



Solve economic crisis: Indigenous movements in Latin America

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Background

Latin America has witnessed an eruption of indigenous movements that reflected the growing discontent among the community. Historically the heterogeneous group of indigenous citizens lacked political representation which resulted in the cohesive efforts to change the political system through peaceful street protests, constitutional reforms, and electoral politics. The paper traces the emergence of the indigenous movements across nations in the Latin American region and the actors involved in these movements. The movement have gained momentum in the international arena through the involvement of more transnational actors. The paper examines the protest movements lead by the indigenous people demanding an inclusive economic process. Indigenous movements prospect to expand beyond the region by inspiring various protesters on success techniques. This is analysed with the reference with to historical events of the region. The paper also identifies the issues with protests and the unclear demands by the various segments of the indigenous communities which act as an impediment in the protest movements. The indigenous movements cannot automatically be considered progressive or emancipator. They are just as often enacted in pursuit of backward-looking and even conservative objectives. The paper highlights the changing trends of the indigenous protest movements across the centuries. The structural barriers and the glass ceiling in the society impede the growth of indigenous communities. The paper assesses the subject with the relevant theories of international relations.

The Latin America that we are observing is the former colonies of Spanish and Portugal powers. The history of indigenous people is one of the longest struggles in Latin American history. It starts from the European invasion to the region and continues till date. But the reasons have changed across centuries. Indigenous peoples made significant social progress, experienced a reduction in poverty levels in several countries and gained improved access to basic services during the boom of the first decade of the century, but they did not benefit to the same extent as the rest of Latin Americans, according to a new World Bank study. The poverty of indigenous households decreased in countries like Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador, while in others, such as Ecuador, Mexico and Nicaragua, the educational gap that for decades excluded indigenous children was closed which evidently shows that a combination of economic growth and good social policies becomes the primary demand among the communities in the villages. The World Bank estimates about 28.6 million Brazilians moved out of poverty between 2004 and 2014.

But the bank estimates that from the start of 2016 to the end of this year, 2.5 million to 3.6 million will have fallen back below the poverty line of 140 Brazilian reais per month, about \$44 at current exchange rates. A nationally representative survey conducted in the first decade of 21st century indicated that unemployment was 4 per cent and by the end of 2004 it rose to 13 per cent, but by the end of the decade, unemployment had jumped to almost 30 per cent. The growing unemployment and cut to various social welfares aggravates the economic crisis among the indigenous communities. However, the data for analysis clears the point that though the communities have gained significantly from the past conditions but still the gap keeps widening in the case of development among the entire population. They continue to be confronted with glass ceilings and structural barriers that limit their full social and economic inclusion. While indigenous peoples make up 8 per cent of the population in the region, they represent approximately 14 per cent of the poor and 17 per cent of the extremely poor in Latin America. Also while looking at the key aspect of increasingly globalized societies; they continue to face challenges to gain access to the basic services and the adoption of new technologies. This growing feeling of exasperation set off the supporters to organize as never before and using new, more open democracies to take on the traditional, light-skinned ruling classes whom they are blaming for keeping their countries mired in poverty and their people on the sidelines of power for decades together.

Causes, Concerns and Fallouts

Income inequality

The discrimination, economic inequalities and racially discriminatory policies and practices continued to play a major role in the disproportionate placement of indigenous children and youth in detention, custody, foster care and adoption in many countries. Even the dynamic governments that have represented a few Latin American nations as of late, while they made noteworthy gains regarding salary dissemination, didn't accomplish considerable duty changes. To a prominent extent, inequality has been reduced in recent decades in several countries of the region which includes Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Argentina. The progress in tax systems did not improve the distribution of wealth in the framework. The redistribution was mostly because the subsidies financed by different types of income, like the ones that are generated by mining and the export of raw materials but the wealth in Latin America has no solid foundation since it is dependent on the mercantile commodities that is now over, and subsidy systems that can easily disappear. With the return of right-wing governments to many countries in the region, reforms are likely to go hand in hand with lower taxes and less tax redistribution.

