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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Indigenous Autonomy in Latin America: The Impact of the Indigenous Rights Revolution on the Study of Politics

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### Abstract

This paper asserts that critiques of political science for neglecting Indigenous politics highlight a critical gap that risks overlooking significant conceptual and practical innovations. It emphasizes how Indigenous autonomy claims challenge traditional notions of sovereignty. Scholars of Indigenous politics in Latin America, publishing in area studies journals, provide essential insights into these autonomy claims and contribute valuable perspectives to the discipline. We identify rigorous scholarly work in English language, peer-reviewed journals exploring Indigenous autonomy, conceptualizing it as a multifaceted notion that encompasses political visions, practices, and social movement agendas. Through a comprehensive meta-analysis of literature in Latin American area studies, we argue that this field offers four fundamental insights. First, Indigenous peoples deploy diverse strategies to assert their rights, positioning themselves as active citizens and political agents rather than passive groups. Second, the emergence of multicultural institutions that integrate individual and collective rights is fundamentally reshaping politics and citizenship, leading to innovative governance structures. Third, accumulation by dispossession remains a crucial driver of wealth creation, severely undermining Indigenous autonomy and degrading their environments. Finally, a renewed emphasis on Indigenous territorial autonomy decisively challenges conventional views of state sovereignty, as Indigenous peoples assert territorial and nonterritorial rights.

## Introduction

The past three decades have seen a significant transformation in Indigenous political activism, reshaping the dynamics between states and Indigenous communities and challenging established academic perspectives on sovereignty, territoriality, and the

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balance between individual and group rights (Lightfoot 2016). This shift highlights the urgent need for a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous politics within political science. Scholars of Indigenous politics have previously expressed concerns that aside from a few comparative studies in Latin America (Yashar 1998; 1999; 2006; Van Cott 2010), the discipline of political science has largely overlooked the profound implications of these changes. The limited number of articles published in leading academic journals underscores this oversight (Falleti 2020). This long-standing neglect indicates that the discipline may have missed out on innovative worldviews, practices, and theories related to political systems (Ferguson 2016, 1034). As these critiques argue, a more focused analysis of Indigenous politics could shed light on other aspects of political development, such as the influence of governing colonized populations on the evolution of legal systems and constitutionalism (Carpenter 2016) or the impact of the Indigenous rights revolution on the integration of individual and collective rights into constitutional frameworks.

More scholars and publications have focused on important issues in Indigenous politics in the past five years. For example, this journal published a special issue on Indigenous sovereignty (Witmer et al., 2022). Additionally, a piece in the *Annual Review of Political Science* discussed creating a new subfield dedicated to Indigenous politics (Mowatt et al., 2024). While this growth in research is encouraging, it is essential to consider the critiques from experts in the field. We must think carefully about their feedback to more fully understand Indigenous politics. Although these scholars raise several concerns, we want to emphasize four key issues.

First, there is a tendency to subsume the study of Indigenous politics within broader categories such as interest group politics or racial/ethnic representation. This approach often merges diverse Indigenous actors in ways that obscure their distinct political interests, identities, and broader political impacts (Ferguson, 2016). Second, not fully exploring the significant political innovations introduced by this key actor hinders our ability to deepen our knowledge of fundamental political science concepts and processes, such as autonomy, local politics, conceptions of citizenship, or territory. Third, focusing on the violent dispossession of Indigenous lands and labor demonstrates that the primitive accumulation of capital is not merely a relic of the past but, instead, a current engine of capitalist development (Nichols, 2020, cited in Falletti, 2020). Finally, because Indigenous politics presents significant challenges to state-centric notions of sovereignty, we must scrutinize how various forms of autonomy claims contest, reframe or innovate upon this prevailing view of sovereignty.

Attention to these issues will engage the discipline with crucial aspects of Indigenous politics and offer a more nuanced understanding of larger political dynamics, including differing perspectives on power, democracy, citizenship, the origins of race as a political category, and more (Wadsworth 2014). In sum, delving into the subject matter at hand politicizes place, subjectivities, and social relations while challenging long-held notions about the agents of social transformation (Motta 2009).

Scholars studying Latin America have emphasized the importance of Indigenous politics, offering valuable insights into how demands for autonomy can lead to transformative change. However, these findings are more often published in area studies journals rather than in prominent political science publications. As a result,

mainstream political science may overlook critical insights from this rich and diverse body of research. This gap may be partly due to the differing academic backgrounds of researchers and their preferred methodological approaches.

An initial assessment of the authors' academic credentials reveals notable diversity. Out of 200 primary authors, approximately 81 are political scientists, while around 43 are anthropologists. Other disciplines represented include sociology, history, environmental studies, and development studies. There is also a notable presence of female scholars, and many academics affiliated with universities in Latin America.

Regarding methodological approaches, many authors employed comparative case studies and historical institutional analyses. Some also incorporated experiments and surveys—methods commonly associated with political science. However, qualitative approaches, often linked to anthropology, appeared to be more prevalent. These qualitative methods included ethnography, oral histories, participatory research, participatory mapping, and informal community conversations. This diversity is significant given that their research focuses on important political issues.

We have delved into this literature to further our understanding of Indigenous autonomy politics, aiming to identify key themes and patterns that could offer lessons in politics. Our analysis suggests that Latin American Indigenous politics offer insights in four areas. First, it sheds light on the various strategies Indigenous peoples use to assert their rights, highlighting their active roles as citizens and political agents. Second, it explores how multicultural institutions incorporating individual and collective rights reshape politics and citizenship, particularly at the local level. Third, it discusses how the ongoing process of wealth creation through dispossession has hindered Indigenous autonomy and degraded the environment. Finally, it examines how Indigenous territorial autonomy challenges traditional notions of state sovereignty.

## Indigenous Politics in Latin American Area Studies: Insights on Autonomy Claims

Scholars of (and primarily in) the region began appraising the transformative influence of ethnic politics on domestic institutions and its effects on national identity, state sovereignty, jurisprudence, and political representation patterns. This highlights the crucial role of Indigenous and ethnic movements in shaping Latin America's political landscape. Their attention was also prompted by events that unfolded in the late 1980s to early 1990s when Indigenous movements for land, autonomy, and cultural survival compelled governments to enact national legislation and endorse international instruments recognizing Indigenous rights to self-determination—this commitment to Indigenous rights found expression in domestic constitutions. Brazil's 1988 and Colombia's 1991 constitutions incorporated the rights of Indigenous peoples as integral to the state, setting a standard that influenced a dozen other new constitutions in the subsequent two decades. Notably, by 2010, most Latin American countries had ratified the International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention 169. They voted in favor of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Their scholarly work has contributed to at least five themes in the following areas that are important to studying Indigenous politics in general and autonomy in particular. The first theme examines how *changing political opportunities* brought about by the 1980s democratization and neoliberalism impacted state-Indigenous relations by disrupting the extant institutions that unintentionally supported Indigenous autonomy. Though these reforms created new democratic participation opportunities, they also curtailed Indigenous land rights and threatened *de facto* autonomy (Yashar 2006). This politicized Indigenous people to mobilize for their land rights.

A second focal point argues that Indigenous peoples were not simply adapting to changing political opportunities but actively transformed these institutions to meet their autonomy needs (Merino 2021b). This perspective emphasizes that *Indigenous agency and activism* were crucial drivers of institutional change, reshaping the political landscape and altering state-Indigenous relations. Indigenous activism played a crucial role in democratization, advocating for radical democracy over more liberal frameworks of democracy (Van Cott 2008). By creating innovative political parties that have won significant regional and national elections, Indigenous communities have successfully changed existing forms of political participation, demonstrating their influence on processes of representation and governance.

