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Oil, urbanization, and 'pacted' ethnic politics: Indigenous movements in Latin America

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Abstract

According to resource curse theory, oil may cause ethnic rebellions. However, this article proposes a conditional explanation for the oil-causes-rebellions curse by examining indigenous movements in oil-producing countries in Latin America. I argue that oil price drops and oil-caused land conflicts increase the likelihood of rebellions if indigenous peoples remain under-urbanized, as evidenced by the 1994 Zapatista rebellion in Mexico. Conversely, indigenous peoples are likely to pursue an ethnic politics that is 'pacted' if oil-led economic activities have urbanized them. In Venezuela and Ecuador, oil has created an urban-indigenous class. When Venezuela and Ecuador introduced neoliberal reforms to deal with their economic crises caused by oil price drops, indigenous peoples made efforts to codify indigenous rights in the constitution as a pact. I conclude that this conditional explanation fits Latin America due to two regional factors: ethno-corporatist legacies and diffusion effects.

Keywords

Oil, urbanization, pacts, ethnic politics, Latin America, indigenous movements

Introduction

Oil has been argued to be a curse (Chaudhry, 1989; Karl, 1997; Ross, 2001; 2012; Tusalem and Morrison, 2013). In particular, oil wealth may trigger ethnic conflicts against the state. When oil wealth is geographically concentrated in regions populated by ethnic minorities, ethnic tensions often arise when oil extraction deprives ethnic minorities of their ancestral lands. Ethnic tensions may eventually escalate to rebellions when drops in world oil prices disrupt oil revenues and produce economic crises at home (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; de Soysa, 2000; Fearon, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Ross, 2006).

There is nothing inevitable about the oil-causes-rebellions curse. Recently, scholars have revisited resource curse theory and proposed conditional explanations for such resource curses as democracy deficits, regime instability, state failure, and low economic growth (see, for example, Dunning, 2008; Humphreys et al., 2007; Luong and Weinthal, 2010; Smith, 2007). However, few works have

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reexamined the relations between oil and ethnic conflict. In this article, I argue that despite oil-caused land conflicts and economic crises produced by oil price drops, ethnic minorities are less likely to rebel if oil-led economic activities have urbanized them. Oil tends to create jobs in modern industries that offer higher wages than traditional modes of production. Although not necessarily working directly for the oil sector, ethnic minorities may leave the land and enter into urban areas to work for modern industries.[1] As such, they may mount protests for their rights, but they are less likely to escalate their protests to rebellions. Instead, they are more likely to pursue an ethnic politics that is 'pacted' and fight for their constitutional rights from within the political system. Conversely, oil will increase the likelihood of rebellions if ethnic minorities remain under-urbanized. If oil has not significantly urbanized ethnic minorities, land conflicts and economic crises are likely to trigger rebellions.

To test urbanization level as an intervening variable between oil and rebellions, this article compares indigenous movements in Mexico, Venezuela, and Ecuador. In these three oil-producing countries, indigenous peoples have protested against the intrusion of oil companies and demanded their land rights and a larger share of oil revenues. These three countries also experienced economic crises when oil prices in the world market collapsed in the 1980s. In response, they all embarked on neoliberal economic reforms and suspended generous welfare programs. Under these conditions, however, indigenous movements in these three countries proceeded along two different paths. In Mexico, the Zapatistas rebelled in Chiapas in 1994 when Mexico entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement. In Venezuela and Ecuador, by contrast, indigenous peoples engaged in short-term protests and never waged rebellions during the period of neoliberal reform. Instead, they organized political parties, entered electoral politics, formed alliances with governments, and participated in constitutional reforms that codified indigenous rights in the constitution as a 'pact.'

Empirical evidence demonstrates that urbanization level has impacts on the oil-rebellion equation. In Venezuela and Ecuador, oil has created an urban-indigenous class. When Venezuela and Ecuador introduced neoliberal reforms, indigenous peoples formed various organizations, including political parties, to fight for their constitutional rights. Although they mobilized street protests, they never rebelled. In Mexico, the oil boom of the 1970s did create lucrative jobs for indigenous peoples in Chiapas. In the 1980s, however, indigenous peoples lost oil-related jobs after the oil sector was hit by the world oil price drops. An urban-indigenous class was thus lacking. When Mexico implemented neoliberal reforms, the Zapatistas rebelled.

This article first reviews the literature on indigenous movements in Latin America. I argue that the literature does not provide a sufficient account of the Zapatista rebellion as well as indigenous movements in Venezuela and Ecuador. I then elaborate my argument, stressing that oil-induced urbanization steers indigenous preferences toward negotiations and compromises with the state. I then examine indigenous movements in Mexico, Venezuela, and Ecuador. To further test my argument, I then briefly examine indigenous movements in Peru and Colombia, where oil is partly responsible for indigenous urbanization. I also explain my case selection criteria. I conclude that two regional factors make my argument applicable to Latin America: ethno-corporatist legacies and diffusion effects.

Explaining indigenous movements in Latin America

Literature review

According to the existing literature, three grievance-related factors have contributed to indigenous movements in Latin America since the 1980s. The first one is the uneven distribution of land. It is argued that indigenous peoples have mobilized for their land rights (Collier, 1994; Harvey, 1998; Otero, 2003). In fact, the ethnic conflict literature has viewed land as provoking ethnic conflicts. As Fearon (2004: 275) argues, 'wars that typically involve land conflict….are on average quite long-lived.'