Economists know very well that high inequality is a major barrier to economic development, and Latin America is no exception. The colonial legacy of the Latin American countries prevents them from making the most of their potential rather inheriting the unequal social structure. Only by involving the entire population in economic progress can a country grow steadily, and for this a strong public sector with redistributive capacity is essential. Its consequences in the economic and social development have been evident throughout history. Reports show that both European countries and the successful economies of South-East Asia began to grow steadily after managing to redistribute wealth. This was done through sound tax mechanisms. The emphasis of strong and progressive tax system has awakened even the developing states with neoliberal systems. Only with a strong tax system, and a social covenant in which those who have the most contribute the most, can essential public goods such as infrastructure, public services and efficient institutions be financed, and then a national identity that goes beyond colours and flags can be achieved.

The taxes have been viewed as the burden and the aversion to paying taxes has become a common phenomenon. Generally, the upper and upper-middle classes do not feel the moral obligation to contribute to the public coffers, nor are they aware of their importance, not only for reducing inequality, but also for good economic performance of the country as a whole. The reasons for such behaviours are nothing but the concept of redistribution is an alien idea for them and the taxes were treated as the synonym with stagnation, waste and inefficiency. The consequences of the inability to understand the collective goods attacked the inequality in the society seriously which is denoted as the fractured society by David Castells-Quintana, the economics professor who points out the consequence that generated the extreme political conditions and the permanent social conflicts.

Privatization

The indigenous communities are becoming fragile due to the globalization of resources and the privatization of markets. The indigenous communities of Latin America lives on the lands that contain the strategic resources for market exploitation such as water, oil, gas, forest and biodiversity which made them vulnerable to the liberal market system. They are eventually losing economic and social ground by losing control over their lands, waters, and other natural resources. Both academic researchers and indigenous organizations show that market-driven global processes are increasing environmental deterioration and poverty in indigenous communities, blocking the viability of sustainable indigenous communities and societies. The political and economic speculation brought by the spread of globalization shove the indigenous people to engage in new forms of fighting while concentrating on consolidating their autonomy. National indigenous federation AIDSESEP's Beatriz Huertas says indigenous peoples in "isolation"

refuse sustained, direct contact with “outsiders” and are extremely vulnerable to the invasion of their territories because of their total reliance on the forest for their lives and livelihoods, and because of their lack of immunological defences which can decimate them if contact is made. Turning to the right to land, territories and resources, she said the report discussed securing ancestral lands and waters in a manner that provided the basis for indigenous peoples’ economic, social, cultural and spiritual development. Those areas were particularly vulnerable to climate change policies and laws. The judicial procedures or the policies that sought to build dams and wind farms, or to plant bio fuels, create incentives for relocating indigenous peoples which in turn denies their rights. The right to free, prior and knowledgeable consent was associated to those for self-determination participation. “Free” meant that indigenous peoples should not face any coercion or intimidation. “Prior” meant that their consent must be sought sufficiently in advance of the start of any activities. It also should include accurate information about the nature and reversibility of any project. Indeed, opportunities had to be provided for indigenous peoples to debate any proposal that might affect them. The indigenous communities are often displaced without proper knowledge on the policies and moved to the unfamiliar places. They become more vulnerable in every aspect in the new life that is started (i.e.) jobs, education and facilities are received after struggles.

Political corruption

Many countries lack strong, independent regulators and justice systems, allowing corruption to flourish in political campaigns and government contracting. Peru’s past four presidents have all been ordered to be detained on corruption charges though each has denied wrongdoing. With weak institutions, George Mason University political scientist Jo-Marie Burt said, it becomes more difficult to address problems. In some countries, “there’s an inability to process social conflict through normal political channels. So you we end up seeing street protests” or the dissolution of congress.

