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## Indians & politics in Latin America- after Evo Morales

**Just over a year and a half after Evo Morales became Latin America's first indigenous president, the tidal wave of growing indigenous assertiveness throughout the region is beginning to look slightly different. Many indigenous leaders, even in countries with indigenous majorities, are becoming more aware of the need to adopt inclusive political stances - with so-called ethnopolitism emerging as a risky option. Awareness is also growing that dual-system proposals can be just as prone to partisan manipulation as the 'partidocracia' so reviled by indigenous ideologies.**

Ethnopolitism is hardly a new notion; it has been around since the 1960s and in Latin America has been applied to the Duvalier régime in Haiti and indigenous movements in Nicaragua under the Sandinistas. However, Raúl Madrid of the University of Texas has recently revived it as a tool for understanding what is happening in Latin America.

He argues that Evo Morales represents an ethnopolitist rather than purely indigenous approach to politics: Bolivia's political experience showed that exclusive ethnic appeals were insufficient to attract a broad enough support base. Hence, he blended it with elements from the 'populist' arsenal: nationalism, statism, denunciation of existing political élites and institutions at home, and imperialism abroad. It worked: most of those who voted for Morales in 2005 identify themselves as mestizo rather than indigenous (pages 3-4).

Seen in this light, Ollanta Humala's first-round win in Peru's last presidential elections can also be seen as an ethnopolitist success. So too then, was Lucio Gutiérrez's election to the presidency of Ecuador, a venture which collapsed when Gutiérrez turned his back on both the populist and the ethnic components of his campaigning stance. This experience may prove to have been a turning point for Ecuador's indigenous movement, inasmuch as it appears to have adopted a more explicitly inclusive stance in its social campaigning (pages 5-6) - and did not display the enthusiasm of yore to the distinctly ethnopolitist campaign which took Rafael Correa to the presidency.

In Peru, the leader of the coca growers, Nelson Palomino, has claimed initial successes with his new 'indigenous' party, Kuska Perú, and has declared his intent to emulate Evo Morales's ascent to the presidency - but has already made it clear that his appeal will be inclusive (pages 7-8). This suggests awareness of a feature of Peruvian society which Ladislao Landa has been underlining: that the indigenous people tend to put their identity as peasants before their ethnicity.

Guatemala is also witnessing a presidential bid by an indigenous leader, Nobel Peace Prize holder Rigoberta Menchú. She has created an indigenous

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party, Winaq, which is explicitly inclusive, and is conducting her presidential campaign in alliance with a left-of-centre ladino (mestizo) party, Encuentro por Guatemala (EG), and her running-mate is a prominent business leader (pages 9-10).

More radical ethnic approaches are still present, however. They are dominant in indigenous politics in Chile (pages 10-11), partly reflecting the fact that the indigenous population is highly concentrated in one region, partly as a political response to the Bachelet government's initiatives regarding recognition of the status and rights of indigenous peoples, which are portrayed as coming from above rather than representing the true wishes of the Indians.

They are also present in the attempt by a number of indigenous organisations to set up a body to coordinate their actions throughout the Andean region, the Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas - which includes representatives from Chile and Argentina but, surprisingly given the group's political stance, not from Venezuela (pages 15-16). Their inaugural declaration rejects the nation state as a tool of neocolonialism, and embraces the spreading mood which rejects 'indigenism' as representing the paternalism of the non-indigenous, in favour of 'indianism', meaning the policies proposed by the indigenous peoples themselves.

A less visible trend has arisen from the reassessment of last year's five-month-long uprising in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, in the light of the fact that this is the country's most indigenous state and, since the late 1990s, the only one in which a majority of municipalities are ruled by traditional indigenous "uses and customs" - one of the key planks of indigenous platforms throughout the region.

The picture that is emerging is that these municipalities are proving about as vulnerable to party-political manipulation as those run under régimes of political competition between parties, and that the aforementioned traditional "uses and customs" do not ensure equal treatment for all citizens (pages 13-14). This provides a new focus for this year's renewal of authorities in Oaxaca's indigenous municipalities.

#### Politically weightiest indigenous populations Ranked by % of total population

Country	000 Indians	% of population
Mexico	12,000	14.1*
Peru	9,300	46.5
Bolivia	5,600	81.2
Guatemala	5,300	66.2
Ecuador	4,100	43.2
Argentina	1,000	3.1*
Chile	998	10.3*
Colombia	744	2.2*

*\*High regional concentrations of indigenous population.*

Note: Argentina included because of the Mapuche connection (pages 11-12, 15-16), Colombia because of the Andean connection (pages 15-16).

**Sources:** Estimates based, for most countries, on data from the early 1990s used by the IDB, PAHO and Eclac; and late 1990s-2000 for Chile. Percentages of population based on population at the time data was compiled.

## Test of indigenous content coming for Evo

**The test of the indigenous nature of Evo Morales's administration is not likely to come until after the constituent assembly wraps up its business without having approved the most controversial proposals of the indigenous organisations. Morales has said that he will put such proposals directly to the electorate in a referendum - but will have to keep in mind that the key to his political success has been his ability to attract the vote of the non-indigenous population, which the more radical indigenous leaders have never managed to do.**

When he was devising the constituent assembly, Morales stated that he would like to see indigenous representation of "60% to 70%". However, he ruled out establishing an indigenous quota, just as he did with demands for corporate quotas for unions and social organisations.

