

# Revolution from Below: Cleavage Displacement and the Collapse of Elite Politics in Bolivia

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## Abstract

For fifty years, Bolivia's political party system was a surprisingly robust component of an otherwise fragile democracy, withstanding coups, hyperinflation, guerrilla insurgencies, and economic chaos. Why did it suddenly collapse around 2002? This article offers a theoretical lens combining cleavage theory with Schattschneider's concept of competitive dimensions for an empirical analysis of the structural and ideological characteristics of Bolivia's party system from 1952 to 2010. Politics shifted from a conventional left-right axis of competition, unsuited to Bolivian society, to an ethnic/rural–cosmopolitan/urban axis closely aligned with its major social cleavage. That shift fatally undermined elite parties and facilitated the rise of structurally and ideologically distinct organizations, as well as a new indigenous political class, that transformed the country's politics. Decentralization and political liberalization were the triggers that politicized Bolivia's latent cleavage, sparking revolution from below. The article suggests a folk theorem of identitarian cleavage and outlines a mechanism linking deep social cleavage to sudden political change.

## Keywords

cleavage theory, political parties, elite politics, decentralization, Latin America

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Why do entire political party systems suddenly collapse? As traditional electoral coalitions fall apart in stable democracies such as the United Kingdom and the United States and establishment parties bleed votes all over Europe, while new parties and movements mushroom to the left and right, the question demands to be answered. And not just in developed countries—in countries as diverse as Brazil, India, Peru, and Venezuela party systems are under severe stress. In many, entire systems have already given way, and their inheritors now appear poised to repeat the experience.

The collapse of individual parties is more common and more often analyzed. Prominent examples include Whig parties in the United Kingdom and United States, the Italian Socialist Party, and the Argentine Radical Party. But it is the collapse of entire political party systems that concerns us here. That is a larger, more complex issue posing far greater dangers for affected societies, and it is accordingly more difficult to analyze.

When a political party system collapses, not only a large number of organizations disappear but an established axis of competition, political discourse, and ideological space previously understood to encompass a society's most pressing needs disappears as well. This condition is distinct from a country's parties disappearing and being replaced by new parties espousing positions along the same axis of competition, for example, left/pro-worker versus right/pro-capital. Although certainly dramatic, such a change would not meet the strict definition of system collapse I employ. If, by contrast, all a country's parties collapsed and its axis of competition shifted from, say, left versus right to green/pro-environment versus brown/pro-growth<sup>1</sup> or, equivalently, if the meanings of left and right changed substantially,<sup>2</sup> then my criteria for system collapse would be satisfied.

One of the most dramatic and complete examples of political system collapse in recent decades is Bolivia. According to received wisdom, Bolivia is the archetypal example of political instability, with supposedly, and famously, more coups d'état than its 193 years of independence.<sup>3</sup> Much less well known is that during the second half of the twentieth century its political party system was remarkably robust, withstanding a series of shocks unknown in most countries. A partial list includes hyperinflation and economic chaos, repeated coups, civil strife, international price collapses, guerrilla insurgency, and striking levels of social change. Through all these crises, any one of which might have felled a less robust party system, the same parties—indeed the same individuals—returned again and again to take up the reins of power.<sup>4</sup>

Then in 2002, when Bolivian politics appeared to outsiders to have become “boring” and predictable, a series of demonstrations against a proposed gas pipeline to Chile morphed into a popular uprising in El Alto and La Paz that not only destroyed the government of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and sank his ruling coalition but overturned the political party system. Fernando Molina refers to a “revolutionary period” that took the country to the brink of civil war before the establishment was finally defeated.<sup>5</sup>

The scale and speed of the political system's collapse were extraordinary. Of the three establishment governing parties, two—the ADN and MIR—were by 2005 unable to field candidates, and the third—the MNR—gained just 6 percent of the vote. By

2009 MDR, too, had disappeared from the ballot. They were replaced by new parties that were creatures of Bolivia's rural, poor, ethnically diverse countryside.<sup>6</sup>