Land, however, cannot account for the timing of the Zapatista rebellion. Because indigenous struggles for land rights had been long-standing, land by itself cannot explain why the Zapatistas rebelled as late as 1994. Moreover, land inequalities have also plagued indigenous Venezuelans and Ecuadorians for decades. However, they have not rebelled for their land rights. Therefore, land does not provide a sufficient account of rebellions.

The second factor is the collapse of corporatist welfare programs (Brysk and Wise, 1997; Yashar, 1998). When the state introduced neoliberal reforms, indigenous communities lost access to state resources and therefore took the initiative in fighting for their own rights. As Yashar (1998) argues, the incentives for the Zapatistas to rebel and for indigenous peoples in other Latin American countries to engage in social movements lay in the dismantling of corporatist programs (or the introduction of neoliberal reforms).

Missing in Yashar's explanation, however, is why indigenous peoples responded differently to neoliberal reforms. In the same neoliberal context, the Zapatistas rebelled whereas indigenous peoples in other countries did not. In particular, indigenous peoples in Venezuela and Ecuador only protested and became politically organized. Therefore, neoliberalism is indeterminate with regard to explaining how indigenous peoples pursued their rights. If neoliberalism can cause both rebellious and non-rebellious activities, how explanatory can the factor be?

The third factor is the nondemocratic nature of state–indigenous relations (Cleary, 2000; Van Cott, 2001). Indigenous peoples became active because state apparatuses had been unresponsive to indigenous demands. In particular, the Zapatistas rebelled because their demands for democratic local governance and indigenous human rights were not treated through democratic channels, but with police repression (Trejo, 2002).

Like the uneven distribution of land, however, nondemocratic state–indigenous relations cannot account for the timing of the Zapatista rebellion. Given that state–indigenous relations in Mexico had long been nondemocratic, this factor cannot explain why the uprising occurred as late as 1994. Moreover, state–indigenous relations in Venezuela and Ecuador were also nondemocratic when indigenous peoples' protests against neoliberalism were treated with police repression. The state also occupied indigenous lands in nondemocratic ways and was unresponsive to indigenous demands during the period of neoliberal reform. However, indigenous Venezuelans and Ecuadorians never rebelled.

A counterargument about the effects of regime type on the possibility of rebellions is that unstable democracies have higher risks of rebellions. In particular, new democracies are often unstable and may raise unrealistic expectations that motivate ethnic minorities to rebel (Ross, 2006: 202). Mexico, Venezuela, and Ecuador were all unstable democracies at the time of neoliberal reforms. However, Venezuela and Ecuador experienced no indigenous rebellions. In particular, Mexico democratized in the late 1980s, and Ecuador returned to democracy in 1979. In the same democratization context, however, the Zapatistas rebelled whereas indigenous Ecuadorians entered electoral politics and sought negotiations with the state. It is true that democratic transitions provide indigenous communities with macropolitical opportunities to assert autonomy, but democratization is indeterminate with regard to explaining how indigenous peoples choose between rebellions and negotiations.

The argument

This article explains the Zapatista rebellion through the lenses of resource curse theory. In the early 1970s, vast oil reserves were discovered in the Chiapas-Tabasco area along the Gulf of Mexico. However, extractive activities infringed upon indigenous lands and therefore triggered indigenous protests. To the extent that land inequalities had been a structural problem, oil operations were the short-term detonators that aggravated land conflicts. Moreover, when world oil prices plummeted in the 1980s, Mexico introduced neoliberal reforms and cut off corporatist welfare programs in order to deal with its economic crises. The Zapatistas thus rebelled in the context of neoliberalism.

Resource curse theory, however, cannot explain the Venezuelan and Ecuadorian cases. Indigenous Venezuelans and Ecuadorians have long struggled for their land rights in oil-drilling areas. Venezuela and Ecuador also introduced neoliberal reforms after the oil price drops of the 1980s triggered economic crises at home. In response, indigenous Venezuelans and Ecuadorians protested, but they never rebelled. Therefore, there must be something missing in resource curse theory.

Karl's study of the 'pacted' democratic transition in Venezuela may provide a clue. She argues that Venezuela transitioned to democracy in 1958 through political pacts because the requirements of oil exploitation—from labor needs to infrastructure constructions—had created 'an independent class of urban dwellers whose source of livelihood [was] removed from the land' (Karl, 1987: 65). In the absence of strong peasant communities conducive to revolutionary activities, political elites in Venezuela favored negotiated compromises. While Ross (2001) argues that oil has a 'modernization effect' that fails to bring about the socio-cultural changes favorable to democratization, Karl stresses that oil has an 'urbanization effect' that contributes to pacted democracies.

While Karl explores the impact of oil on modes of democratic transitions, her theory has implications for resource curse theory. This article examines indigenous urbanization as an intervening variable between oil and rebellions. I argue that even in the presence of oil-caused land conflicts and economic crises triggered by oil price drops, rebellions are less likely to occur if the oil economy has attracted ethnic minorities into urban areas or created jobs in modern industries that offer higher wages than traditional, tribal modes of production. Under oil-led urbanization, indigenous peoples are likely to seek an ethnic politics that is pacted by negotiating with the state, organizing their own political parties, entering electoral politics, forming alliances with governments, and codifying indigenous constitutional rights from within the political system, however illegitimate it may be.

Indigenous urbanization by no means gives rise to an indigenous middle class. Indeed, the majority of indigenous migrants still live in slums, lack education, and are discriminated against on the job market. At a minimum, however, indigenous peoples may leave the land and enter into urban areas in search of wage labor. As such, indigenous peoples are more likely to take a conciliatory rather than rebellious approach toward the state.