The message was that indigenous demands would have to be channelled through the ruling party, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). This approach did not go down well with the indigenous organisations, in particular the electorally weaker ones like the Confederación de Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano (Cidob), which represents the less populous ethnic groups of the eastern lowlands.

One of the most controversial proposals of the Pacto de Unidad, the alliance of indigenous organisations taken under the wing of the MAS, is the redrawing of Bolivia's administrative boundaries to incorporate autonomous indigenous territories.

This runs opposite the demand for departmental autonomy from Bolivia's richest departments. It poses a considerable problem, as there are 36 recognised ethnic groups demanding territorial autonomy, and as illustrated by the experience of Colombia and Brazil, the size of the territories demanded tends to be disproportional to the size of the ethnic group (on account of the requirements of small hunter-gatherer peoples).

There is more. Félix Patsi, the former education minister who many consider the ideologue of the Pacto de Unidad, says the full proposal is to establish the coexistence of two systems in Bolivia, a liberal one and a communitarian one - the latter one formed by the autonomous indigenous territories.

The opposition is almost unanimously against this scheme, which means that it is highly unlikely to attract the two-thirds majority needed for

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**Ethnic self-identification of voters  
2005 presidential elections, % of voters per party**

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>MAS</i>	<i>MNR</i>	<i>Podemos</i>	<i>UN</i>
Mestizo/cholo	61.3	50.7	68.7	70.8
Indigenous/originary	27.2	22.5	9.2	12.2
White	6.8	20.8	19.0	16.9
Black	0.9	0.9	0.3	0.1
None	3.8	5.1	2.8	-
% of total vote	53.7	6.5	28.6	7.8

*Source: LAPOP.*

“ It has been suggested that his appeal to the non-Aymara comes from the fact that many see Morales as typical of the internal migrant and of a man who built his career within the sindicalista tradition that remains a strong identifying feature of Indians and mestizos. ”

approval by the constituent assembly. The scheme also worries the armed forces, traditionally in favour of centralist government (almost as much as they are worried by the autonomy proposals of the eastern business elites).

The extent to which Morales and the MAS have relied on the non-indigenous vote is illustrated by a survey conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (Lapop) into the ethnic self-identification of those who voted in the 2005 general elections.

Of those who voted for the MAS, 27.2% identified themselves as indigenous or 'originary', but more than twice as many, 61.3%, described themselves as mestizo or cholo.

This latter proportion is not much lower than that declared by those who voted for the runner-up party, Podemos (68.7%) - of whom only 9.2% identified themselves as indigenous.

The party with the second-largest proportion of indigenous voters (22.5%) was the much-diminished Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR).

To put this into perspective, the MAS attracted overall 53.7% of the vote, not much less than twice those for Podemos, and more than eight times those for the MNR. A word of caution: even after the rise in indigenous assertiveness, most Bolivians prefer to identify themselves as mestizo (65% in a Lapop survey of 2002, versus 11% calling themselves indigenous).

Morales, an Aymara, is undoubtedly indigenous, and he plays to the indigenous constituency by wearing indigenous garb and addressing them in Aymara or Quechua (though he prefers to speak in Spanish).

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His pursuit of the non-indigenous voter was deliberate, and demanded his going beyond his original powerbase among the coca growers and the political base provided by the Cochabamba local governments.

He cultivated unions and social organisations elsewhere in the country, and sought out non-indigenous candidates to accompany him. In the 2002 elections, when he came a close second in the presidential contest, almost half the MAS candidates who won seats in congress were non-indigenous.

This pattern was roughly replicated in 2005 and in the elections for the constituent assembly.

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>%</i>
Quechua	36.4	Mojeño	2.9
Aymara	24.2	Guaraní	2.6
Chiquitano	3.7	Other native	1.9

**Source: INE.**

### Indigenous movement seems to be changing course

**President Rafael Correa, presenting himself as a champion of indigenous aspirations, was elected with the support of a large number of Ecuador's indigenous voters. In stark contrast, the candidate supported by the umbrella indigenous organisation, Luis Macas, attracted a mere 2% of the vote. This has started to raise the question of whether the indigenous movement is already past its peak as a political force in its own right.**

"This electoral performance can be judged from two different angles. The view of officialdom, based on the 2001 census, is that the Ecuadorean indigenous population of 830,418 represents just under 7% of the population. This would suggest over-representation at the national level. Conaie claims that they account for 45% of the population, which would make indigenous representation still very low. Estimates of the indigenous population, based on differing criteria, vary quite considerably even within this range."

The rise of Ecuador's indigenous movement is no less than spectacular. By resorting to the levantamiento (literally 'uprising', usually a bid to paralyse the country by blockading highways and peacefully occupying cities), they did much to change the status of an important segment of Ecuadorean society - which as recently as the 1970s lived in near-serfdom under the hacienda system and were also denied the vote. Major uprisings were staged in June-July 1990, June 1994, February 1997, June 1999, January 2000, and January 2001. On two of these occasions the uprisings were instrumental in the ousting of elected presidents: Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, Jamil Mahuad in 2000.

On the latter occasion, the levantamiento turned into a coup staged with the support of part of the army, and a representative of the indigenous movement became a member of a shortlived ruling triumvirate. Apart from that, the achievements of indigenous militancy were remarkable. The constitution was amended in 1998 to declare Ecuador a pluricultural and multi-ethnic society, and impose upon the state the obligation to consult the indigenous communities on decisions affecting their territories.