A third area on *Indigenous networking* suggests that changes in alliances during the 1980s and 1990s enhanced Indigenous peoples' capacity to apply pressure through strategic relationships (Andrews 2010). This empowerment stemmed from new opportunities emerging from "below" and "outside," as well as from "above." Connections from below were influenced by the Catholic Church's revised Pastoral doctrine and increasing religious rivalry, alongside the state's shift toward community-focused services, facilitated by NGOs and anthropologists developing targeted programs. Influences from above included transnational actors and international organizations that shaped national political arenas and human rights norms (Marti i Puig, 2010).

Fourth, the *implementation gap* (Stavenhagen 2005) examines the weaknesses of Latin American states, highlighting power vacuums that affect territorial presence and public policy execution. This gap reveals a significant disparity between *de jure* autonomy rights and the *de facto* realities of Indigenous decision-making. On a positive note, state weaknesses provide opportunities for institutional innovation and power exercise on ancestral lands, helping to safeguard Indigenous sovereignty. Conversely, politically marginalized Indigenous groups, particularly in the Amazon or newly colonized regions, suffer from the state's failure to fulfill constitutional obligations to protect their rights. These communities often fall under the authoritarian control of local power brokers, enabling external actors to encroach on their lands and threaten their populations for capitalist expansion.

Fifth, the implementation and impact of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) has revolutionized political participation, with Indigenous rights to prior consultation serving as mechanisms to manage intercultural disagreements (Ilizarbe 2019) and incorporate mobilized Indigenous groups (Falleti & Riofrancos 2018). Even if governments limit FPIC, these rights have empowered Indigenous communities to express their interests, forming a crucial tool for autonomy. It is

noteworthy, that these mechanisms have often conflicted with the region's populist governments, which seek to demonstrate benefits for the broader population (Alberti 2019), limiting prior consultations. Consequently, Indigenous peoples have adopted varied strategies, from refusing participation to demanding more extensive consultation (Jaskoski 2020).

Together, these five themes highlight the complex and dynamic nature of Indigenous autonomy in Latin America. While changes in political structures and the agency of Indigenous peoples have opened new avenues for constructing autonomy, the role of supportive networks and the challenges posed by the implementation gap underscore the ongoing struggle to achieve self-determination. Innovative tools such as FPIC are critical for empowering Indigenous communities to have a say in projects and policies that affect their lands, resources, and lives. However, the inconsistent application of multicultural rights can also reflect the challenges of the implementation gap, where Indigenous voices are often undermined. Indigenous autonomy is thus a multifaceted process, continuously shaped by legal, political, and social forces.

Drawing on these insights, we argue that a unified demand for autonomy within the nation-state is the primary driver of innovation in Indigenous politics. We highlight how addressing these demands has been transformative. In doing so, we aim to respond to critiques of political science by delving into the rich body of literature on Indigenous autonomy within Latin American studies.

## Methods

In our review of the literature, we identified research articles and book reviews focusing on Indigenous autonomy, self-determination, or self-government published in key English-language, peer-reviewed journals on Latin American area studies since 1990. Leading journals in the field, such as *Latin American Politics and Society, Latin American Perspectives, Latin American Research Review,* or *the Journal of Latin American Studies*, as well as others that publish the work of Latin Americanists (e.g., rural studies journals), have been sustaining essential discussions on the influence of Indigenous politics across various topics, including identity, activism, territory, and democracy, among others. We recognize that our approach has a drawback in excluding literature in Spanish published in Latin America and relevant studies published in flagship journals from other disciplines. Still, we address this limitation by outlining the above five prominent debates in Indigenous politics that experts in the field widely recognize.

Our meta-synthesis is limited to five Latin American area studies journals, two peasant and rural studies journals, and ten political science journals. Most of the research, comprising 169 of the 200 articles analyzed, was published in Latin American studies journals (refer to Appendix 1). Since we argue that the autonomy claims of Indigenous peoples have been a fundamental driver of the rights revolution transforming the study of politics, we limit our inclusion criteria to articles that focus primarily on Indigenous autonomy. These articles were identified by searching the term "Indigenous autonomy" and closely related terms "Indigenous sovereignty," "Indigenous self-determination," "Indigenous government," and "Indigenous jurisdiction." The term needed to be found either in the
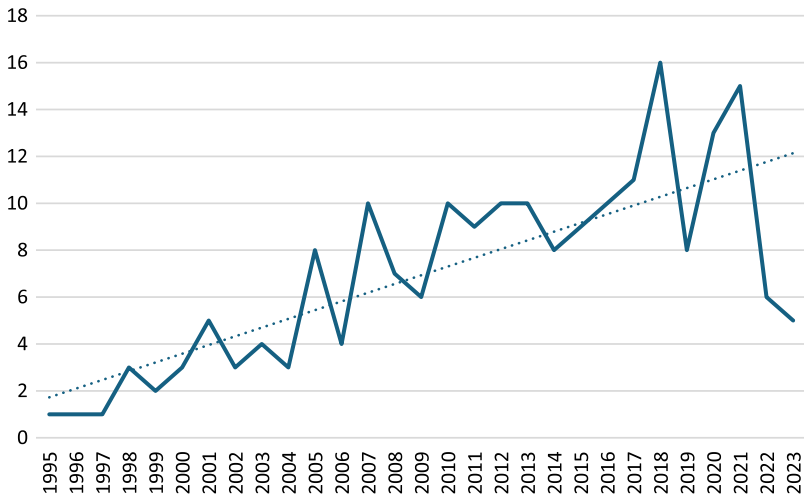
**Figure 1.** Articles Published per Year on Latin American Indigenous Autonomy (1995–2023) N = 200. *Notes:* Of the 200 articles, 169 were published in journals focusing on Latin American Area Studies. The information for 2023 may be incomplete, as our article selection process concluded in March of that year.

article title or the abstract. Additionally, the criteria included that the article cover Latin America.

We did not use terms related to "Native American" or "American Indian" autonomy because we focused on Latin America, where such terms are not used. The start date of 1990 is due to a lack of writing about Indigenous politics broadly before that date, as the literature identifies the 1990s as the pivotal time for Indigenous uprisings. We then looked at articles from 1990 until early 2023. Figure 1 presents the publication years of the articles and a trendline illustrating a growing and consistent interest in the topic among Latin Americanists in the past three decades, with an average of about seven articles published annually.