Of course, land conflicts and economic crises are likely to produce indigenous protests. According to Gurr (1993: 94), protests are usually a precursor to rebellions because 'violent political action follows a period of nonviolent activity.' As will be examined later, the Zapatista rebellion originated from a series of protests that began in the 1970s. However, I argue that protests may not necessarily spiral further toward rebellions if oil-led economic activities have urbanized indigenous peoples. As will be discussed later, indigenous Venezuelans and Ecuadorians protested in the context of neoliberalism, but they never escalated their protests to rebellions. Although oil extraction may produce ethnic tensions, it is less likely to cause rebellions under oil-led urbanization.

Conversely, oil will increase the likelihood of rebellions if it has not urbanized ethnic minorities. When indigenous peoples remain under-urbanized, they will demand state protection and land rights far more determinedly than mobile wage-earners insist on controlling the means of industrial production (Scott, 1976; Skocpol, 1979). As such, indigenous peoples are more likely to rebel when they lose their lands to extractive activities and suffer from economic crises caused by oil price drops. In Mexico, an indigenous-peasant class had emerged since the land reform of the 1930s. Although the oil boom of the 1970s provided indigenous peoples in Chiapas with jobs outside of agriculture, the world oil price drops in the 1980s struck the oil sector, and therefore indigenous peoples remained under-urbanized.

One thing should be noted. My central argument is that indigenous communities, once urbanized by oil, *prefer* pacts. It does not require that ethnic politics will necessarily become pacted. Nor does it mean that pacted ethnic politics will guarantee indigenous rights. As will be examined later, ethnic politics in Venezuela became pacted only after the end of neoliberal reforms. In Ecuador,

ethnic politics became pacted during the neoliberal period, but indigenous peoples still protested and demanded the enforcement of their constitutional rights.

In the following empirical sections, I focus on the context of neoliberal reforms in Mexico, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Given the same neoliberal context and oil production structure, whether oil triggers rebellions depends on the extent to which ethnic minorities have been urbanized. In particular, my narratives of Venezuela and Ecuador examine several factors that the relevant literature believes to be conducive to rebellions, including democratization, nondemocratic state–indigenous relations, state weakness, political illegitimacy, continued protests, and organizational strengths of indigenous peoples. Under these unfavorable conditions, indigenous Venezuelans and Ecuadorians still favored pacts.

Mexico: from protests to a rebellion

The agrarian period

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Mexican landowners, whose power positions were based on land as an abundant factor endowment, were cut off from external export markets. They thus lost power to coalitions of workers and capitalists (Rogowski, 1989: 74). On behalf of capital and labor forces, the Cárdenas administration formulated industrialization strategies that were predicated on breaking down feudal rural structures and redistributing lands.

In Chiapas, indigenous communities acquired official land titles. As Yashar (1998: 35) argues, 'many Indian communities regained title to land, and in Chiapas 54 percent of the land came to be held as *ejidos.*' The state also constructed corporatist ties with indigenous peoples. In 1938, it established the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC). In 1940, it established the National Indianist Institute (INI). The CNC and INI worked together to integrate indigenous peoples into the agricultural sector through indigenous rural development projects (Barmeyer, 2009: 25).

The oil boom

In 1972, the state-owned Pemex announced oil discoveries in the Chiapas-Tabasco area. The area, known as 'little Kuwait,' accounted for 35.4 percent of total national oil production by 1980 (Velasco, 1983: 68). The government also constructed two major hydroelectric power dams on the Grijalva River between the Guatemalan border and the Gulf of Mexico.

The oil economy offered higher wages than the agricultural sector. In 1977, the Pemex salary scale 'ranged from 214.91 pesos per day for level-one employees to 984.19 pesos per day for level-thirty-four employees, with an average of about 800 pesos per day, compared to 57 pesos per day for rural workers in Chiapas' (Randall, 1989: 92). Therefore, many indigenous peoples were attracted into the oil economy. In his study of an indigenous community in Chiapas, Cancian finds that while more than 90 percent of its adult men depended on corn farming in the 1960s, the figure declined to 30 percent by 1982. More importantly, another 30 percent were semiskilled laborers in construction, and another 30 percent were traders, skilled craftsmen, and government employees (Cancian, 1992: 23–26).

It should be noted that some indigenous peoples still worked on the land for agriculture and that not all indigenous peoples who entered the oil economy worked directly for the oil sector. An accurate account is that oil 'created many jobs outside of agriculture and offered many new opportunities, especially for Indian peasants from the highlands who gained entry to economic activities that had been ladino preserves' (Brown and Cancian, 1994). Besides oil drilling, these economic activities included construction, transportation, and masonry.

The Mexican government also strengthened its corporatist programs through oil revenues. In the 1970s, it launched two development projects in Chiapas: PIDER (Rural Development Public

Investment Program) and PRODESCH (Social and Economic Development Program for the Highlands of Chiapas). PIDER was a system that improved the distribution of food to the poor. PRODESCH addressed indigenous poverty by improving health, bilingual education, farming, and road construction (Velasco, 1983: 46).

Despite these oil-induced advantages, however, indigenous lands were invaded by oil companies. A 1977 amendment to the Regulatory Law of the Mexican Constitution's Article 27 gave Pemex the rights to drill for oil on farming land without permission from the affected parties (Global Exchange, 1996). According to some indigenous men, 'Pemex arrived and invaded our lands…..Today, this land is invaded by PEMEX pipelines' (Global Exchange, 1996). In addition, the hydroelectric power projects on the Grijalva River flooded hectares of farming land in order to build the dams (Brown and Cancian, 1994).