Indigenous juridical systems and procedures were recognised. A bar was imposed on selling, breaking up or placing embargos on communally-held land. The government handed over more than 1m hectares of land to the Amazonian indigenous communities. Agencies were created to devise and implement policies targeting the indigenous peoples (rural development, healthcare, bilingual education).

In the political arena, the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Conaie), the umbrella indigenous body, gave birth to a party, Pachakutik, which in the 1996 elections won 10% of the seats in congress. By 2000 it had won five of the country's 22 provincial prefecturas (governorships) and 36 of its 225 municipal governments. Two years later, in alliance with the Partido Sociedad Patriótica, which is the party of retired Lieutenant-Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez and their partner in the 2000 coup who later handed power back to his military superiors, Pachakutik became part of an elected government.

Indigenous leaders were entrusted with the ministries of foreign relations and agriculture, as well as a number of lower-ranking posts in the executive. This experience lasted only six months: after President Gutiérrez jettisoned the policies he had agreed with Pachakutik, Conaie ordered the indigenous party to withdraw from the government.

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in charge of bilingual education, calculates the membership of the largest ethnic group, the Quichua (or Kichwa) at 3.9m, while the World Bank-backed development programme, Prodepine, estimates it at only 1.1m.

Conaie leaders blamed Pachakutik for having compromised the reputation of the indigenous movement for the sake of hanging on to their government posts, but despite moving into opposition held back from making Gutiérrez the target of a levantamiento such as those that had precipitated the ouster of Bucaram and Mahuad. The indigenous movement was conspicuously absent from the groundswell of protest which led to the toppling of Gutiérrez in 2005.

#### Watershed?

Ladislao Landa, a scholar who has studied Andean indigenous movements in depth, sees this moment as a watershed, after which the indigenous movement retreats from the leading role it had played in the pursuit of indigenous social demands. He notes three factors converging to produce this result. One is the perception that Conaie's prestige had been dented by its association with the Gutiérrez government (Pachakutik's share of seats in congress has fallen to 6%).

The second is that the World Bank's development schemes, ostensibly designed to benefit the indigenous population, had ended up by dividing Ecuador's peasantry along ethnic lines. Moreover, he speaks of 'Kafkian' situations in which people sharing a fairly small area are divided into those who are entitled to the indigenous development scheme and those entitled to the non-indigenous one.

The third factor, he says, is that recent actions of the Ecuadorean indigenous organisations suggest that they are seeking to broaden the range of their demands so as to incorporate those of other social sectors. "In this manner," he says, "they have been substantially changing the content of their struggle [...] The discourse of differentiation has been exhausted, giving way to a diversification of actors sharing their struggles for broader demands."

If this observation is accurate, then the course of events in Ecuador would fit in with the picture painted by Raúl Madrid of the University of Texas, of the rise of 'ethno-populism', which he attributes to the ability of some parties and political leaders “to combine traditional populist rhetoric and platforms with an inclusive ethnic appeal.” When he wrote a paper on his subject for the 2006 meeting of the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia, Rafael Correa had not yet won the Ecuadorean presidential elections.

#### Ecuador's main indigenous peoples Members (in 000) and main habitat

Peoples	000 members	Region
Quichua	3,070.0	-
-	3,000.0	Highlands
-	70.0	Amazonian lowlands
Huaorani	152.0	Amazonian lowlands
Shuar	110.0	Amazonian lowlands
Chachi	4.0	Pacific coast
Tsáchila/Colorados	2.0	Pacific coast
Awá	1.6	Pacific coast
Cofán/A'i	1.3	Amazonian lowlands
Siona-Secoya	1.0	Amazonian lowlands

**Source:** Top-of-the-range estimates from various sources. Overall estimates run from 830,418 (official 2001 census) to Conaie's implicit 4.9m. The membership of the Quichua (Kichwa), the largest ethnic group, has been put at 3.9m by the government's Dirección Intercultural Bilingüe, and 1.1m by the Proyecto de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Afroecuatorianos (PRODEPINE), a development scheme backed by IFAD which was conducted between 2002 and 2004.

## Is this the new Evo Morales?

**Kuska Perú ('Together for Peru' in Quechua), the indigenous party created in 2006 by the leader of Peru's coca growers, Nelson Palomino, fared better than expected in the November municipal elections, and is now setting its sights on the 2011 presidential elections. However, it remains unclear whether indigenous identity alone is enough of a force to make an impact on the national scene. Another indigenous party has since appeared, with a far more radical agenda, which envisages no future for the indigenous peoples within the present political system.**

“Palomino is an open admirer of Bolivia's Evo Morales. Like him he has sought intellectual support from leftwing politicians. The Trotskyist former congressman Enrique Fernández Chacón (leader of Uníos en Lucha, a member organisation of the Unidad Internacional de los Trabajadores, UIT-CI), has recently become Kuska Perú's secretary-general. Unlike Morales, Palomino's control of the cocalero movement is seriously threatened.”

Palomino, leader of the Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras del Perú (Conpacpp), the umbrella organisation of Peru's coca growers, was released on parole in June 2006, after having served one third of a 10-year sentence for extolling terrorism and kidnapping. On regaining his freedom he founded Kuska Perú, ostensibly as an indigenous party, predicting that it would "reclaim" the votes which it "lost" to the nationalist candidate Ollanta Humala in the presidential elections.