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the countries or regions that have been the focus of scholarly research. We consider studies as focusing on Latin America if they encompass more than one case and generalize about the region. The "Andes" classification primarily includes comparative studies of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. However, most studies (178 out of 200) are single-country cases, offering detailed insights into the complexities of Indigenous issues within specific socio-political contexts. Mexico and Bolivia stand out as the most extensively studied nations. While it is logical to concentrate on these prominent cases, an overemphasis on notable social movements and their leaders—such as the Zapatistas in Mexico or Evo Morales and the Movement Towards Socialism in Bolivia—could skew our understanding of the balance between agency and political opportunity. Surprisingly, despite having one of the largest Indigenous populations in Latin America relative to its total population, Guatemala is not well-represented in studies on autonomy in the academic journals reviewed. Chile, another underrepresented case, whose strong Indigenous movement is facing significant challenges in asserting their rights, highlights the impact of strong state structures in
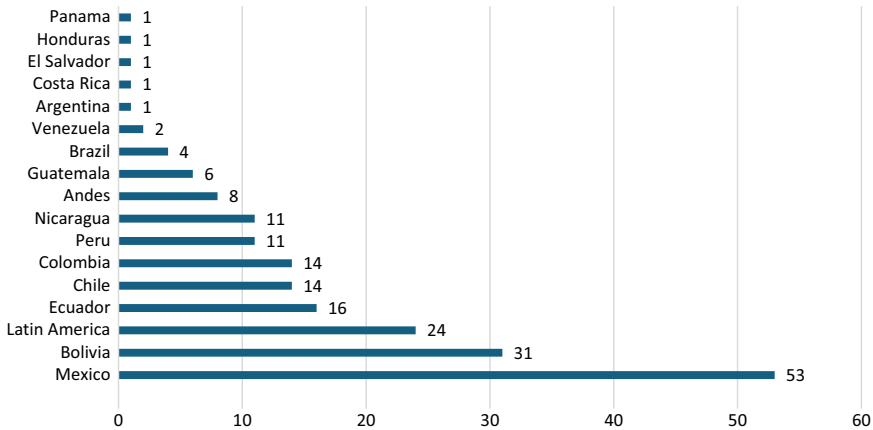
**Figure 2.** Country or region of study (1995–2023), N = 200.

limiting Indigenous autonomy. Studying such cases more at length offers a better understanding of the implementation gap argument and represents a significant opportunity to explore the political and economic marginalization of Indigenous territories, in stronger states, among other critical issues.

For coding purposes, we employed the computer program NVivo, which allows researchers to manage, code, and analyze qualitative data and documents systematically and individually. Offering a framework for rigorous analysis ensures that researchers stay closely connected with the data by saving time on labor-intensive tasks (Zamawe 2015). For example, it quickly links different documents referenced under one code and retrieves all sections coded under similar categories. We then followed an inductive and iterative coding procedure, comparing every piece of data with other pieces. This supported a constant comparative approach that allowed the research team to individually identify related codes and abstract them into common themes and categories.

While most articles addressed multiple autonomy-related themes, only one specific section was chosen for coding to reference each dimension. For instance, if an article covered both neoliberal multiculturalism and institutional adaptation, we highlighted one section for each. This approach enabled us to accurately track the number of articles referencing specific themes without overemphasizing any single theme. Each researcher identified themes and sub-themes and then collaborated to triangulate findings and finalize the themes for the project. We returned to the original articles to verify the applicability of these themes individually, ensuring intercoder reliability. After the initial coding, we reviewed the entire project to eliminate duplicate categories and ensure our coding framework was coherent and comprehensive.

## Autonomy: Origins, Constraints, and Indigenous Views

Indigenous political autonomy is fundamentally linked to the right to self-determination (Tomaselli 2016). These rights emerged from *processes of political bargaining* aimed at resolving conflict, reforming national constitutions, or revising

existing laws (Tomaselli 2016) and were further strengthened by international legislation (Anaya 2009; Lightfoot 2016). For instance, the U.N. General Assembly's 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples elevated the principle of self-determination to the status of a universal right (Anaya 2009). Such changes to international law served as a crucial point of negotiation for addressing the aspirations of Indigenous peoples in determining their own cultural, economic, and social priorities (Lightfoot 2016).

Crucially, self-determination was linked to both territorial and nonterritorial rights. While autonomy is more substantial when practiced within self-governing territories that establish autochthonous laws, active participation in non-Indigenous decision-making processes—such as education, environment, or rural development policies—is equally essential to maintaining Indigenous rights. Consequently, Indigenous territorial autonomy must necessarily be constructed through negotiations with the state and other parties at different scales, and such negotiations cover issues beyond what are commonly recognized as territorial rights. Autonomy –or own rule of law—and sovereignty –or the power to make laws—thus overlap and enhance each other in many ways.

Even when Indigenous rights are formally recognized, legal frameworks often endorse autonomy in principle but restrict it, particularly in the face of extractive economic models (Tockman & Cameron, 2014). Implementing Indigenous rights to autonomy can allow the state to organize, fund, and exert partial control over Indigenous sectors, resulting in what has been termed a form of corporatism or a centralized form of interest representation (Chartock, 2013). This suggests that these advancements in Indigenous rights may ultimately integrate Indigenous communities into the state in ways that subject them to increased regulation, management, and control (Augsburger & Haber, 2018; Cleary, 2020).

Autonomy is further constrained by different models of state-Indigenous relations. Latin American governments have attempted to formally incorporate Indigenous rights into national constitutions. At the same time, the United States and Canada manage the relations through treaties reflecting unequal pacts between native peoples and settler states. Both models are characterized by neo-colonial relations of capitalist expansion that destabilize Indigenous territories.

Finally, understandings of autonomy are also informed by Indigenous ontologies that view the self and collectivity as rooted in complex interactions between people, culture, nature, and spirituality. Indigenous authorities are building on their own traditions to help represent their people's aspirations to live "a good life" in their territories. For example, the Quechuan "Sumak Kawsay," or living in plenty (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador, 2015), is a life philosophy common among many ethnic groups–including Afro-descendants– in the Americas. It describes "a spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural organizational model in harmony with the environment, with nature and with people" and represents the thinking-feeling (Escobar 2020) of communities developed in dialogue with their own philosophies and in reaction to the politics destroying their homelands (Mena and Meneses 2019). Indigenous *buen vivir* politics provide a platform for "articulating their demands for self-determination, territoriality, and governance of natural resources as opposed to the dominant development path of the state" (Merino 2021a).

In summary, the above suggests that autonomy is influenced by specific contexts and is shaped by political, cultural, and economic systems that perpetuate the neocolonial control of Indigenous peoples and lands. Therefore, Indigenous autonomy should always be viewed as interconnected and not fixed (Böhm et al. 2010). This indicates that autonomy is an intricate combination of rhetoric, legal frameworks, urgent needs, and negotiated politics (Ferguson, 2016). Therefore, recognizing the multifaceted nature of autonomy as a complex concept is essential. Expanding on Bretón et al. (2022), who argue that autonomy should be seen as a political project, practice, and aspirational objective for marginalized groups, we gain deeper insights into the diverse and dynamic nature of Indigenous autonomy.

### Conceptualizing Autonomy, Political Opportunities, and Impact of Indigenous Rights

To examine the literature on Indigenous politics within Latin American area studies, we expanded upon previous sections to analyze autonomy as a multifaceted concept arising from political bargains that led to the recognition of rights to self-determination. Recognizing autonomy as a product of negotiation processes, we examined the political factors that both constrained and facilitated the advancement of autonomy. Finally, we identified the broader impacts of these rights on Indigenous communities and governance structures (see Appendix 2).

In conceptualizing autonomy, we adopted Bretón, González, Rubio, and Vergara-Camus's definition (2022, 548), which views autonomy as *a vision, a practice, and a project*. This breakdown proves valuable as it encompasses autonomy's political, ideational, legal, and economic dimensions. We subdivided vision, practice, and project into discrete features for coding purposes. *Autonomy as a vision* encompasses a set of symbols and normative views supporting the cultural and economic survival of marginalized or colonized groups. It delineates the political project through which subordinate classes seek to regain collective control of their lives, claiming to uphold pluriculturalism as a political program, self-determination as a right, and territory as a social-spatial claim underpinning sovereignty. This vision develops a robust moral discourse against neoliberalism, capitalism, and colonial states (Bretón et al. 2022, 548) and increasingly draws on worldviews such as Sumak Kawsay, inherently conflicting with state sovereignty claims and the political visions of dominant political elites.

