) 4911-9188
Email: mesatrabajo@hotmail.com
Contacts: Cristina Oribe and Roxana Soto

Belize

Belize Indigenous Training Institute
49 Main Street / Punta Gorda / Toledo / Belize
Tel: (501-7) 225-51 / Fax: (501-7) 225-51
Email: biti@btl.net
Website: http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/Activities/international_dev_summary/Belize_indigeno us_training_ins/belize_indigenous_training_ins.html

Caribbean Organization of Indigenous Peoples (COIP)
C.C. 229 Belize / Belize City / Belize
Tel: (501-2) 441-00 / Fax: (501-2) 321-36

Bolivia

Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia, also known as Indigenous Confederation of the East, Chaco, and Bolivian Amazon
Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia, also known as Confederación Indígena del Oriente, Chaco y Amazonía Boliviana
C.C. 6135 Villa 1o de Mayo, Barrio San Juan, detrás del Colegio Los Ángeles, Santa Cruz de la Sierra / Santa Cruz / Bolivia
Tel: (591-3) 346-07-14, (591-3) 3 362 707, (591-3) 346 84 37 / Fax: (591-3) 349-84-94
Email: cidob@scbbs.com.bo
Website: http://www.cidob-bo.org/
Contacts: Robert Cartagena and Egberto Tavo
Sole Union Confederation of Campesino Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB)
Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB)
C.C. 11589 La Paz / La Paz / Bolivia
Tel: (591-2) 236-49-75
Email: csutcb@hotmail.com
Website: http://www.musicosandinos.org/tupackatari/html/
Contact: Felipe Quispe Huanca

National Counsel of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo Conamaq
Consejo Nacional De Ayllus Y Markas Del Qullasuyo Conamaq
Email: conamaq@ceibo.entelnet.bo
Contacts: Faustino Zegarra, Fermín Beltrán, Jaime Apaza, members of the Governing Council

Organization of Aymará Women of Kollasuyo
Organización de Mujeres Aymárás del Kollasuyo
C.C. 13195 el Alto / La Paz / Bolivia
Tel: (591-2) 280-68-90 / Fax: (591-2) 282-33-23
Email: omak@caoba.entelnet.bo
Website: http://www.aymaranet.org/OMAK.html

Brazil

Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB)
Coordinación de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Amazonía Brasileña (COIAB)
C.C. 1081 Av. Ayrao, 235-Presidente Vargas / Manaos / Amazonas / Brazil C.P. 69.025-290
Tel: (55-92) 233-05-48, (55-92) 2330749, (55-92) 2331171 / Fax: (55-92) 233-02-09
Email: coica-dh@buriti.com.br; comunicacao@coiab.com.br; coiab@coiab.com.br
Website: www.coiab.com.br.
Contacts: Jecinaldo Barbosa Cabral, General Coordinator; Maria Miquelina Barreto Machado, Secretary General

Coordinating Council of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Brazil (CAPOIB)
Conselho de Articulação dos Povos e Organizações Indígenas do Brasil (CAPOIB)
Setor Área Isolada sul (SAIS) - Lote 8 - Galpão 1 - Canteiro Central do Metrô / Brasilia, DF / Brazil C.P. 70.610-000
Tel: (55-61) 346-70-48 / Fax: (55-61) 346-70-48

Indianist Missionary Council (CIMI)
Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI)
SDS Ed. Venâncio III salas 309 a 314 / Brasilia, DF / Brazil C.P. 70.393-900
Tel: (55-61) 322-75-82 / Fax: (55-61) 225-94-01
Email: cimi@embratel.net.br
Website: http://www.cimi.org.br/
Indigenous Council of Roraima
Conshelo Indígena de Roraima
Av. Sebastião Diniz, 1672, Bairro São Vicente / Boa Vista / Roraima / Brazil C.P. 69.303-120
Tel: (55-95) 224-57-61 / Fax: (55-95) 224-5761
Email: cir@technet.com.br
Website: http://www.cir.org.br/
Union of Indigenous Nations of Acre and South of the Amazon (UNI-AC)
União das Nações Indígenas do Acre e Sul do Amazonas (UNI-AC)
Rua Amazonas 158 / Rio Branco / Acre / Brazil C.P. 69.900-390
Tel: (55-68) 223-19-73 / Fax: (55-68) 223-19-73
Email: uni@mdnet.com.br
Contact: Francisco Avelino Batista, General Coordinator

Chile

Council of All the Mapuche Lands (CTLTM)
Consejo de Todas las Tierras Mapuche (CTLTM)
Calle Lautaro 234 - Casilla Postala 448 / Temuco, IX Región / Chile
Tel: (56) 45-235697
Email: aukin@entelchile.net; aucanhuilcaman@hotmail.com
Contact: Aucan Huilcamán Paillama