Three months before his release, Palomino's coca-growers' organisation, Conpacpp, was billed as the leading presence in an indigenous congress in Huamanga which announced the launch of the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Perú (Conaip) and its political 'instrument', the Movimiento Plurinacional Pachacuti (MPP). The driving force behind Conaip was Javier Lajo Lazo, who had been promoting indigenous congresses since 1997. Like Lajo's previous attempts, the MPP did not get off the ground.

Palomino failed in a bid to get two other leaders of the coca growers, Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida, to break away from Humala's Partido Nacionalista-Unión por el Perú (PN-UPP) bloc, under whose banner they had been elected to seats in congress and the Andean parliament. He did succeed, however, in recovering his leading position in Conpacpp, and using it to organise his party's first electoral venture, in the November regional and municipal elections.

Kuska Perú struck an alliance with Tarpuy, a political group based in Huanta and led by Edwin Bustíos Saavedra, which under the name Qatun Tarpuy contested the elections in a number of municipalities in the Apurímac-Ene valley (VRAE, heart of the southern coca-growing region), the provincial councils of Huanta and La Mar and even the presidency of the Ayacucho regional government. Those last three goals were widely considered to be over-optimistic but, in the municipal arena, Qatun Tarpuy managed to win 17 mayoralties; nine more than its leaders had considered probable. This encouraged Palomino to announce that Kuska Perú would start preparing to contest the presidential elections of 2011 - a decision which caused, in March this year, a rift with his ally in Qatun Tarpuy, Bustíos.

### The Morales model

Palomino is an open admirer of Bolivia's Evo Morales. Like him he has sought intellectual support from leftwing politicians. The Trotskyist former congressman Enrique Fernández Chacón (leader of Uníos en Lucha, a member organisation of the Unidad Internacional de los Trabajadores, UIT-CI), has recently become Kuska Perú's secretary-general. Unlike Morales, Palomino's control of the cocalero movement is seriously threatened. His main rival is Ibucio Morales Baltazar, who has succeeded Nancy Obregón as leader of the coca growers of the Upper Huallaga valley: he heads the

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Asociación de Productores Agropecuarios y Cocaleros del Monzón, a core organisation of the Junta Nacional de Cocaleros del Perú (Junccap), established in 2004 as an alternative to Conpaccp. Ibucio Morales led separate bids for municipal offices in his own area.

Also unlike Morales, Palomino did not rise from the ranks of the coca growers. A rural teacher in the Apurímac-Ene valley, he became famous in the area broadcasting the programme *La Voz del Campesino* ('The Peasant's Voice') on the Doble A radio station (now Radio VRAE), which has continued to speak for the coca growers and against the government's eradication drives.

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On the other hand, for any parallel with Morales's political career to be complete, Palomino would have to demonstrate an ability to expand his constituency beyond the coca growers to a broader electorate - and, given the relatively lower weight of the indigenous population in Peru, an ability to attract a greater proportion of the non-indigenous electorate.

Another party

In May this year Javier Lajo Lazo reappeared in the political arena, accompanied by Eduardo Candiotti, organising another indigenous congress and announcing the launch of a new indigenous party, the *Movimiento al Socialismo Andino Amazónico* (MASA) - a transparent attempt to suggest a connection with Evo Morales's *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS). However, this new group proposes the very opposite of Morales's inclusive approach.

Its declared aim is to restore a "confederal" form of government, which it claims was prevalent in Inca times, replacing the current "poor imitation of democracy" with "a true democracy which enables the participation of all the peoples who have inhabited Peru for millennia". While admitting that the ideas of the Humala camp are those "closest to our ideology", the promoters of MASA state emphatically that they are not nationalists, because "Peru is a state of many and varied nations" and nationalism is an pretext for unitarian states to conduct "low-intensity ethnic cleansing".

**Peru's highland-lowland divide**  
Ethnic groups of more than 3,000 members, in 1000s

<i>Eastern lowlands</i>		<i>Central &amp; southeastern highlands</i>	
Shipibo	30.0	Quechua	4,498.8
Cocama	18.0		
Chayahuita	12.0	<i>Southeastern highlands</i>	
Quichua	12.0	Aymara	350.3
Huambisa	10.0	Machiguenga	8.0
Yaneshá	10.0	Nomatsiguenga	4.5
Ticuna	8.0		
Yagua	6.0		
Achuar	3.5		
<i>Northern lowlands</i>			
Aguaruna	39.0		

Source: Based on language research; various sources, mainly mid- to late 1990s.

Menchú seeks to put Indians & women on the map

“Montenegro had been elected to congress under the banner of the Alianza Nueva Nación (ANN), a party formed by defectors from the URNG led by Jorge Ismael Soto. On a personal plane, Menchú and Montenegro have one important aspect in common: both suffered personal losses to repression (Menchú's father, Montenegro's husband).”

**Nobel Peace Prize holder Rigoberta Menchú has launched a bid to become Guatemala's first indigenous president, as well as its first female president. She has founded an indigenous political party, Winaq, but does not intend to run solely on the strength of support from the indigenous peoples, even though they jointly account for well over half of Guatemala's population. She has struck an alliance with another prominent female politician, congresswoman Nineth Montenegro.**

Menchú announced the launch of her political party, Winaq, in February this year. Winaq is a Quiché word used most frequently to signify man or person, but the promoters of the new party say it carries the connotation of human or whole person. From the outset Menchú stated that Winaq would not be an exclusively indigenous party, but "a multicultural and multilingual expression [...] different to the traditional political parties, which will satisfy the aspirations of all Guatemalans". She added explicitly that membership of Winaq would be open to the ladino, or mixed-race people who make up most of the rest of Guatemala's population.