Therefore, indigenous protests began to emerge in Chiapas. In the late 1970s, northwest Chiapas saw numerous protests against Pemex. In 1978, the Chiapas *municipio* of Juárez demanded indemnification for the contamination of their lands. When oil wells encroached onto the *ejidos* of the Chiapas-Tabasco area, indigenous peoples started organizing to defend their lands (Global Exchange, 1996).

With help from the Catholic Church, indigenous peoples held the Indigenous Congress in 1974, which was the first indigenous meeting convened through a bottom-up process. The congress was a channel through which indigenous peoples voiced their concerns to the state. Immediately reacting to the congress, the Mexican government convened the National Congress of Indians in 1975 and announced land redistribution and other welfare programs (Stephen, 2002: 115–119). Afterwards, independent indigenous organizations began to emerge. According to Yashar (2005: 79), the Zapatista rebellion built on pre-existing social networks that emerged in the 1970s. For example, the Union of *Ejidal* Unions and United Peasant Groups of Chiapas (UU) was formed in 1980 to bring together smaller *ejidal* unions and producer groups that had been formed earlier.

The neoliberal period

To finance its oil industry, Mexico borrowed money from the world banking system. In the early 1980s, however, world oil prices plummeted, and Mexico found itself unable to service its debts. Therefore, Mexico moved forward with such neoliberal economic programs as drastic reductions in government spending, a tight monetary policy, and steep currency devaluations.

In Chiapas, extractive activities continued, but the government suspended many petroleum development projects and laid off thousands of construction workers. Some indigenous peoples remembered their foremen telling them that 'the President wants you to go back to farming' (Collier, 1994: 101). As Canby (1992: 216) observes, when the debt crisis erupted, many construction sites in Chiapas closed down, and many indigenous peoples who had turned to jobs outside of agriculture during the oil boom now lost oil-related incomes.

After returning to farming, however, indigenous peoples only held small plots of land. According to a 1990 official survey, 44.6 percent of *ejidatarios* in Chiapas possessed only between 0.1 and 4.0 hectares of land, and 42 percent had plots between 4.1 and 10 hectares. In the Altos region, the average size was only 2 hectares (Harvey, 1998: 7).

Worse yet, land redistribution and other welfare programs became meager. In 1992, the Salinas administration introduced a neoliberal agrarian program by amending Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution. The program terminated land redistribution, deregulated the agricultural economy, privatized state enterprises, eliminated agricultural subsidies, and opened free trade on agricultural products (Otero, 2003: 192–193).

Due to the state's retreat, indigenous peoples became increasingly rebellious. For example, Rolando, an indigenous man, took up construction work around the oil reserves in Chiapas during the oil boom. After the debt crisis, however, he could only get construction work at starvation

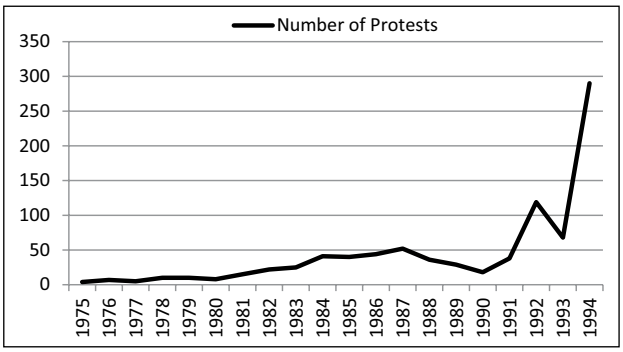

Figure 1. Indigenous protests in Chiapas, 1975–1994.
Source: Trejo (2002: 109).

wages. He then returned to his jungle hometown, but there was no land for him to farm. He thus joined the Zapatistas in 1986 (Collier, 1994: 104).

According to Trejo (2002), indigenous movements in Chiapas evolved from protests in the 1970s to guerrilla movements that began in the early 1980s. He also investigates the annual number of indigenous protests happening in Chiapas, as Figure 1 shows. The annual number of protests remained constant at less than 10 in the 1970s. Yet it increased dramatically after the early 1980s. Both the quality and quantity of indigenous protests show that indigenous peoples became increasingly militant in the neoliberal context. In the 1970s, oil extraction triggered indigenous protests, but oil-financed corporatist programs addressed indigenous concerns. Moreover, oil created jobs for indigenous peoples. In the 1980s, however, the world oil price drops trapped Mexico in a debt crisis and compelled it to implement neoliberal reforms. Moreover, indigenous peoples lost oil-related jobs. The Zapatistas thus rebelled in the neoliberal period.

Indigenous movements in Venezuela

Indigenous Venezuelans have criticized extractive activities for invading their lands, polluting their environments, and destroying their cultural traditions. Missing from the picture, however, is the fact that the oil economy has largely absorbed indigenous Venezuelans. Since foreign oil companies ventured into their territories around Lake Maracaibo, many indigenous Venezuelans have taken on wage labor for oil companies. About half the labor force that cuts the forests and detonates explosives for oil exploration is indigenous. Indigenous peoples work for oil companies voluntarily because they earn four times the wage they could earn on haciendas (Haller, 2007: 266).