*Autonomy as a practice* involves concrete actions to empower Indigenous authorities and governments. These actions encompass developing participatory decision-making in communal assemblies, establishing territorial governance, administering justice and security, implementing self-managed economic projects (Chojnacki 2016), and employing strategies for intermediation with other authorities (Bretón et al. 2022). *Autonomy as a project* encompasses detailed plans, procedures, and strategies to assert Indigenous rights, frame sociopolitical or economic interests, define an ideology, and announce political intentions. Inherently linked to activism, advocating for Indigenous autonomies involves framing, identity formation, networking, and mobilization.

Concerning the political structure, shifting political opportunities substantially impact Indigenous activism and agency, molding the direction of reforms.

The theory of political opportunities delves into instances when the political system is susceptible to challenges, creating openings for others to drive social change (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). These opportunities encompass formal and informal politics, which can encourage, discourage, or guide movement activities. Consequently, they profoundly impact strategies, organizational arrangements, and the success rate achieved by social movements (Campbell 2005, 44–45). Regarding political constraints, we focused on identifying specific government practices to curb Indigenous autonomy.

Autonomy rights have not just impacted, but significantly transformed nation-states through decentralization and the establishment of special Indigenous jurisdictions. This has led to the development of multicultural and plurinational constitutions, challenging the norms of liberal democracies. Territorialized and nonterritorialized experiments in self-government have also challenged common assumptions about the state, representation, and the market economy. The struggle for political autonomy and territorial control has resulted in improvements in rural infrastructure and social service delivery. However, it also carries the risk of bureaucratization and co-optation.

## Autonomy as Project, Practice, and Vision: Insights from Latin America

In our analysis of the articles, we referred to various aspects of autonomy 257 times. The theme we referenced most was autonomy as a project (113 times), followed by autonomy as a practice (85 times), and finally, autonomy as a vision (59 times) (See Appendix 2).

### *The Project of Autonomy*

This dimension of autonomy focuses on Indigenous rights activism, emphasizing the ongoing importance of social movements (Hristov 2005) and their interactions with the state. These interactions range from direct autonomic practices (Merino 2020) to organizing contentious and formal channels of representation (Vanegas 2011) at local, regional, and national levels. This includes employing diverse means such as individual acts of resistance, land occupations, public statements, peaceful marches, road blockades, takeovers, mass protests, self-defense, and, in some cases, violent actions (Haughney 2012; Hernández-Díaz 2010; Marti i Puig, 2010; Andolina 2003). A crucial strategy, however, is mobilizing toward the capital city, aiming to draw attention to Indigenous issues that have long been sidelined in political discourse.

Another critical project involves strengthening Indigenous identities, a crucial step in establishing a sense of solidarity and mobilizing well-defined groups capable of defending community interests (Yashar 2006; Huarcaya 2017; Laing 2014; Leyva Solano, 2001). Indigenous identities became politicized following neoliberal reforms, which altered the dynamics of interest representation, weakening class identity (Marti i Puig, 2010) and depoliticizing class-based organizing (Troyan 2008). These changes collectively demonstrated the governments' intent to undermine the rights of rural communities (Radonic 2015; Granada-Cardona, 2017).

In response, the 1990s Indigenous "politics of recognition" (Gaitán & Azeez 2018; Richards 2013) played a crucial role in shaping a cohesive agenda centered around the "unifying elements" of community and autonomy (Lucero 2003). An essential step was to imbue the material concerns of Indigenous peoples with cultural significance to distinguish their demands from *campesino* claims (Pallares 2002). Indigenous calls for recognition were strategically presented as morally upright and historically significant (Velasco 2021) to justify rights to territory and resources (Anthias 2016), and to articulate alternative forms of economic development (Lehmann and Jenss 2022). This strategic framing facilitated the development of new institutions.

This autonomy project fundamentally depended on constructing a new social base or a political subject that recognized itself as Indigenous and supported Indigenous movements. The literature reveals the extent to which Indigenous identities are intricately connected to community dynamics and landscapes (Smith 2007; Gasparello 2020) and identifies how these identities are activated when individuals engage in land struggles, experience marginalization in urban centers where economic competition with other groups is inevitable (Pallares 2002), or confront instances of "othering" or racism (Mora 2015). Nuanced interpretations of the relationship between identity formation, consciousness-raising (Bolaños 2010), and historical memory (Huarcaya 2017) reveal the role of ideology and history in shaping indigenous political subjectivities. For example, earlier uprisings against the expansion of modern forces continue to play a role in the processes of ethnogenesis (Bold 2021; Leyva Solano 2001). These involved individuals who had previously integrated as peasants or mestizos and began to reclaim their ethnic identity (Marti i Puig, 2010) upon realizing they had been de-territorialized and weakened due to discrimination against their forebears (Tovar-Restrepo & Irazábal 2013).

Finally, mobilization capacities were strengthened through the activation of national and international networks that provided resources or brokered new connections, including with churches, anthropologists, and government agencies (Cortés 2019). Simultaneously, prior participation in peasant leagues or other social movement networks provided valuable lessons to Indigenous activists (Mattiace 2012; Yashar 2006). However, mobilizing broad networks entails both risks and benefits. In Mexico, for instance, culturally and ideologically diverse movements offered lessons in political strategy and opportunities to consolidate an ally base (Hernández 2006). Yet, spreading too thin across multiple networks jeopardized the ability to build a unified political agenda.

In conclusion, as Indigenous social movements engaged in the politics of recognition, they revived an Indigenous political subject previously thought to have merged with other identities. With their networking and mobilizing potential, they were poised to shape a constituency for broader claims. They fostered solidarity and employed framing techniques to connect economic survival with culture, effectively "culturalizing" economic demands. This politicization of identity has profoundly affected political representation, challenging conventional perspectives on national identities and emphasizing the importance of integrating national or group identities into a broader understanding (Lehman 2018).

### The Practice of Autonomy

Access to local or municipal political power has played a pivotal role in the historical struggles for political autonomy (Cameron 2009), allowing Indigenous authority structures to endure despite the lack of formal government recognition of self-determination (Yashar 2006). In this sense, the decentralization reforms accompanying the multicultural agenda enhanced intercultural political participation (Postero and Tockman 2020) and opened opportunities to integrate communitarian norms and values into various local institutions, including policies on water, land, or resource management (Gasparello 2020; Boelens & Gelles, 2005; Guimaraes and Wanderley).

In Mexico, for example, Indigenous people reshaped the municipality, initially introduced by the Spaniards, as a space to defend their rights and counteract state policies (Hernández-Díaz 2010). More recently, the Zapatistas have navigated the government's counterinsurgency and co-optation strategies by establishing a flexible, community-based model of autonomy and creating regional *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* to consolidate resistance efforts (Stahler-Sholk, 2007). Consequently, decentralization has proven strategic for the formation of Indigenous subnational authorities and the emergence of local governance hybrids, balancing conventional institutions with Indigenous customs (Velasco 2021; Tockman et al., 2015).

Indigenous justice systems play a vital role in advancing autonomy rights by addressing conflict (Sturtevant 2018), resisting external pressures—such as those from drug cartels attempting to control local governments, populations, and territories (Gasparello 2020; Ley et al., 2019)—and facilitating the reintegration of Indigenous members recruited into illegally armed groups in countries that have undergone peace processes, such as Colombia (Santamaría 2020). As Indigenous leaders develop these capacities, they .adopt or redefine Western concepts on human rights and citizenship, aiming for a broader understanding of political subjectivities that encompasses both individuals and groups (Hernández 2006). Incorporating Indigenous norms and traditions into mainstream institutions has helped diminish the influence of non-Indigenous local elites (Boelens & Gelles 2005) and strengthened Indigenous political parties (Kowalczyk, 2013), ultimately contributing to the resilience of Indigenous communities.