Before February was out, Menchú announced that negotiations with the Movimiento Amplio de Izquierda (MAIZ), a coalition led by the former guerrillas of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), had come to naught, and that she had struck an alliance with Encuentro por Guatemala (EG), the party set up in 2005 by Nineth Montenegro, famous for her work at the helm of the Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM), the rights advocacy NGO set up by victims of repression during Guatemala's long internal conflict.

Montenegro had been elected to congress under the banner of the Alianza Nueva Nación (ANN), a party formed by defectors from the URNG led by Jorge Ismael Soto. On a personal plane, Menchú and Montenegro have one important aspect in common: both suffered personal losses to repression (Menchú's father, Montenegro's husband).

**Rise in indigenous mayoralties  
Five latest municipal elections**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Nº of municipalities</i>	<i>Indigenous mayors</i>
1985	325	59
1990	300	80
1995	300	62
1999	330	93
2003	331	112*

\*This total included the first woman mayor, of Tactic, Alta Verapaz.

**Source:** TSE & Fundación Rigoberta Menchú Tum, cit. Indigenous Women and Governance in Guatemala.

Though not yet formally registered, EG has completed the necessary formalities. It has collected more than the required 15,000 signatures and has constituted assemblies in 13 of the country's 22 departments, including such key electoral districts as Guatemala, Quetzaltenango and Alta Verapaz. In the other nine departments, the indigenous population is an overwhelming majority. Winaq leaders say their party has a substantial following in 70

"One development which must be kept in mind is that indigenous participation in local government has been increasing rapidly over the past decade. In 1985 only 59 of 325 municipalities were ruled by indigenous mayors. By 2003, the proportion had risen to 112 of 331 municipalities. To put this into perspective, in the 11 departments with the highest proportion of indigenous population there are 197 municipalities."

municipalities of 12 highland departments, including Huehuetenango and Quiché.

Menchú's appeal to the non-indigenous population has been strengthened with the selection of Luis Fernando Montenegro as her running-mate. A co-founder of EG, Montenegro is a coffee exporter who has been president of his industry's association, the powerful Asociación Nacional del Café, and of the even more powerful Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras (Cacif), Guatemala's umbrella business association.

For now, the most Guatemalan analysts will concede is that Menchú may subtract votes from some of the other leading contenders. Speculation about the possible "cataclysmic" effect of her candidacy actually "taking off" is in many cases intended to prevent that possibility. An exception is the leftist magazine *Envío*, which said last March: "One thing can be foreseen: the unleashing of all the demons of racism if Rigoberta Menchú's candidacy does not only gel by also appears to have a chance of success. Many more demons if, as he has announced, Bolivian president Evo Morales should provide advice for Menchú's presidential bid." It added, however: "Another thing is also clear. That this candidacy between an indigenous movement and a ladino one should have materialised is perhaps a spark lit in the fire of a new future."

#### Public response

Elections are due in September. Campaigning only formally began in May, and EG officials say they have not yet moved into top gear because they lack the resources to do so. Still, when Menchú first appeared as a contender in a CID-Gallup poll conducted in early May, she was shown attracting 10% of voter preferences. Ahead of her were Álvaro Colom of the Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE), with 37%, and retired general Otto Pérez Molina of the Partido Patriota (PP), with 15%. Perhaps the most telling feature of these results was the decline in support for Colom and Pérez Molina since January: six and three percentage points, respectively.

One development which must be kept in mind is that indigenous participation in local government has been increasing rapidly over the past decade. In 1985 only 59 of 325 municipalities were ruled by indigenous mayors. By 2003, the proportion had risen to 112 of 331 municipalities. To put this into perspective, in the 11 departments with the highest proportion of indigenous population there are 197 municipalities. This municipal success has not been replicated in congress, where over the same period the proportion of indigenous representatives has not exceeded 8%.

Guatemala's Mayan population  
Groups of 50,000 or more, in 1000s.

<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>
Kiché	1,271.0	468.5	802.4
Kaqchikel	833.0	425.9	407.1
Mam	617.2	114.2	503.0
Poqomchí	114.4	24.3	90.1
Achi	106.0	28.3	77.7
Qanjobal	159.0	23.7	135.3
Ixil	95.3	37.5	57.8
Tzutujil	78.5	59.1	19.4
Chui	64.4	10.6	53.9
Total Mayan	4,411.9 <sup>1</sup>	1,396.5	3,015.5

<sup>1</sup> The Mayan peoples account for 96% of the indigenous population and 39.2% of the total population, according to the census. **Source:** INE, 2002 census.