Poverty

Poverty rates among the indigenous people paralyse their socio economic status of the community which drives core reason for the protest movements in Latin America. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) said the proportion of people in extreme poverty, which is characterized by lack of access to basic human necessities like food and shelter, rose to 10.2 per cent of the population in 2017, or 62 million people, from 9.9 per cent in 2016. The poverty gap (average difference between the incomes of the poor and the poverty line) among indigenous peoples is also deeper, and shrank more slowly over the decade, compared to the same indicators among non-indigenous populations. In the countries like Mexico, Guatemala and Bolivia the national poverty rates declined where the poverty gap, as well as the poverty rate, diminish more

slowly for indigenous people relative to the rest of the population. In fact, in Bolivia, the indigenous poverty gap actually increased. The poverty gap between the indigenous people and others are widening and the reasons are unclear. The reports submitted by the World Bank shows the per cent age of the poverty gap faced by the indigenous communities in Latin America is illustrated with the statistical reports. The remaining 8 per cent points remain unexplained, suggesting that indigenous communities face unique challenges in moving out of poverty.

A brief note on the developments

The stated causes aid to understand the reasons for the protest and the dissatisfaction that is building upon in the minds of the people. In Latin America the year begins with Juan Guaido Auto proclaiming himself as the interim president of Venezuela provoking huge protests in the streets of Caracas and other cities. Throughout the year, malaise in the region increased as did the idea that citizens have the power and capacity to organise themselves and influence the policies of their governments. However, the disproportionate use of violence and repression against protesters in the region has also been a common yet worrying theme, which represents a serious threat to democracy in Latin America. During the first two weeks of October, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Quito to express their collective frustration about the aggressive economic measures of Lenin Moreno's government, who had previously negotiated a set of austerity measures with the IMF that would have negatively affected the most vulnerable of Ecuadorian society. The straw that broke the camel's back was the rise in petrol prices presented alongside other cuts in order to reduce the country's deficit to pay off its IMF debt, a project known as the 'paquetazo' in Ecuador.

In 2019 a violent battle between riot police and protesters began when the enraged indigenous communities and other social sectors by the measures decided to mobilise and travelled to the capital. Indigenous communities in Ecuador have been victims of extractivist exploitation for centuries, and it was also a general rejection of petrol extraction, deforestation, and mining that led them to march in Quito. The indigenous groups successfully negotiated with the Ecuador government after the 12 days of conflict. The leaders and the communities camped out in Quito until Moreno responded to their demands. They agreed to abandon the 'paquetazo'. On the other hand most of the initiatives taken to increase the economy of the states are failed by the corrupt governments. The projects are often negotiated behind the backs of indigenous peoples, in open violation of Convention 169 of the ILO that states that indigenous peoples have the right to be consulted before decisions that affect their territories or natural resources are made.

In this context, many indigenous people perceive “globalization” as a euphemism for a second colonization. The following statement from the “Abya Yala Indigenous Peoples' Mandate,” from a continental congress of indigenous peoples in Quito in 2002, is typical of dozens more emanating from indigenous federations and gatherings in recent years. “This one, directed to the ministers for economic issues in the Americas, states: It has come to our attention that, representing various countries, you are meeting to design a project for Latin American integration. However, we who were the first inhabitants of these lands, and therefore the hosts, have not been notified, much less consulted. Because of this, we consider your presence to be suspect and unwelcome”.

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) called free trade pacts “a new crusade to re-colonize our territories, our cultures, our consciences, and nature itself.” The “Declaration of Chilpancingo,” produced at the National Gathering of Indigenous Mexican Peoples and Organizations in Mexico in 2002, talked about trade pacts “which turn over our sovereignty to large national and transnational capital, turn their backs on the interests of the majority, and seek to maintain a homogeneous nation, rejecting the plurality and diversity of the peoples. The wide spread understanding of globalisation and the discomfort faced by the indigenous communities are voiced out in the international forums by Nongovernmental organisations. In Ecuador, unrest blew up after President Lenin Moreno ended fuel subsidies. Thus protests are happening against every single issue which evidently shows the rising expectations of the people and the inability of the government to satisfy the need.