However, decentralization is not without challenges as it requires authorities to skillfully navigate a space between customary and ordinary law (Postero and Tockman 2020), form alliances with non-Indigenous entities (Muñoz 2004), and address tensions created by the state's mandated forms of intermediation and those preferred by Indigenous organizations (Kowalczyk 2013). Control over municipal power brings risks, including bureaucratization, co-optation, and the political fragmentation of Indigenous and peasant struggles (Cameron 2009), raising concerns about the potential enlargement of state power and conflicts over resources, norms, and procedures within Indigenous communities (Augsberger and Haber 2018).

Additional concerns involve intermediaries gaining new powers, company efforts to influence vulnerable leaders to access communities or weaken FPIC processes (Anthias 2016; Jaskoski 2020), and conflicts of leadership, notably between traditional authorities (e.g., elders, chiefs, etc.) and emerging leaderships (González

2016). Conversely, leaders or communities that reject outside political processes and institutions—such as electoral politics, for instance—risk marginalizing themselves from the policy process (Hiskey & Goodman 2011; Carter 2021) and negatively impacting Indigenous rights.

Finally, the practices of autonomy face criticism for potential gender discrimination, as emphasized by Indigenous practices that may have detrimental effects on women's rights (Picq 2012). Notwithstanding, women advocate for gender parity within Indigenous justice systems (Picq 2012; Romero & Rodriguez 2016), challenging both state sovereignty (Picq 2012) and amplifying Indigenous women's strategies of "negotiating with patriarchy" (Sieder & Barrera 2017).

In summary, the practice of autonomy underscores the significance of subnational institutions in Indigenous autonomy claims, as they align with historical processes that, despite challenges, helped sustain local customs and traditions. Local autonomy has long been a strategy for Indigenous authorities to safeguard lands, livelihoods, and Indigenous justice systems. While the neoliberal state restructuring agenda was detrimental to Indigenous interests, given the austerity measures it entailed, it nonetheless offered new avenues to maintain older practices that had managed to preserve some degree of Indigenous control.

### Visions of Autonomy

In the Indigenous movement's pursuit of self-determination, the concept of territory holds considerable political, ideological, and philosophical significance. Territory, which is not synonymous with land nor an issue of land distribution, embodies visions of autonomous reproduction for Indigenous peoples to safeguard Indigenous livelihoods, cultures, and people while resisting colonization peoples (Andolina 2003; Guimarães & Wanderley 2022). Territories hold political weight as spaces that enable self-determination beyond the state's jurisdiction (Laing 2014), encompassing rights to political authority, resource use, justice, and economic alternatives (Guimarães & Wanderley 2022; Finley-Brooke & Offen 2009; Gasparello 2020). However, constitutional definitions and protections of Indigenous self-determination within the framework of state unity (Postero & Tockman 2020), while advancing Indigenous rights, may potentially limit the vision's emancipatory potential. This underscores the contested and relational nature of constructing an autonomous territory (Clare et al. 2018).

Territorially grounded self-determination, far from implying isolation (Stephenson 2002), forms part of a broader strategy to address structural contradictions within the state (Vásquez 2018). This takes the form of "nested" sovereignty or "differentiated citizenship" (Guimarães and Wanderley 2022; Gaitán-Barrera & Azeez, 2018), emphasizing a spatial separation between the central state and local communities through institutional protocols (Jaskoski 2020) and representing resistance against a singular state-citizen relationship (Stephenson 2002; Yashar 1998). It is important to note, however, that the right to self-determination does not absolve the state of its obligations toward Indigenous peoples. In this respect, a particularly complex issue arises as Indigenous territories confront state strategies to deterritorialize Indigenous peoples (Tovar-Restrepo and

Irazábal 2013) aimed at controlling space to facilitate extractive economic activities (Tockman and Cameron 2014).

Indigenous visions of territory carry significant socio-ecological importance, highlighting diverse relationships with the natural environment and its resources. Often rooted in a spiritual connection to the land, these perspectives contrast sharply with developmentalist views focused solely on economic growth. Territorial autonomy, a key aspect of the decolonization process (Felix 2008), has sparked a revival of ontologies and epistemologies from precolonial times (Gaitán-Barrera & Azeez, 2018). This emphasizes the need to respect ethnic "otherness" and recognize Indigenous peoples' right to maintain their distinctiveness (Leyva Solano 2001), while also elevating alternative worldviews.

The Andean conceptualization of Buen Vivir politics (Merino 2021a) especially emphasizes such alternative epistemological visions. This political framework proposes not only alternative development paths but also challenges the Western commitment to development, prioritizing harmony between individuals, society, and nature (Altmann 2017). The focus lies on connecting the socio-productive model with the territory and local cultures (de Zaldívar 2017). The way Indigenous peoples both operate within and reject colonial and capitalist ontologies and epistemologies illustrates the ongoing colonial underpinnings in recent institutions (Gonda et al. 2023). By employing cultural resistance as a counterhegemonic tool, Indigenous movements not only challenge entrenched state political powers they build Indigenous counter-publics to forge an arena of differential consciousness (Stephenson 2002).

Indigenous visions have played a crucial role in advancing the recognition and acceptance of the pluricultural character of Latin American societies. Pluri-culturalism, which draws on various cultural attributes, significantly shapes politics, particularly in jurisprudence, conflict resolution, education, and sources of authority. However, efforts to establish rules of intercultural dialogue often face challenges due to contested understandings regarding material concerns (Pallares 2002) and differing socio-environmental relations. These contested understandings give rise to ontological antagonisms, primarily stemming from a lack of recognition of diverse cultural backgrounds (Ilizarbe 2019). The clash between the state, rooted in its own language and cultural background, and Indigenous ontological meanings is evident in attempts to establish rules of engagement. While the state's capacity, legal tradition, and society's willingness to tolerate normative diversity impose limits on establishing legal pluralism, multicultural reforms have empowered Indigenous communities to influence local institutions and incorporate ethnic rights provisions within them (Velasco 2021).

In conclusion, Indigenous leaders and authorities are pioneering innovative visions of territories that serve as the bedrock for many of their broader claims. These visions not only assert territories as vital for safeguarding Indigenous rights and lands but also indicate that the primary domestic political struggle will center around different views on territorial issues, spanning security, environmental concerns, jurisprudence, and more. Addressing this conflict will require political arrangements that accommodate diverse worldviews regarding sociocultural and economic relations within Indigenous territories. In essence, Indigenous commu-nities advocate for the recognition and accommodation of their unique perspectives

on territory, underscoring their demand to be acknowledged as integral components of the state. If successful, this struggle will bring about profound transformations in the state's structure.

## The Structures of Political Constraints and Opportunities

We referenced political opportunities 45 times and political constraints 35 times (See Appendix 2). Regarding political opportunities, constituent assemblies convened by unitary states in response to crises (Anthias 2016) have emerged as significant venues to transform the nation-state's relationship with its citizens (Canessa 2012). These venues have also facilitated the development of new constitutional norms, influenced by international jurisprudence (Marti i Puig 2010). Indigenous peoples have played essential roles in shaping their legitimacy and purpose within these assemblies, blurring the lines between cultural and institutional politics (Andolina 2003).