## Mapuche party born as legislative battle rages

**The last year witnessed the appearance of an indigenous political party, Wallmapuwen, which aims at working for the recognition of the Wallmapu, the Mapuche territory on both sides of the Andes, as a nation entitled to self-determination. In the background, organisations representing the Mapuche and other indigenous peoples pressed the Bachelet government to abandon plans to amend the constitution by introducing broader indigenous rights, in favour of expediting ratification of ILO convention 169, which commits signatories to protecting such rights.**

“ There have been previous attempts to establish indigenous parties in Chile. In the 1930s Mapuche members of the Sociedad Caupolicán floated the idea, but did not get around to implementing it. In 1971 the Partido Mapuche de Chile (Pamachi), but never took root. In 1989 the multi-ethnic Partido de la Tierra y la Identidad (PTI) was created to represent the Mapuche, Aymara and Rapa Nui people. This suffered a similar fate, though several of its promoters -later associated with the ruling Concertación coalition- rose to become high-ranking officials of the Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena (Conadi); the government's agency for indigenous development. ”

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In 2005, Aucan Huilcamán, leader of the Consejo de Todas las Tierras (CTT), the most publicised of militant Mapuche organisations, sought to register as a presidential candidate, but failed because he was unable to notarise more than a small proportion of the signatures he collected endorsing his candidacy. From the outset, Huilcamán admitted that his candidacy was meant to be symbolic.

A single Mapuche, Guillermo Tripailaf Manquelaquén, unsuccessfully ran for a seat in the senate on the Communist party ticket. Six others contested seats in the lower chamber, on the tickets of the ruling coalition and the leftwing alliance Juntos Podemos Más, but they lost. Only at municipal level did Mapuche candidates enjoy some success. They won 17 mayoralties (of the country's 345 ).

According to the 2002 census, Chile's indigenous people numbered just under 700,000, a bit less than 5% of the population (with the Mapuche accounting for 87% of that total). Other estimates put the indigenous population at about 1m. The Mapuche are mainly concentrated south of the Bío-Bío river, where they account for about a quarter of the population.

### Wallmapuwen

The new party, led by a group of Mapuche intellectuals including Gustavo Quilaqueo, Claudio Curihuentro, Pedro Marimán, Víctor Naguil, Nilda Trafipan and Anita Millaquén, makes a point of underlining that their project is a quest for Mapuche autonomy and nationhood. Wallmapuwen means "compatriots of the Wallmapu", the land of the Mapuche. It intends to contest elections, starting at municipal level. In a first phase, which it predicts as lasting some years, it will campaign for an autonomy statute in Ngulumapu, the western (Chilean) Mapuche territory, which includes the current Region IX (Araucanía), where about 23.5% of the population is Mapuche, and some adjacent portion of Region X (Los Lagos) and Region VIII (Bío-Bío).

Furthermore, their aim is the "restitution" of Puelmapu, the eastern Mapuche territory, which lies within Argentina. This is actually territory conquered by the Mapuche from other peoples, mainly the Puelche and Pehuenche, which became subsumed under a broader Mapuche identity after the end of the Indian wars of Argentina and Chile in the early 20th century.

“Bachelet withdrew her request for urgent treatment of her proposals. In April 2007 she came up with a set of proposed policies regarding the indigenous communities. These included legislation, in consultation with the indigenous organisations, to establish "new mechanisms for the autonomous and representative participation of the indigenous peoples in society and the state" and a constitutional amendment "recognising the multicultural character of the Chilean nation, the existence of the originary peoples and the exercise of their rights".”

CTT leader Huilcamán has come out strongly against the new party, with personal attacks on the probity of its promoters, particularly Marimán, a historian with the Centro de Estudios y Documentación Mapuche Liwen.

#### The Bachelet proposals

In January 2006 President Michelle Bachelet promised leaders of indigenous organisations that she would speed up moves to incorporate the protection of indigenous rights to the constitution, including the recognition of the indigenous and peoples, and ensure that they were consulted on matters affecting them. When she moved to deliver on the promise, announcing fast-track treatment for a number of constitutional reforms, the leading indigenous organisations strongly opposed her, arguing that they had not been fully consulted on the texts of the proposed amendments, and that these actually conspired against the Indians being granted the status of a collective people. Almost unanimously, they demanded that she should withdraw her proposals and instead put all her efforts behind securing ratification of ILO convention 169.

This convention had already been approved by the lower chamber of congress, and the constitutional court had ruled that it did not clash with Chile's constitution. All that remained was ratification by the senate, where after the last elections the ruling coalition was only two votes short of the required majority.

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This too earned Bachelet a round of criticism from indigenous leaders, who appeared to be determined, above all, to secure ratification of Convention 169 -which, beyond their rhetoric, actually promises little more than government commitment to grant indigenous peoples at least the same treatment as other citizens, plus respect for their land, their cultures and their traditional customs when these do not clash with existing statutory rights. The impression that Convention 169 makes provision for indigenous self-government is not borne out by its text, but this is unlikely to prevent its invocation for that purpose.

<b>Chile's indigenous peoples</b>		
<i>Members (in 000) and main habitat</i>		
<b>Peoples</b>	<b>000 members</b>	<b>Region</b>
Mapuche	604.3	Centre-south
Aymara	48.5	Far north
Atacameño	21.0	Far north
Quechua	6.2	Far north
Rapa-nui	4.6	Easter island
Colla	3.2	Far north
Kawaskar	2.6	Far south
Yagán	1.7	Far south
Total indigenous	692.2	-

**Source: INE, 2002 census. Other estimates put the total indigenous population close to 1m.**

## Oaxaca as testing-ground for indigenous rights

"The indigenous population of Oaxaca is hardly homogeneous: it is divided into 16 ethno-linguistic groups ( 29% of the national total). The state is also unique in that it has 570 municipalities, or just under a quarter of the national total, for a population of 3.5m."