“We feel like we’ve been hijacked by the protesters who have their own agenda on this,” said Theresa Tait Day, whose hereditary name is Wi’haliy’Te. “They’ve used our people to advance their agenda.”. The issues among the protesters are being deviated or misunderstanding of the proper policies which is often utilized by the opposition parties to gain popularity. The successful individuals command their people and organize protest movements. Apparently the globalized media houses voice the leader’s opinion to the world against globalization. Tait Day, president of a group called the Wet’suwet’en Matrilineal Coalition who was stripped of her title of hereditary chief after supporting the Coastal Gas Link project, testified at a parliamentary committee in Ottawa. According to a statement released by Tait Day, only a limited number of Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs oppose the pipeline and the broader community wants it to proceed, including the majority of the elected chiefs. The lack of confidence and unclear vision on development dilutes the demands of the indigenous movements in the recent times.

Major Trends

The understanding of the major trends in the recent protest are analysed through the comparative study of the earlier movements and the later protest movements. Earlier in

the 20th century the goals of the protest movements are the fundamental rights, more recognition in the social and political life and greater representation in political decision making. The 21st century protests have a shift in demands which demanded more economic opportunities, to stop violence against them and equality in the society. New balance of international powers in the region provides Latin American countries with new options and creates more competition for both economic opportunities and political influence. Indigenous peoples have historically had to build their political entities inside nation-states, which mediated and still mediate many of their relationships with the world. While a decade ago, they took their concerns only to the state, now they also go to the international arena. The indigenous people began to deal the problems directly when their political powers expanded, they approached the multilateral organizations like the World Bank, the Inter American Development Bank (IDB), the Ibero-American Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (a multilateral organization created by the Ibero-American heads of state, also known as the Indigenous Fund), and the Andean Community of Nations. They approach them looking for consent on projects and consensus around political operations which in turn the corporations negotiate local investment and resource exploitation projects directly with local indigenous leaders.

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

Earlier the protest was coup d'état and violent in manner. The Zapatista army of national liberation in 1994 are the guerrilla groups who waged a war against the ruling party and brought significant changes in the governing system itself. They were based in Chiapas state rainforest in Mexico and demanded for land reforms and political autonomy. Since 2014 the unrest caused in the region because of "Latin American spring movement" started in Venezuela against the president Nicola Maduro. When the protest was controlled violently it started spreading to neighbouring countries to Guatemala,

Ecuador and gradually to all other countries. The core cause shifted to corruption and the region witnessed a series of protest movements. The recent movements are street protests and started in a peaceful manner, their voices are heard in the social media and writings in the journals but they face violence in the course of time. Invasions of indigenous territories and attacks and murders of indigenous leaders have increased dramatically since President Bolsonaro took office in January 2019. Indigenous peoples across Brazil are protesting against President Bolsonaro's plan to steal their lands and open them up for exploitation.

Violence against the group is a vital issue addressed in the recent protest movements. Indigenous groups lack education. Most of them live in poverty and the majority of the population face unemployment according to the economic surveys. Thus the youngsters ended up in forced drug trafficking. The vast amounts of drug money washing through Latin America have intensified corruption, fuelling violence and political instability in countries from Colombia to Mexico. In Bolivia, for example, Plan Dignity has been effective not as a challenge to drugs, but as a challenge to popular opposition to privatization of state-owned natural resources. The militarization of these and other countries in Latin America has paved the way for expansion of neoliberal globalization. Bolsonaro has said he wants to assimilate Brazil's indigenous people into Brazilian society and plans to develop the Amazon economically, arguing that the tribes live in dirt poverty. Brazil has the largest number of isolated and uncontacted indigenous groups, 114 of the 185 known to exist in South America, said Vaz, who warned of the risk of ethnocide. According to the press release in February 14, 2020 the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples March was organized. The indigenous women in particular face disproportionately high rates of violence with more than 84 per cent of American Indian and Alaska Native women experiencing violence in their lifetime. The release also says nearly 5,600 Native American women were reported missing last year alone.