It is essential to note that granting rights to Indigenous peoples also aligned with state interests, demonstrating how states identified political opportunities to advance their own agendas. Granting Indigenous autonomous territory has become a means of consolidating state control. In specific contexts, state officials exhibit a strong inclination toward ethnic land titling to extend the state's influence and counter other power factions (Rayo 2021), as Indigenous communities residing in peripheral areas often serve as the primary guardians of territorial security. When the state lacks the capacity or willingness to assert control over certain territories, it has endorsed Indigenous police or self-defense forces through policies promoting citizen participation (Gasparello 2020; Ley, et al. 2019). These local practices have, in turn, provided the backdrop for ethnic mobilization at the national level (Cervone 2012). Motivations for state security measures vary (Mattiace and Alberti 2023). For example, some states have chosen to grant autonomy rights to preempt potential social and political unrest in regions neighboring areas of recent Indigenous uprisings (Magaloni 2019) or have become a focal point in several peace negotiations within the region to resolve longstanding internal armed conflicts (Van Cott 2001).

Regarding constraints, the most common theme was the impact of extractivist economies. Indigenous hopes of recovering territorial control through the state-led land titling process have unraveled in the context of an expanding hydrocarbon frontier (Anthias 2016). In this context, the state often frames Indigenous peoples as obstacles to development or redistribution. Since many states in Latin America primarily rely on revenue from resource extraction, their main objective is to make more land available for economic development. Much of this land lies within Indigenous territories that intersect with new frontiers of development, making this economic model dependent on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples (Gentry 2019). This results from pressures to pay foreign debts (Howard 1998), reduce poverty, and strengthen national institutions (Tockman and Cameron 2014), among other reasons (Kowalczyk 2013; Radonic 2015; Haughney 2012). Furthermore, many governments conceive of Indigenous territories as open spaces for economic exploitation (Merino 2021a), and claims over subsoil rights have

limited Indigenous autonomy as the state often maintains control and ownership (Postero & Tockman 2020; Guimarães & Wanderley 2022).

Other constraints encompass territorial overlap with state-based entities and violence against Indigenous peoples. Territorial overlap often manifests in hybrid models of subnational governance structures that diminish Indigenous autonomy (González 2016). Conflicting sources of territorial authority exacerbate this issue, particularly at the municipal level, where Indigenous communities maintain governing institutions within municipal spaces (Hernández-Diaz 2010). Additionally, this challenge extends to protected or conservation areas, leading to the encroachment of mestizo populations into Indigenous territories (Gonda et al. 2017; Howard 1998).

Contexts of generalized violence, often instigated by nonstate forces, disproportionately affect Indigenous communities, limiting their engagement in politics (Dest 2020). In situations where state control is lacking, the prevalence of uncontrolled violence has necessitated the establishment of Indigenous police or self-defense forces (Risør and Jacob 2018; Gasparello 2020). Finally, in post-conflict or peacebuilding settings, the reintegration of Indigenous ex-combatants has posed significant challenges (Santamaría 2020).

In summary, concerning political opportunities, a notable finding suggests that state elites are receptive to multicultural reforms that enhance Indigenous sovereignty, seeing it as a means to bolster security and promote bottom-up state-building. Additionally, Indigenous political participation has created new opportunities, as seen in constituent assemblies held amid state crises, providing avenues for redefining state legitimacy and purpose. Regarding constraints on autonomy, Indigenous peoples face challenges due to the expansion of the extractivist frontier. The state typically views Indigenous peoples as obstacles to development or redistribution, prioritizing land availability for resource extraction.

## The Impacts of Indigenous Autonomy

We referenced the impact of Indigenous autonomy 150 times, exploring themes such as polarization, goods provision, discourse, international relations, political representation, and incorporation (see Appendix 2). A significant impact was the constitutional recognition of the right to self-determination, which integrated a previously marginalized group and political identity. This development underscored the impracticality of Latin America's assimilation project (Stavenhagen cited in Granada 2017) as Indigenous peoples consistently demanded their collective rights, challenging the practices and definitions of citizenship within the region's emerging democracies (Yashar 1998).

While integration acknowledged Indigenous collective and individual rights, simultaneous attempts by governments to curtail these rights continued. The neoliberal integration project incorporated Indigenous peoples into the political system while excluding demands that could undermine elite power sources. Such an unbalanced incorporation failed to address the socioeconomic needs of most communities. Consequently, many scholars suggest that the primary impact of the reforms was to bureaucratize, co-opt, or render Indigenous communities more

visible within the state framework. Issues such as clientelism and co-optation thus become prominent concerns. Moreover, if not implemented carefully, multicultural institutions may exacerbate ethnic polarization, particularly if they are not meticulously designed to uphold human rights standards (Eisenstadt & Ríos 2014).

Despite these challenges, political liberalization coincided with the restructuring of the state, opening avenues for regulatory shifts (Mora 2015). One significant impact was the hybridization of institutions, resulting from Indigenous leaders and activists adapting to new structures. Hybridization, viewed as an alternative approach, attributes positive value to hybrid status, overcoming internal colonialism (Granada-Cardona, 2017). In Mexico, for instance, the weakening of party-state-controlled mechanisms allowed groups like the Zapatistas to assert rights based on collective identity and Mexican national citizenship. Despite attempts at a homogenizing neoliberal project, the Zapatistas navigated counterinsurgency through a flexible, community-based autonomy model, shifting in 2003 to regional Juntas de Buen Gobierno (Stahler-Sholk 2007).

Gains in Indigenous recognition through selective state incorporation should not be celebrated uncritically, considering the continued deterioration of their material well-being (Webber 2007). Indigenous peoples also faced a more complex political landscape that required negotiation with Indigenous communities, transnational petroleum corporations, and the state, even if FPIC rights facilitated new forms of participation and helped manage conflict with extractive industries (Jaskoski 2020).

Chile's case serves as a cautionary tale, illustrating how the failure to pass more comprehensive multicultural reforms to enhance local capacities to redesign territoriality for Indigenous communities hampers the development of institutions to mediate conflict between the state and the Mapuches. While Mapuches challenge traditional notions of nationhood and political development policy consensus, the government offers limited socio-economic assistance and suppresses militant organizations, often resorting to extreme force and judicial trials (Haughney 2012; Richards 2013).

In sum, acknowledging Indigenous rights to self-determination integrated previously marginalized groups and political structures into constitutional systems. However, reforms prioritizing individual identity and free markets over community welfare came without substantial socioeconomic benefits. These reforms overlapped with state restructuring efforts, fostering the blending of institutions as Indigenous communities sought alternative paths to autonomy.

## Indigenous Politics: Lessons from Latin American Area Studies

At the start of this study, we identified four main criticisms of the political science field that merit closer scrutiny. We further proposed that examining the concept of autonomy would be an effective starting point because the literature shows that autonomy claims are central to these groups' agendas—whether within social movements, their envisioned relationships with states, or their strategic use of institutions to protect cultures and livelihoods. By analyzing the concept of autonomy in detail, we gained a clearer understanding of the extent of the political changes occurring.