While no data show the extent to which indigenous Venezuelans work directly for the oil sector, it is clear that they have been largely urbanized. According to the 1992 indigenous census, the Wayúu, making up more than half of the indigenous population, are concentrated in Zulia, an oil-rich state with the largest population among Venezuela's states. Moreover, half of the Wayúu live in Zulia's capital, Maracaibo, the second most populous city in Venezuela (quoted in Van Cott, 2005: 182). As the Minority at Risk (MAR) project observes, the Wayúu are highly assimilated and have adapted to the modern economy (MAR, 2006). According to Colchester's estimate, 42 percent of indigenous Venezuelans live in cities or urban agglomerations (quoted in Haller, 2007: 246).

How did indigenous urbanization affect indigenous movements in the context of neoliberalism? In 1989, President Carlos Andrés Pérez embarked on neoliberal reforms because Venezuela's oil revenues declined sharply in the 1980s. The neoliberal reforms, however, provoked massive protests and two failed coups in 1992 and plunged Venezuela into crises of legitimacy and governance.

When neoliberal reforms proceeded, the Venezuelan government was rarely responsive to indigenous concerns. For example, in order to implement Article 77 of the 1961 Constitution,[2] Venezuela in the late 1980s proposed the Law of Indigenous Communities, Peoples, and Cultures. However, this proposal was ignored throughout the 1990s (Van Cott, 2003: 51). According to a human rights report released by the American government in 1996, Venezuela did not properly enforce laws that could protect indigenous rights. It also noted that indigenous peoples possessed no influence in relation to decisions that could affect the allocation of lands and natural resources (quoted in MAR, 2010a).

Without state responsiveness, indigenous Venezuelans engaged in mass mobilizations and protests. They first participated in the 1989 Caracazo riots, which radically protested against neoliberalism. Afterwards, they persistently conducted protests in the form of road and street blockades (Lopez-Maya, 2002: 213). Unlike their Mexican counterparts, however, indigenous protests in Venezuela never transformed into rebellions. On the contrary, indigenous Venezuelans formed various organizations. Shortly after the Caracazo riots, they founded the first national indigenous organization, the *Consejo Nacional Indio de Venezuela* (CONIVE). In 1993, another indigenous organization, the *Organización Regional de Pueblos Indígenas del Amazonas* (ORPIA), was founded. In 1997, the ORPIA became a political party and participated in electoral politics (Van Cott, 2005: 45).

These indigenous organizations became the institutional channels through which indigenous peoples sought to negotiate with the Venezuelan government. In August 1992, indigenous peoples appealed to Congress to correct a proposed constitutional amendment that called for their incorporation into Venezuela's national life. In September, they held the Hemispheric Congress of the American Indians in Caracas and argued that the Constitution should be reformed to protect their land rights. In July 1996, the first nationwide meeting of indigenous Venezuelan women took place in Caracas, and participants vowed to fight against any state attempts to acculturate indigenous peoples (MAR, 2010a).

In this respect, indigenous movements in Venezuela stood in contrast to their Mexican counterparts. As mentioned above, the Mexican oil boom witnessed two indigenous congresses (the 1974 Indigenous Congress and the 1975 National Congress of Indians) through which indigenous peoples held dialogues with the state. In the neoliberal period, however, indigenous peoples lost oil-related jobs and therefore became militant without continuing negotiations with the state. Some indigenous organizations even transformed into radical guerrilla organizations on which the Zapatista rebellion was built. In Venezuela, by contrast, the level of indigenous urbanization was high, and indigenous peoples continued to convene indigenous congresses in the neoliberal period as a forum in which they voiced their concerns to the Venezuelan state. In addition, the ORPIA transformed into a political party, a form of indigenous organization that was absent in Mexico.

One might wonder why indigenous Venezuelans did not return to farming in the neoliberal period, as indigenous peoples in Chiapas did. The reason was largely because agriculture had declined in oil-rich Venezuela. As Karl (1987: 68) argues, 'Because petrodollars provided easier ways to keep the economy alive, few major efforts were made to revive the agricultural sector.' Of course, Venezuela implemented an agrarian reform in 1960. However, indigenous Venezuelans did not benefit from land redistribution. Such protected zones as national parks, forest reserves, and natural monuments were not subject to the agrarian reform. Therefore, indigenous peoples who had lived in these protected zones did not obtain land titles (Haller, 2007: 242). In this respect, while oil had created an urban-indigenous class, the Venezuelan state never turned indigenous peoples into peasants.

Venezuela's neoliberal reforms ended after the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998. This politico-economic change made pacted ethnic politics possible. In 1999, most indigenous Venezuelans were allied with Chávez's Patriotic Pole coalition in order to reform the Constitution. In March, CONIVE received state support for the first time when the Office of Indigenous Affairs provided funds to help CONIVE convene indigenous congresses. When the Constituent Assembly was

convened in August, indigenous peoples joined it with three seats. The resulting new Constitution declared Venezuela a 'multiethnic and pluricultural state' and included a chapter on 'Rights of the Indigenous Peoples' (Van Cott, 2003). Of course, these constitutional rights were symbolic and required further legislation and enforcement.