**The five-month-long uprising in the southern state of Oaxaca was not widely portrayed as indigenous in nature: it started with a teachers' strike, then spawned a coalition of social and political groups that staged what can only be described as an insurrection. Oaxaca, however, has the largest concentration of ethnic groups in Mexico, and at least a third of its population is indigenous. Moreover, 73% of the state's municipalities are governed according to indigenous 'uses and customs' - a state of affairs which may do more to determine the issue of indigenous rights than the small-scale Zapatista model of 'autonomous municipalities'.**

The indigenous population of Oaxaca is hardly homogeneous: it is divided into 16 ethno-linguistic groups ( 29% of the national total). The state is also unique in that it has 570 municipalities, or just under a quarter of the national total, for a population of 3.5m.

In 1990 the state authorities set a series of reforms in motion which have been portrayed by some as cutting edge in terms of moving towards a greater respect for indigenous rights. The first step, that year, was to amend Article 16 of the state constitution, formally recognising the pluricultural nature of the state and to add to Article 25 a provision recognising "the traditions and democratic practices of the indigenous communities in the election of their municipal authorities".

Five years later the state legislature amended the electoral code accordingly, to enshrine full respect for the selection of municipal authorities according to traditional "uses and customs". Further constitutional and legal amendments in 1997 and 1998 gave final shape to a system in which 418 of the state's 570 municipalities opted to rule themselves according to their "uses and customs". What this means, in a nutshell, is that the municipal authorities are not elected by popular ballot but nominated by consensus: serving in public posts is a duty, and it is unpaid. Indeed, in some cases it carries to obligation of covering some outlays from the official's own purse.

Behind the progressive gloss put on these reforms was a somewhat different political reality. For decades the only political presence in rural Oaxaca was that of the long-ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). It was only after opposition parties began to grow there in the late 1980s and early 1990s that these legal reforms were introduced. Many political analysts saw, in this, a move to exclude the opposition parties from municipalities, which in any case were already being governed according to uses and customs as the PRI continued to exert its influence on the indigenous municipal authorities via coercion and bribery. On top of this there has been growing criticism of the fact that in many cases the local 'uses and customs' are exclusionary and deny some categories of people the rights to which they are entitled as Mexican citizens.

Initially, the ruling PRI was able to point to a sharp reduction in the number of post-electoral disputes as proof that the system was working. This, however, did not last. In 2001 the election led to disputes in 122 of the 418 'uses and customs' municipalities. In 2004 there were disputes in 66 of them. In many cases, disputes lead to intervention by the state government. An educational NGO, Educa, has reported on another trend: that many of the "uses and customs" municipalities have been infiltrated by political parties.

Oaxaca's indigenous peoples were hardly absent from the 2006 uprising. Many of the teachers who triggered the event are themselves indigenous,

“sympathy for the guerrilla groups has long been strong among teachers, particularly those posted to rural areas, where they are first-hand witnesses of the situation in which the peasant and indigenous communities live.”

and acted as direct conveyor belts for the grievances and demands of the communities they teach. Indigenous activists were also present in the Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca (APPO), the loose coalition which turned protest into insurrection. When, in the face of the federal intervention which would quash the uprising, the APPO held a congress (actually a series of discussion 'tables'), representatives of indigenous communities accounted for about 40% of the participants.

One chronicler of the Oaxaca uprising, Diego Enrique Osorno, warned, during the anniversary of the beginning of the uprising, that the tension in Oaxaca has not been dispelled and could be used by guerrilla groups to fuel an armed uprising. He said that three guerrilla groups were marginally involved in last year's uprising: the Partido Democrático Popular Revolucionario-Ejército Popular Revolucionario (PDPR-EPR), Tendencia Democrática Revolucionaria-Ejército del Pueblo (TDR-EP) and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias del Pueblo (FARP). Their most ostensible participation, as Osorno had reported at the time, was a series of appeals addressed directly to the local branch of the SNTE, the teachers' union. Osorno has noted that sympathy for the guerrilla groups has long been strong among teachers, particularly those posted to rural areas, where they are first-hand witnesses of the situation in which the peasant and indigenous communities live.

Oaxaca forms part of Mexico's triangle of extreme poverty, along with Chiapas (scene of the Zapatista uprising) and Guerrero: 29.5% of its municipalities have been classified as in a state of high marginalisation; 46.5% in a state of very high marginalisation. Of Mexico's 100 municipalities with the highest rates of malnutrition, 45 are in the indigenous areas of Oaxaca.

**Mexico's ethno-linguistic groups & margination**  
Groups of 50,000 or more<sup>1</sup>

<i>Ethno-linguistic groups</i>	<i>Members (000)</i>	<i>% living in 200 most marginal municipalities</i>
Náhuatl	2,446.0	13.9
Mixteca <sup>2</sup>	726.6	28.6
Zapoteca <sup>2</sup>	777.3	10.3
Otomí	646.9	5.8
Totonaca	411.3	28.4
Tzotzil <sup>2</sup>	407.0	42.3
Tzeltal <sup>2</sup>	384.1	39.2
Mazateca <sup>2</sup>	305.8	38.0
Chol <sup>2</sup>	221.0	32.5
Chinanteca <sup>2</sup>	201.2	8.7
Mixe <sup>2</sup>	168.9	13.9
Tlapaneca <sup>2</sup>	140.2	74.3
Tarahumara	121.8	58.8
Zoque	86.6	28.8
Popoluca	62.3	39.1
Chatino	60.0	45.8
Amuzgo	57.7	42.8
Tojolabal <sup>2</sup>	54.5	2.8
Total indigenous <sup>1</sup>	0,220.9	17.0
Total population	97,483.7	2.4

<sup>1</sup>Accounting for 71% of all members of registered ethno-linguistic groups. <sup>2</sup>Living in the south and southeast.