Regarding the first critique–on recognizing Indigenous agency–Latin American area studies highlight the diverse strategies Indigenous peoples use to advance their rights, showcasing their broad and varied political agency. Networking, which extends beyond mere interest group lobbying, emerges as one of the key strategies employed, mobilizing entire constituencies comprising both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. The Latin American scholarship reveals how Indigenous communities have engaged with the political system through social movements, constitutional politics, and international norms, among other approaches. This underscores that Indigenous peoples are not merely an interest group or ethnic category but active agents using their roles as citizens, peoples with territorial claims, and members of subnational communities to advance their rights. In the 1990s, Indigenous peoples engaged with the democratization process that enabled new actors and identities to gain rights, even as neoliberal reforms aimed to undermine economic rights and class identities. As they politicized their identities to defend their interests, they drew on a rich history of self-identification as Indigenous peoples with rights to territory, strategically linking economic and cultural rights to safeguard their lands, livelihoods, and cultures. Another significant example involves Indigenous women, whose identities and political struggles build on collective and individual rights, often challenging both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of gender roles (Suzack 2016).

Concerning the second critique—focused on innovations arising from a blend of Indigenous agency and the utilization of political opportunities—the shift toward multicultural institutions is particularly notable. These institutions increasingly integrate individual and collective rights, potentially alleviating tensions stemming from the historical exploitation of Indigenous peoples. Despite Latin American governments formally recognizing Indigenous rights, limited implementation efforts have prompted leaders, activists, and authorities to act themselves. The constitutional integration of these rights is, as a result, fundamentally reshaping politics on a broader scale, especially at the local or municipal level, and may also be transforming notions of citizenship. This phenomenon has acted as a catalyst for political transformation across numerous countries. The proactive approach of Indigenous communities has led to the creation of hybrid institutions—a remarkable outcome of political negotiation that has reshaped state-Indigenous relations and opened new avenues for advancing Indigenous rights. Another significant impact of this rights revolution is its connection to the rights of nature. As diverse worldviews expand alongside new rights recognition processes, they are increasingly applied to new entities, such as natural bodies or other living species.

A third lesson considers the dispossession of Indigenous land and labor as a crucial part of the original process of capital accumulation, which continues to this day. States continue to perceive Indigenous autonomy claims as threats to dominant property regimes centered on private ownership of lands and resources. The ongoing process of capitalist accumulation is highlighted as the continued struggles Indigenous peoples face with extractivist economies. This dispossession is also inflicting severe damage on environments, a concern that Indigenous peoples have also actively mobilized against, as they perceive destructive economic practices not only as a threat to their livelihoods but also as assaults on the natural systems they have cultivated and stewarded. Indigenous integration into contexts where states

re-commoditize their political economies, focusing on hydrocarbon, mining, or agricultural sectors, challenges common theories of economic development that do not consider the environmental limits of growth. Rather than being viewed as a dynamic emerging solely from the recent expansion of the extractive frontier, struggles against extractivist activities should be investigated as predating but currently articulating themselves with such expansion.

In what respects the final critique on the challenge to state-centric views of sovereignty, the paramount importance of territorial rights becomes evident, whether through constitutional recognition, as seen in Latin America, or through treaties, as observed in settler states in North America. This innovation is most visible in local-level efforts to adapt to or challenge legal systems and power structures undermining Indigenous rights. In doing so, Indigenous activists may be reshaping how some domestic institutions operate. While Latin Americanists explicitly highlight the implementation gap, revealing that many reforms had minimal impact on the daily lives of Indigenous people, in the context of weak states that were decentralizing, Indigenous activists found vital opportunities to shape institutional development and innovation in their favor. This finding holds significance not only for studying Indigenous politics but also for examining institutional innovation in similar contexts. Essentially, specific actors can assert rights and contribute to bottom-up state-building through strategic action. In sum, territorial rights not only pose a significant challenge to prevailing notions of state sovereignty or definitions of the state closely tied to territorial control but also, as illustrated in Latin American cases, offer an opportunity to build the state from the grassroots level. This process not only strengthens weak states but also has the potential to democratize politics as new political actors are fully integrated into national politics.

## Conclusions

Our work suggests that political science can gain valuable insights from Latin American area studies. In this region, governments have formally recognized Indigenous rights, although the efforts to implement or enforce these rights have been limited. In response, Indigenous authorities have actively driven implementation, resulting in significant political negotiations that have reshaped state-Indigenous relations and created new opportunities to advance Indigenous rights.

The literature highlights the crucial role of agency, demonstrating how Indigenous activists employ various tactics to advocate for their communities. Social movements have transformed Indigenous identities and impacted other identities, notably those of peasants. The literature clarifies the role of consciousness-raising, which is connected to the praxis of political participation in collective efforts to occupy lands and support traditional authorities. It also highlights the strategic importance of framing material demands as cultural ones, which helps to create a new political identity. This process may provide others with an agenda for their own efforts to seek social justice. Consequently, some of the world's most marginalized groups have effectively leveraged diverse political strategies to their advantage. Recognizing both individual and collective rights for Indigenous peoples signifies a broader rights revolution with far-reaching effects,

leading to shifts in identities and worldviews. Analyzing these changes offers a comprehensive view of the evolving political landscape for advancing Indigenous autonomy.

While many of these changes occurred at the national and international levels, the literature highlights the critical role of local initiatives in driving institutional innovation and uncovering opportunities within existing political frameworks. In this context, territorialization emerges as a significant approach, facilitating the improvement of essential public goods for Indigenous peoples and addressing their security and conflict resolution needs. Latin Americanists contribute valuable and optimistic insights by challenging the "weak state" narrative. They demonstrate that the perceived power vacuums in weak states can provide opportunities for institutional change when managed by politically motivated actors advocating for social justice and political recognition within established frameworks, such as constitutions.

Due to the insufficient efforts in implementing or enforcing these rights, Indigenous leaders, activists, and authorities have taken the initiative to drive implementation themselves. This proactive approach has led to the establishment of hybrid institutions—an important result of political negotiations that have transformed the relationships between states and Indigenous peoples and created new opportunities for advancing Indigenous rights. Nonetheless, considerable challenges persist, particularly within the political and economic framework. Specifically, the ongoing emphasis on primitive wealth accumulation—a persistent process that often leads to environmental degradation and the exploitation of Indigenous territories—presents a significant obstacle. Governments continue to prioritize their economic interests or those of allied business entities over those of Indigenous communities.

What does this all mean for Indigenous self-government and decolonization efforts? We believe it can yield real benefits; it opens meaningful opportunities for power-sharing, even at the highest levels of government (as seen in the examples of Bolivia and Ecuador), or it enables Indigenous movements from countries where they are a minority to exert influence beyond their numerical strength. Another positive aspect is that these institutional transformations can benefit other marginalized groups as Indigenous activists associate and network with them offering institutional alternatives. On the downside, Indigenous institutions and communities can become coopted and legible to the state, potentially undermining self-governance and political independence, giving governments a clear pathway to implement their agendas with the consent of Indigenous authorities.

To conclude, the political participation of Indigenous peoples is introducing fresh discourse to address issues of representation and participation. Moreover, it offers a framework for evaluating socio-economic development that resonates beyond their boundaries, encapsulating new concepts like the *Sumak Kawsay*. It underscores how the embeddedness of capitalism as part of the colonial process is not only about economic dispossession; it has significantly changed cultural dynamics and destroyed entire life-worlds. The response to that must include organic institutional changes and the creation of new identities.