As a final note, the indigenous population accounts for 12 and 2 percent of the total population in Mexico and Venezuela, respectively (Van Cott, 2001: 52). One might attribute the absence of rebellions in Venezuela to its minuscule indigenous population. However, indigenous Venezuelans succeeded in codifying their constitutional rights. This raises a question: What can be defined as 'success' for indigenous movements? Does a rebellion represent success? One may reasonably argue that indigenous movements in Venezuela have borne more desired fruits than the Zapatista rebellion. If indigenous peoples can secure constitutional rights through constitutional reforms, what remains worth rebelling for? Therefore, a small indigenous population size does not mean that indigenous peoples cannot achieve any goals.[3]

Indigenous movements in Ecuador

In the Ecuadorian Amazon, sizable oil reserves were discovered in Napo and Sucumbíos in 1967. In turn, indigenous peoples have formed various organizations in defense of their land rights. In 1973, they formed the *Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas de Napo* (FOIN). When oil companies entered the province of Pastaza, indigenous peoples formed the *Organización de Pueblos Indígenas de Pastaza* (OPIP). In 1979, FOIN and OPIP merged into CONFENIAE, the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana* (MAR, 2010b).

Oil, however, has also created jobs for indigenous peoples. Extractive activities have reshaped rainforest landscapes with oil wells, pumping stations, oil refinery facilities, and other infrastructure essential for oil operations. Therefore, indigenous peoples have worked for oil companies or taken on such oil-related jobs as construction and transportation. As Sawyer (1996) observes, oil wealth has divided indigenous communities into two groups. While one group opposes oil operations, the other supports oil operations because it has acquired jobs and other economic benefits from oil companies.

The Ecuadorian Amazon remains a rainforest region without high levels of urbanization. However, oil-led economic activities have caused the migration of indigenous peoples to predominantly *mestizo* highland cities and towns. A network of roads constructed as infrastructure for oil operations has made incursions into the Amazon and ended its relative isolation. Roads, while facilitating the intrusion of colonizers into the Amazon, have helped indigenous peoples migrate to urban areas for better job opportunities (Sawyer, 2004: 100). The roads that Ecuador has built into Napo and Sucumbíos have boosted indigenous migration to the neighboring province of Pichincha and its capital, Quito. As Van Cott (2005: 101) observes, 'a large number [of indigenous peoples] have migrated to urban areas, particularly around Quito.' Therefore, oil has produced indigenous urbanization through the construction of roads linked to urban areas.

The Ecuadorian state never turns indigenous peoples into peasants. In 1964 and 1971, the populist military governments did introduce land reform programs. However, the state modified the programs in 1974 and 1979 in line with landlords' demands. By 1980, '68.4% of Indians had gained access to only 8.9% of land surface' (Handelman, 1980: 11). As in Venezuela, an indigenous-peasant class never emerged in Ecuador. Moreover, the land reform programs ended in the early 1980s when the newly elected civilian administrations introduced neoliberal reforms. During the presidencies of Osvaldo Hurtado and León Febres Cordero, a debt crisis erupted because Ecuador's oil revenues declined. Therefore, Ecuador introduced neoliberal reforms to deal with its economic crises.

During the neoliberal period, indigenous organizing became more extensive. In 1980, CONFENIAE and *Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui* (ECUARUNARI), which was formed in 1972 in the

highlands, merged into a national coordinating body called the *Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de Nacionalidades Indígenas* (CONACNIE). In 1986, CONACNIE was renamed CONAIE, the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*. A 2000 World Bank report stated that indigenous Ecuadorians were 'extremely well organized' (quoted in Van Nieuwkoop and Uquillas, 2000: 6).

While the Zapatistas rebelled at the time of democratic transition and neoliberal reform, indigenous Ecuadorians entered electoral politics in the same politico-economic context. In the 1980s, indigenous leaders ran as candidates in alliances with leftist and center-left parties. Moreover, CONAIE became a party in 1996. In the 1996 national elections, CONAIE won eight of the total 82 seats in the Congress. Between December 1997 and May 1998, CONAIE participated in the National Constituent Assembly with 10 seats. The resulting 1998 Constitution declared Ecuador a plurinational state and contained a chapter on indigenous rights, including indigenous languages and customary law recognized as official in indigenous-populated areas (MAR, 2010b).

Of course, some indigenous peoples attacked neoliberalism through social movement mobilizations. In 1990, CONAIE called a 10-day mobilization to resist President Rodrigo Borja's neoliberal programs. Indigenous peoples blocked roads, cut off transportation, and occupied government buildings. In the Amazon, indigenous peoples occupied oil wells and halted oil productions. CONAIE also called for negotiations with Borja and proposed a 16-point petition, including legalizing collectively owned lands, providing funds for bilingual education, and amending the Constitution to declare Ecuador a plurinational state. Borja did not agree to all of the demands, but indigenous peoples ended their protests after Borja agreed to establish bilingual education and grant lands to indigenous peoples (MAR, 2010b).

During the neoliberal period, however, the Ecuadorian state was never sincerely responsive to indigenous demands. In 1994, President Sixto Durán Ballén proposed a neoliberal agrarian program that aimed to privatize land ownership. In response, CONAIE mounted two-week protests. In particular, CONAIE demanded one percent of national oil revenues and the revocation of unused oil concessions in indigenous lands. After bilateral negotiations, the state conceded less than what indigenous peoples demanded, but CONAIE ended the protests (MAR, 2010b).

In 1997, however, President Abdala Bucaram proposed economic austerity plans. In response, CONAIE mounted massive protests that brought down Bucaram. Despite state weakness and regime collapse, CONAIE never rebelled; instead, it demanded the convocation of the 1997–1998 Constituent Assembly and took part in drafting the 1998 Constitution. However, the following administrations still pushed hard for neoliberalism. In 2000, President Jamil Mahuad pushed for the dollarization of the economy, and therefore CONAIE mobilized protests that ousted him. In 2002, CONAIE helped elect President Lucio Gutiérrez and garnered five seats in his cabinet. However, the governing alliance ended in 2003 when Gutiérrez proposed a free trade agreement with the United States. In 2005, CONAIE was responsible for protests leading to the ouster of Gutiérrez (MAR, 2010b).