Throughout the Americas, indigenous peoples are losing economic and social ground. The rights that they got after long episodes of struggle are not executed or practically applied in the everyday life. The indigenous people fights with the courts to get justice and voice out their struggles in the public spheres. They receive support from minority right people across the world. Their fragile control over their lands, waters, and other natural resources is loosening. Both academic researchers and indigenous organizations show that market-driven global processes are increasing environmental deterioration and poverty in indigenous communities, blocking the viability of sustainable indigenous communities and societies.

On 5 February, 2019 the President signed a draft law known as “PL191/2020”, which allows large-scale mining, oil and gas extraction, and other destructive activities on indigenous territories. It has been sent to a parliamentary commission for approval, and could then be voted on by politicians. The proposal, which Bolsonaro has described as a “dream”, is the latest in of a series of actions in his “war” against Brazil’s indigenous peoples. It violates existing Brazilian legislation, and international law. Indigenous leader Sonia Guajajara tweeted in the social media referring the President’s dream as a night mare and voices their opinions against the mining which causes death and diseases, firmly through these social media. Joenia Wapichana, Brazil’s first indigenous Congresswoman accounted that mining on indigenous land is illegal and against the constitution. It only brings pollution and death. We don’t want the rivers, the forest and indigenous people to die. They emphasise that indigenous peoples depend on their land for their survival. The invasion and theft of their territories could wipe out entire uncontacted tribes – the most vulnerable peoples on the planet. The tribal population that are living in the dense forest rarely comes out and voice their opinions are taking up stands against the government. They take up protest stages to express their infuriation against the destruction of forest in the name of economic developments. The government’s method of handling the issues gives a different angle of perspective altogether.

The comparative analysis of the earlier protest movements and the recent struggles gives a better understanding of the growing trends and developments in the indigenous movements. In many ways the indigenous rights movement itself was “born transnational”. “Transnational organizing and coalition building opened up new opportunities for pueblos to influence national legislative agendas, and many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that specialize in development or human rights came to see indigenous peoples as clients”. In the 1970s, the emerging principles of democracy resulted in the growing establishment of indigenous social-movements and organisations that sprang up from Mexico to Argentina. These organisations typically have their roots in local movements which were formed to defend land rights. Later these movements started to address additional agendas such as bilingual education and respect for traditional indigenous systems of law and self-government.

By the 1980s and actively supported by international donor organisations and other stakeholders, including human rights organisations, churches, and environmentalist groups, national-level indigenous organisations had formed in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. At the same time, organisations covering specific and often large regions within states were active in Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru. Some of these national organisations had only very limited funding at their disposal and were initially only loosely organized but they nevertheless increasingly provided a platform for interaction with national and international actors regarding economic

development and human rights policies. Local protests in the earlier period i.e. late 20th century and early 21st century received positive responses for their demands. The recent movements are voiced out publicly through various social media which invites sympathy wave from subaltern right activists across the world.

The indigenous movements echoed in the Global arena which reflected in 2007 UNGA adopting a resolution. United Nations General Assembly passed on the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People. UNDRIP was adopted by 144 countries across the world. The declaration is the product of almost 25 years of deliberation by UN member states and Indigenous people. All over the world we are witnessing a resurgence of native culture, native claim and native pride. The involvement of major international actors such as NGOs, take up these issues across the world. The concept of globalization becomes the primary reason to start the movements in most of the developing countries. The spread of globalization was looked upon as the new style of colonization. Also the network and technology that connects the whole world facilitates the spread of indigenous struggles and their demands to the global level.