Source: CONAPO, 2002

## Attempting to shape regionwide policies

**Eleven organisations from six countries met in Cusco, Peru, in July 2006 to launch the Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas, a body aspiring to represent the indigenous peoples of the Andean region as a whole. They set out an agenda which calls for all the countries in the region to be "re-founded as plurinational states" in which the territories of indigenous peoples are untouchable and ruled according to indigenous tradition. While some of the participating organisations have played important political roles in their countries, not one of them is a political party.**

It was an unusual assemblage. Represented were Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru - but not Venezuela, despite the fact that the gathering issued a statement of "solidarity with the social processes and progressive governments of Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia". Of the 11 founding organisations, only six are explicitly indigenous. Moreover, in their final document, they declared themselves as representatives of 16 named Andean indigenous peoples - far fewer than those several of the participants usually claim to represent.

Listed were the Quechua, the largest indigenous group in Bolivia and Peru, also present in Argentina and Chile; the Kichwa, the largest group in Ecuador; the Aymara, the second-largest in Bolivia and Peru, also present in Chile; and the Mapuche, the largest group in Chile, also present in Argentina. The only Colombian group mentioned was that of the Guambiano people, which rank eighth in size. Absent from the list were the Amazonian peoples of Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador (though in the latter the Amazonian Kichwa are the third-largest group). Included, on the other hand, were a number of minor groups from Bolivia (Chuwí, Larecaja, Kallawayá, K'ana, Killaka, Uru), Ecuador (Cayambi, Sarapuro) and a Mapuche subgroup (the Lafquenche) that straddles the border between Chile and Argentina.

Three of the founding organisations, while predominantly indigenous, do not explicitly identify themselves as such. They are the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores y Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) and Peru's Confederación Nacional Agraria (CNA) and Confederación Campesina del Perú (CPP), which date back to when the rural indigenous communities of those countries organised themselves in terms of their "peasant" identity. This said, the CSUTCB - currently divided - is perhaps the body which has best represented Bolivia's indigenous peoples. The Confederación Nacional de Comunidades del Perú Afectadas por la Minería (Conacami) is a militant organisation which represents the Peruvian communities, predominantly indigenous, that oppose the encroachment upon their territories by mining companies.

The Confederación de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Kichwas del Ecuador (Ecuarrunari) is the core organisation of the umbrella Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Conaie): it represents the country's largest indigenous group and came into being as a defender of broad indigenous interests. The Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyo de Bolivia (Conamaq) is far more clearly political in nature: it seeks to gain official recognition for the traditional indigenous forms of local government.

The agenda

The Coordinadora states that it has come into being to end the practice under which others (the World Bank, IDB, Andean Community,

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“The agenda also includes the demands that all Andean governments should sign, ratify and implement ILO Convention 169 (on the rights of indigenous peoples), that the autonomy and self-government of indigenous peoples be respected, as well as their collective rights to culture, identity, health and education, plus the right to be consulted on any policies or projects regarding natural resources, and to veto them.”

governments, ministries and NGOs) should pretend to "translate" or "interpret" the demands of the indigenous peoples. Instead, it says, "Now we invite them to debate the proposals of our peoples."

At the top of the Coordinadora's proposed Andean indigenous agenda is the declaration that the territories of indigenous peoples are "intangible" -indeed, that they must be 'reconstituted', together with the institutional arrangements of the indigenous peoples. This is accompanied with the demand for a ban on the privatisation or "mercantilisation" of water "and Mother Earth", and for the expulsion of transnational companies from indigenous territories.

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The Coordinadora proposes that these rights be given constitutional status, through constituent assemblies which should include representatives of the ayllus, markas and communities "not via parties or traditional elections". In similar vein, the agenda calls for "political participation in national processes, based on the work of the communities, so that they should guide it and take the decisions." Further ahead, the agenda envisages the "confederation of the indigenous nationalities and peoples of the Tawantinsuyo and the Abya Yala" The Tawantinsuyo is the name the Incas gave their empire; Abya Yala is what the Kuna people of present-day Panama and Colombia called their land before the arrival of the Spaniards - by extension, indigenous Latin America.

#### Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas *Founding members*

<b>Argentina</b>	Organización Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas de Argentina (ONPIA)
<b>Bolivia</b>	Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyo de Bolivia (Conamaq) Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores y Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) Federación Nacional de Mujeres Bartolina Sisa del Qullasuyu
<b>Chile</b>	Coordinación de Identidades Territoriales Mapuche (CITEM) Consejo Nacional Aymara de Chile (CNAC)
<b>Ecuador</b>	Confederación de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Kichwas del Ecuador (Ecuadorunari)
<b>Colombia</b>	Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC)
<b>Peru</b>	Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP) Confederación Nacional Agraria (CNA) Confederación Nacional de Comunidades del Perú Afectadas por la Minería (Conacami)

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