In sum, indigenous Ecuadorians never escalated their protests to rebellions. Although the Ecuadorian state sometimes made concessions to indigenous peoples, it continued to seek neoliberal reforms regardless of indigenous concerns. In response, indigenous peoples conducted massive protests. Despite the politico-economic chaos, however, indigenous peoples represented a *political* rather than revolutionary force because they sought negotiations with the state, organized political parties, participated in the constitutional reform, and took cabinet positions.

Indigenous movements in Peru and Colombia

In Peru, 'twice as many Peruvian Indians now live in cities as in rural communities' (Brysk and Wise, 1997: 92). The Peruvian civil war was partly responsible for indigenous urbanization. In the 1980s, Sendero Luminoso and the Tupak Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) organized

guerilla movements.[4] As a result, many indigenous Peruvians migrated from war-torn areas to cities (Brysk and Wise, 1997: 92).

Another contributing factor to indigenous urbanization is oil. In the Peruvian Amazon, oil production increased significantly after the 1960s when large oil reserves were discovered. In the 1970s, Peru constructed the 856-kilometer-long North Peruvian Pipeline. After the end of the civil war, Peru endeavored to increase its oil production by introducing neoliberal policies that privatized the national oil industry. By 1996, some 13.6 million hectares of land had been used for extractive activities (Haller, 2007: 388). As a result, many indigenous Peruvians have worked for oil companies or migrated to cities for better job opportunities. As Webster (2004) argues when observing an indigenous Peruvian group, 'oil company influences have lured the Achuar out of the forest….one group of Achuar sees benefits that the company may bring—including possible employment.' In this respect, oil has played a role in urbanizing indigenous Peruvians.

Indigenous lands, however, have been invaded by oil companies. Therefore, indigenous communities have become organized. In 1979, they founded the *Coordinadora de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva*, which was renamed the *Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana* (AIDESEP) in 1980. In 1987, the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Amazónicas del Perú* (CONAP) was also established (Yashar, 2005: 251).

Besides oil-caused land conflicts, other factors that might be conducive to rebellions were present in the 1980s and 1990s. First, Peru returned to democracy in 1979. Second, Peru's 'democracy' became symbolic after Peru declared states of emergency in many provinces during the civil war. Moreover, President Alberto Fujimori installed a military-backed civilian dictatorship. Therefore, indigenous demands were usually ignored. Third, Peru began neoliberal reforms in the early 1980s. In particular, Fujimori implemented more extensive neoliberal policies. However, indigenous peoples never rebelled in the politico-economic hard time.[5]

Instead, indigenous peoples entered electoral politics, thanks to democratization. Before Fujimori dismantled regional governments, indigenous mayors and municipal councilors had been elected in 78 predominantly indigenous districts (Van Cott, 2005: 160). Indigenous peoples also advocated their constitutional rights. During the Fujimori-dominated 1993 constitutional reform, they proposed a 19-point petition. However, they were excluded from the Constituent Assembly, and only two of the 19 proposals were included in the 1993 Constitution: symbolic recognition of Peru as multiethnic and the right to practice customary law. The most devastating blow to indigenous peoples was the privatization and commercialization of communal lands (Van Cott, 2005: 164).

Of course, indigenous peoples criticized the 1993 Constitution. However, they still attempted to negotiate with the state. Despite the authoritarian political climate, AIDESEP and CONAP urged the Fujimori administration to pass a law that would recognize indigenous peoples as indigenous communities and as citizens of Peru. After bilateral negotiations, the Fujimori administration signed several 'compacts' that rhetorically acknowledged indigenous peoples' collective rights and equal opportunities for political participation. In 1998, AIDESEP became a political party in order to enhance its institutional capabilities (Yashar, 2005: 266).

The last case examined here is Colombia. Approximately 40–45 percent of indigenous Colombians live in cities.[6] As in Peru, the Colombian civil war and oil have jointly contributed to indigenous urbanization. First, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the M-19 engaged in guerrilla movements after the 1960s.[7] As a result, indigenous peoples were forced to migrate to cities. Second, oil exploitation began in Colombia in the 1910s. Although Colombia accounted for a small portion of the world oil production, vast oil reserves were discovered in the 1980s. Since 1996, oil has been the leading export commodity in Colombia. Because the oil economy has become increasingly important, it has offered indigenous peoples jobs or attracted them out of the forest (Haller, 2007: 427–443).

In 1980, several indigenous organizations convened a national meeting and expressed their opposition to an indigenous law that aimed to minimize indigenous self-government and privatize communal lands. In 1982, the First National Indigenous Congress was held in Bogotá. Afterwards, indigenous peoples founded the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC). Although Colombian politics had been dominated by the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, ONIC leaders cooperated with the two parties in regional and national elections in the 1980s. Before the 1990 Constituent Assembly, indigenous peoples demanded reserved seats for them. However, their demand was denied by the Colombian government. Afterwards, ONIC transformed into a political party and acquired two seats by participating in elections for the Constituent Assembly. Through alliances with the newly demobilized M-19, indigenous peoples secured an extensive set of indigenous rights in the 1991 Constitution, including the inviolability of communal lands and the protection of indigenous traditions from oil exploitation (Van Cott, 2005: 180–196).