Nehuen-Mapu Mapuche Association
Asociación Mapuche Nehuen-Mapu
Recreo No. 0380 / Temuco, IX Región / Chile
Tel: (56-45) 26-58-77, (56-45) 22-75-33 / Fax: (56-45) 73-16-07
Email: nehuen_mapu@hotmail.com; sylviacheuquelaf@hotmail.com
Website: http://www.redindigena.net/nehuenmapu/index.html
Contacts: Julio Huenuil L., President; Magdalena Rupayan P., Secretary; Sylvia Cheuqualaf H., Director

Ñankuchew Indigenous Association of Nag-Che Territory
Asociación Indígena Ñankuchew del Territorio Nag-Che
Arturo Prat Nº 164, Comuna de Lumaco / Provincia de Malleco, IX Región / Chile
Tel: (56-045) 815021 / Fax: (56-045) 869639
Email: com_wagvlen@hotmail.com
Contacts: Sergio Alberto Alcamán Llanquinao and Galvarino Reimán Huilcamán

Development and Communications Organization, Xeg-Xeg Mapuche
Corporación de Desarrollo y Comunicaciones Mapuche Xeg-Xeg
Bulnes No. 10, Oficinas 2-3-5 / Temuco, IX Región / Chile
Tel: (56-45) 23-55-96 / Fax: (56-45) 23-72-53
Email: xegxeg@hotmail.com, xeg-xeg@geocities.com
Website: http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/7718
Colombia

National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC)
Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC)
C.C. 32395 Calle 13 No. 4-38 / Santa Fe de Bogotá / Cundinamarca / Colombia
Tel: (57-1) 284-21-68 / Fax: (57-1) 284-34-65
Email: onic@colnodo.apc.org
Website: http://www.onic.org
Agrupa de la mayoría de las 40 organizaciones regionales indígenas del país.
Contacts: Luis Evelis Andrade, Lisardo Domicó, José Domingo Caldón

Movement of Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO)
Movimiento de Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia (AICO)
Calle 23 No. 7-61, of. 501 / Santa Fe de Bogotá / Cundinamarca / Colombia
Tel: (57-1) 341-89-30; Fax: (57-1) 341-89-30
Contacts: Segundo Tarapuésa and Miguel Chindoy

Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon (OPIAC)
Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana (OPIAC)
Carrera 8 No. 19-34, of. 405 / Santa Fe de Bogotá / Cundinamarca / Colombia
Tel: (57-1) 283-23-24 / Fax: (57-1) 283-50-85
Email: opiac@etb.net.co
Contacts: Julio Estrada and Rosalba Jiménez

Authorities of Traditional U’wa Indigenous of Boyacá
Autoridades Tradicionales Indígenas U’wa de Boyacá Cubará
Boyacá / Colombia
Tel: (57-78) 83-80-37 / Fax: (57-78) 83-80-09

Council of Embera Katio Alto Sinú
Cabildo Mayor Embera Katio Alto Sinú
Calle 5 No. 10-30 / Tierra Alta / Córdoba / Colombia
Tel: (57-47) 77-16-03 / Fax: (57-47) 77-12-18
Email: camaemka@col3.telecom.com.co
Contacts: Juan Domicó Nokó; Estefan Baleta, advisor

Regional Indigenous Counsel of Cauca (CRIC)
Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC)
C.C. 516 Calle 1 No. 4-50 / Popayán / Cauca / Colombia
Tel: (57-28) 24-21-53 / Fax: (57-28) 24-03-43
Email: cric@emtel.net.co
Contacts: Alcibíades Escué and Jorge Caballero
Indigenous Oganization of Antioquia
Organización Indígena de Antioquia
C.C. 53433 Carrera 49 No. 63-57 / Medellín / Antioquia / Colombia
Tel: (57-4) 284-48-45 / Fax: (57-4) 291-00-08
Email: indigena@medellin.impsat.net.co
Contacts: Abadio Green and Luis Eduardo Agudelo

Costa Rica
National Indigenous Table of Costa Rica
Mesa Nacional Indígena de Costa Rica
C.C. 10913-1000 200 sur de la bomba Monza, mano izquierda / Centro Comercial Guadalupe / San José / Costa Rica
Tel: (506) 222-22-45, (506) 257-55-65 / Fax: (506) 257-57-02
Email: mesanicr@sol.racsa.co.cr

Regional Aboriginal Association of Dikes (ARADIKES)
Asociación Regional Aborigen del Dikes (ARADIKES)
C.C. 24-8100 Buenos Aires / Puntarenas / Costa Rica
Tel: (506) 730-02-89, (506) 730-07-16 / Fax: (506) 730-11-89
Email: aradikes@sol.racsa.co.cr
Web Site: http://www.aradikes.org

Bribrí Cabagra Indigenous Association
Asociación Indígena Bribrí Cabagra
San Miguel de Cabagra, Buenos Aires / Puntarenas / Costa Rica
Tel: (506) 771-07-55

Ecuador
Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE)
Confederación de Naciones Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE)
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Mapuche Links International
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Ethnicity Today Periodical
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