Forecast in 2020

The indigenous population is not the entire population of the land. Their demands through political change do not stand as the representation of the whole of the state. For example, the decline of one of the indigenous movements in Ecuador which was earlier started as the representative capacity of the Ecuadorian party: Pachakutik. It was formed in 1996 and became a political branch of CONAI (confederation). It won the elections, one of the presidents was from this party and they were quite successful in their initial years. But people started losing hope in the party. They considered the party after obtaining political representation they have compromised many of their demands. This is because the vision of development is different for the indigenous people and the policy makers. The reason is both of them are stating at the different positions and looking for a change. Poverty is the state of indigenous people and better development in infrastructure is the need of the elites. This inequality destabilises both the demand and the protest has been spread to all category of the people which has resulted in the decade of protest for Latin America Latin America's citizens are angry at their political system.

Mass direct action has toppled governments in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Argentina. Government proposals to privatize public services have been soundly defeated in Uruguay, Peru, and Bolivia. In Mexico, the peasants of San Salvador Atenco blocked plans to build a new airport on their agricultural lands, and in Peru the peasants and provincial authorities in Tambo Grande kept agricultural land from being taken over by a multinational mining company. In opposition to this agenda, the new subaltern movements offer a politics of hope, which is the focus of this special issue of Socialism

and Democracy. Analysis of Latin America's anti-systemic rebellions and social movements becomes all the more imperative as the US hastily regroups forces to restore the neoliberal order, which has been under attack since the early 1990s.

Latin America will face a major challenge of engaging in a complex global sphere if countries do not achieve a higher degree of coordination and regional integration. Brazil is already playing an important global role, while Mexico may move in the same direction, depending on its international priorities. For many emerging powers, several obstacles are preventing the transition from middle-income to high-income status. Whether a middle-income trap exists or not (the question is currently under debate), Latin America is not immune to the possible dangers. Global scenarios highlight these risks and reinforce the need for strong policies to ensure growth and governability. Latin America's governance advantage may be undone by political and drug-related violence, especially in Mexico and Central America. South America also faces an ongoing risk of political violence (particularly in Colombia) and instability if institutions are not modernized to channel citizens' demands for public goods, transparency, and participation. Exploring alternative worlds can allow us to identify national or regional issues that could be better addressed by expanding our view beyond the local level. Each of these global trends will significantly affect Latin America. The communities that protest is often unclear with their demands. The untouched indigenous tribal communities wish for a forestation and freedom from the modern society.

The indigenous communities living in the towns and villages who fought their rights and had it wants equality and better lifestyle in the society. The failure of the government policies affects the indigenous people and push them to the pathetic conditions. They demand for further inclusion of their community in the economic progression. Also, the leaders of the indigenous communities claim to be against the globalization and demands for backward reforms which made the indigenous movements weaker in the recent times. The ambiguous reasons and demands of the indigenous communities' limits to the researcher to analyse the future of the protest movements. Although the recent protests are becoming weaker the earlier protests lead by the indigenous communities have inspired and ignited the episodes of protests in Latin America. The future is expected to include the styles of protest by indigenous people that was followed a decade ago will be utilized by the frustrated middle class of the Latin American countries.

The study on the indigenous movements in Latin America with the focus on solving economic crisis draws the attention to the small group that lives unrecognised and voiceless who are facing major problems. They are often ignored by the policy maker which results in violent protest movements on social and economic recognitions. The study limits the various social reasons that shape the indigenous protest movements. In Latin America the protest movements are very strong which in consequence shakes the

stability of the state itself. The major problems across the Latin American countries are connected with the thread of basic unheard problems of the communities that are spread across the nation states. The research looks for the scope of analysing the spread of similar problems across the territories and the combined organized movements by the common name “indigenous communities”. The hypothesis of the paper insists that the economic issues are common among the Latin American citizens and worse among the indigenous communities. The increase in economic inequality among the indigenous communities leads to the rise of protest movements in Latin America.

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