In Latin America, Brazil and Argentina are also oil-producing countries. However, they are not examined here because oil has fewer impacts on indigenous communities. In Brazil, the vast majority of proven oil reserves are located at the Campos and Santos offshore basins on the southeast coast. Therefore, oil exploitation has neither invaded indigenous lands nor created jobs for indigenous peoples. In Argentina, oil production has been low, and there is no evidence that oil has affected the minuscule indigenous population.

This article also excludes non-oil-producing countries where indigenous peoples have to some extent been urbanized and adopted a conciliatory approach. Nor does it discuss indigenous rebellions in non-oil-producing countries such as Guatemala and Nicaragua. Although these cases are of interest to scholars of ethnic politics or conflict, they cannot help us revisit resource curse theory.

Finally, one may argue that this article suffers from a case selection bias because it has only one case of violence as opposed to four cases of peace. In particular, indigenous urbanization in Peru and Colombia can only partly be attributed to oil. However, this critique actually shows the power of my argument—oil does not necessarily trigger ethnic rebellions. The more cases of peace exist in oil-producing countries, the more likely researchers are to revisit resource curse theory. Even in oil-producing countries such as Peru and Colombia, rebellions are not inevitable.

Conclusion

In Latin America, indigenous peoples are less likely to rebel and more likely to pursue pacted ethnic politics if oil has urbanized them. A puzzle, then, is what sets Latin America apart from other regions? There are two explanations. Firstly, whereas the British and the French established a colonial mode of indirect rule in Africa that was predicated on customary tribal authorities (Mamdani, 1996), many Latin American states enacted colonial policies that installed a 'corporatist citizenship regime' as a way to incorporate indigenous peoples into the 'nation-state' (Yashar, 2005). Because corporatism originated from Catholic-organicism, it was prevalent in Latin American countries influenced by Catholicism (Schmitter, 1974). According to Zhang (1994), corporatist regimes provide the institutional conditions for pact-making, particularly when they have created forums in which various actors negotiate and compromise. Before Latin American countries embarked on neoliberal reforms, ethno-corporatism had left a legacy of negotiations and compromises. As an indigenous leader said, indigenous communities had been 'living in a period of laws. To defend our rights, we need to fight with words' (quoted in Yashar, 2005: 265). Due to the ethno-corporatist legacy, indigenous peoples tend to negotiate with the state and abide by laws or institutions, even during the period of neoliberal reform. Therefore, the impact of oil on the possibility of rebellions cannot be understood apart from the ethno-institutional contexts in which oil is exploited. In oil-producing countries with ethno-corporatist traditions, the oil-causes-rebellions curse is less likely to occur.

The second explanation focuses on diffusion effects. In Latin America, 'transnational advocacy networks' (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) established by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Catholic Church have played a role in connecting indigenous communities across borders. They have distributed information concerning the achievements of indigenous movements within the region. They have also sponsored international conferences for indigenous peoples in Latin American to meet. After indigenous Colombians codified their constitutional rights in 1991, this achievement encouraged indigenous peoples in Ecuador and Venezuela to follow the same route. Indigenous Peruvians are also aware of the constitutional reforms in Ecuador and Venezuela. The Ecuadorian and Venezuelan cases have inspired indigenous Peruvians to assert their constitutional rights (Van Cott, 2005: 172–179).

Due to the ethno-corporatist traditions and diffusion effects, Latin America is more likely to escape the oil-causes-rebellions curse. These two regional factors may mitigate the risk of rebellions, especially when oil has urbanized indigenous peoples. Therefore, the curse should be understood as a context-sensitive rather than universal phenomenon. Of course, this does not mean that these two regional factors should be granted analytical priority over oil-led urbanization, or lack thereof. When indigenous peoples remain under-urbanized, these two factors are likely to cease to function and give way to a last, rebellious resort, as happened in Mexico.

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Notes

1. The oil industry usually requires large capital investments and highly skilled labor. If ethnic minorities are unskilled workers, they are unlikely to work directly for the oil sector. However, they may take on jobs created by the oil economy, including construction and transportation.
2. The article stipulated that the state should establish the special system required for the protection of indigenous communities and their progressive incorporation into national life.
3. According to Fearon and Laitin (2003: 80), 'the presence of rough terrain, poorly served by roads, at a distance from the centers of state power, should favor insurgency.' However, because geographic conditions are a constant factor, a dynamic approach to the study of rebellions should examine why indigenous peoples move to frontier areas. When indigenous peoples in Chiapas lost oil-related jobs, they moved to jungles and rebelled. In Venezuela, by contrast, there are jungles and rainforests, but oil has driven half of the indigenous population to urban areas. Therefore, geographic conditions are not sufficient to explain the possibility of rebellions.
4. Sendero Luminoso and MRTA were not indigenous rebellions. Although they recruited some indigenous peoples, they were primarily composed of leftists and Maoists who mobilized along class lines at the expense of indigenous interests (Cleary, 2000: 1126–1127).
5. Admittedly, weak indigenous networks in Peru were unfavorable to mobilizations. Due to the Peruvian civil war, indigenous Peruvians did not develop strong trans-community networks until the late 1990s.
6. Data are provided by the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC).
7. The Colombian civil war was not an indigenous rebellion. Of course, some indigenous peoples joined the M-19, and others organized the Quintin Lame Armed Movement. However, most rebels in the civil war were leftists, and the Quintin Lame was a self-defense, rather than anti-government, organization. Moreover, the M-19 and the Quintin Lame demobilized after 1990 and became political parties.

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