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## Appendix 1. Journals

| Journal Theme | # of Publications |
|---|---|
| *Latin American Area Studies* | |
| Latin American Perspectives | 32 |
| Latin American Research Review | 27 |
| Bulletin of Latin American Research | 24 |
| Journal of Latin American Studies | 31 |
| Latin American Politics and Society | 17 |
| Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies | 38 |
| Total | 169 |
| *Political Science/Comparative Politics* | |
| American Journal of Political Science | 1 |
| American Political Science Review | 1 |
| Annual Review of Political Science | 1 |
| Comparative Political Studies | 2 |
| Comparative Politics | 4 |
| Studies in International Comparative Development | 2 |
| World Politics | 2 |
| Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics | 1 |
| Territory, Politics, Governance | 2 |
| World Development | 1 |
| Perspectives on Politics | 1 |
| Total | 18 |
| *Rural/Agrarian Studies* | |
| Journal of Peasant Studies | 9 |
| Journal of Agrarian Change | 4 |
| TOTAL | 200 |

## Appendix 2. Codebook

| Concepts | Definitions and Examples of Processes | # of References |
|---|---|---|
| *AUTONOMY* | Own rule of law. Derives from self-determination. | 257 |
| *1. Practice* | Concrete actions to empower or organize own authorities and governments or to make autonomous decisions. Includes contentious political strategies that mix formal and informal means to access or contest power, such as challenging predominant forms of political organization or formal actions to develop, interpret, or implement rights to self-government. De-jure and de-facto practices produce meanings, determine strategy, and delimit political boundaries (Bretón et al.) | 85 |
| *i) Administration of justice and security* | Application of customary norms and traditions to adjudicate conflict. | 10 |
| *ii) Creation of subnational Indigenous governments* | Reforms, including decentralization and territorial rights, that open opportunities to function as Indigenous governments at the local level. | 15 |
| *iii) Economic projects* | Organization of cooperatives, collective activities, companies, or other economic activities independent of private markets or businesses. | 11 |
| *iv) Institutional adaptation* | Development of new institutions or implementation of existing institutions to develop own government processes. | 27 |
| *v) Negotiation and intermediation* | Discussion, deliberation, or consultation with dominant authorities to reach agreements on Indigenous rights. Brokering relationships between indigenous and non-Indigenous authorities. May lead to divisions that undermine autonomy. | 22 |
| *2. Project* | Specific plans, procedures, and/or strategies to claim Indigenous rights, frame sociopolitical or economic interests, define an ideology, and/or announce political intentions. Has political, economic, and cultural dimensions. | 113 |
| *i) Framing* | "Signifying work or meaning construction engaged in by movement adherents (e.g., leaders, activists, and rank-and-file participants) and other actors (e.g., adversaries, institutional elites, media, social control agents, counter-movements) relevant to the interests of movements and the challenges they mount in pursuit of those interests." (Snow et al. 2018) | 20 |
| *ii) Identity formation* | Evidence of growing ethnic self-identification, development of a sense of belonging to a cultural group, identification of ethnic group values, interests, attributes, involvement in cultural events, positive/negative views of own group. | 36 |

(*Continued*)

(*Continued*)

| Concepts | Definitions and Examples of Processes | # of References |
|---|---|---|
| *iii) Mobilization* | Concerted, deliberate actions organized by indigenous activists, organizations, or communities to rally, concentrate, or find resources to make claims. Includes protests, takeovers, contentious assemblies, marches, etc. | 30 |
| *iv) Networks* | Establishing, redefining, and enhancing relationships with outside groups to advance or establish autonomy. | 27 |
| *3. Vision* | Symbols or discourses underpinning the cultural and economic survival of marginalized or colonized groups. Develop strong moral discourse against neoliberalism, capitalism, or colonial states. It is in tension with the sovereignty claims of the state and the political visions of dominant political elites. | 59 |
| *i) Alternative epistemologies* | "Local", traditional, Indigenous knowledge. The Sumak Kawsay, or "the good life," features prominently. | 14 |
| *ii) Pluriculturalism* | Utilizing a range of cultural attributes (including values, institutions, norms, and customs) to shape politics is a phenomenon commonly observed. This practice is particularly noticeable in domains such as jurisprudence, conflict resolution, education, and establishing sources of authority. | 10 |
| *iii) Self-determination* | The right to freely determine their political status and pursue economic, social, and cultural development. | 18 |
| *iv) Territory* | Socially constructed space. Control of people, resources, and activities. | 17 |
| *IMPACT* | The influence of de facto or de-jure Indigenous autonomy on institutions, policies, and social relations | 152 |
| *1. Ethnic polarization and conflict* | Divergence in political identities. Tensions created by the incorporation of indigenous peoples, divisions between peasants and Indigenous groups, and conflicts surrounding rights to collective vs. private lands. | 19 |
| *2. Goods provisions* | Developing social programs, delivering benefits, or shaping the quality or the type of service (education, health, housing, old age, etc.) | 18 |
| *3. Ideas or discourse* | The influence or adaptation of Indigenous epistemologies, discourse, or language in regular political discourse or language. | 18 |
| *4. Incorporation* | The inclusion of previously marginalized sectors of society into the polity. | 75 |
| *i) Cooptation* | Government efforts to coopt social movement organizations | 18 |
| *ii) Limitation of autonomy rights* | Government efforts to curtail indigenous autonomy. | 27 |

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(*Continued*)

| Concepts | Definitions and Examples of Processes | # of References |
|---|---|---|
| *iii) Neoliberal multiculturalism* | Multicultural/ethnic rights are granted under the neoliberal model in efforts to streamline the state or weaken class identities. Its impacts include emphasizing individual leaderships who are more interested in gaining electoral advantages, integrating Indigenous lands into market economies, and demobilizing class-based identity. | 30 |
| *5. International relations and diplomacy* | New forms of engaging with foreign partners. New forms of engaging and dealing with border issues, especially where national borders split the same Indigenous people. | 9 |
| *6. Models of political representation* | Speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on behalf of others. They may be elected politicians and other public authorities, but also nonstate actors as increasingly NGOs, multilateral institutions, and others represent or stand for groups or individuals within a nation-state. | 13 |
| *i) Electoral politics* | Using elections and political parties to advance indigenous rights. | 6 |
| *ii) FPIC* | Free, prior, and informed consent. Participation instrument related to International Labor Organization Convention no. 169 on the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. | 7 |
| *POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS* | Government practices that limit or diminish Indigenous autonomy. | 36 |
| *1. Extractive economies* | Development plans that prioritize land- or resource-intensive economies | 24 |
| *2. Overlap* | When Indigenous autonomy is confronted with overlapping territorial authorities (municipal, departmental, state, national parks, or natural reserves, etc.), unclear territorial authority | 7 |
| *3. Violence* | Political or social violence; targeting of social leaders. | 5 |
| *POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES* | Instances when the political system is susceptible to challenges, creating openings for others to drive social change | 45 |
| *1. Constituent assemblies* | constitutional congresses or conventions—bodies assembled to draft or significantly revise the country's constitutions. If indigenous delegates are included, they may press for indigenous rights. | 6 |
| *2. Corporatist interest aggregation* | Corporate forms of interest aggregation and representation. It is usually a top-down organization of the most important interest groups, such as labor, capital, peasants, and now, indigenous people. | 6 |
| *3. Peripheral politics* | Political dynamics at the margins of the state. Indigenous authorities may have more room to negotiate or maintain autonomy. Not to be confused with decentralization, a formal reform granting some administrative, fiscal, and political rights to subnational governments. | 8 |

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(*Continued*)

| Concepts | Definitions and Examples of Processes | # of References |
|---|---|---|
| 4. Regime and/or state consolidation | Nation- and state-building efforts by national government or political elites | 18 |
| 5. Security | National states or dominant political elites accept Indigenous authorities and/or rights to the territory as a strategy to increase state presence or address public order issues. | 7 |