How can we explain such revolutionary change in a nation's politics? Understanding this case is important, and not just for its own sake. Bolivia opens an analytical window on how and why party systems collapse more generally, which can, in turn, help explain the ideological and organizational characteristics of the realigned systems that follow. Why Bolivia? Because its politics were never as institutionalized, nor were its parties as strong, as in the more developed countries of Latin America, let alone in North America and Europe. And yet it suffered many of the same economic shocks, technological disruptions, and social changes as far richer, more developed countries. As a result, the disintegration of its politics began earlier and proceeded faster than elsewhere. In an important sense, Bolivia is at the leading edge of a wave of change currently affecting countries across Latin America, Europe, and indeed the entire globe. Hence understanding what happened there offers interesting insights into how political disintegration and recomposition are likely to operate further afield.

This article dissects the development of Bolivia's political party system from the 1952–53 National Revolution through its collapse and reconstitution in a very different form. Empirically, I combine the Bolivian Electoral Atlas<sup>7</sup>—a wonderful resource that updates and significantly corrects previously available electoral data, disaggregated to the municipal level—with interviews of key political leaders over two decades (see App. 3). To this I add survey data from *Latinobarómetro* and an extensive Bolivian bibliography. I use that evidence to analyze the collapse and reformulation of Bolivia's politics through a theoretical lens that combines cleavage theory with Schattschneider's concept of competitive dimensions in politics. The result is a theoretical mechanism connecting enduring social cleavages to the characteristics of party systems that can explain sudden and decisive political change.

I argue that in Bolivia's incompletely institutionalized democracy,<sup>8</sup> the national political party system was not organized around the major cleavage that characterizes society. It reflected, rather, a subordinate cleavage relevant for a minority of the population, which was imposed from above by political elites who rode the 1952–53 revolution to power and was maintained by their descendants. Elites in effect tried to rewrite the identities of rural Bolivians away from their indigenous roots and render them workers. In the context of a low-income country with partial democratic incorporation, that cleavage became “frozen,” sustained by a fiscal architecture and electoral laws that supported elite dominance of Bolivia's politics.

Institutional reforms triggered sweeping change. Decentralization had the unintended effect of revealing the underlying regional and ethnic conflicts that actually cleave Bolivian society. Electoral reforms broke the oligopoly that upheld the artificial cleavage. Repeated subnational elections revealed both the misalignment and a new generation of leaders, who emerged from the grass roots of society. Traditional parties, moreover, failed to decentralize themselves internally to accommodate the twin challenges of new political actors and surging citizen participation. And so Bolivia's parties and left-right party system collapsed under the weight of their own irrelevance and

inflexibility. They were replaced by parties and movements that are organizationally and ideologically distinct. Those actors define a system that pits rurally based, culturally defined parties—who proclaim themselves left-indigenist but, once in power, act in ways that transcend the old left-right divide—against an urban, cosmopolitan, non-identitarian opposition.

The insights yielded by this approach likely apply beyond Bolivia, to countries as diverse as France, Venezuela, Italy, Ecuador, and Peru, which also saw their politics collapse.<sup>9</sup> It is likely that colonization, the Cold War, and broader institutional mimicry have endowed many developing countries with political systems that do not map their main social cleavages. The rest of this article examines the components of my argument one by one.

### **Theory: Stability and Collapse in Party Systems**

I follow Sartori along with Mainwaring and Scully in defining parties as political organizations that present candidates at elections and are thereby capable of placing individuals into public office.<sup>10</sup> Party systems are the patterns of interactions resulting from interparty competition; they are more than the sum of their parties. They can be characterized as stable equilibria in which parties compete for votes by occupying discrete positions in multidimensional policy/value space, as well as by providing jobs, benefits, and other nonrepresentational goods to partisans.

A rich vein of research in comparative politics analyzes the origins and characteristics of political party systems. Yashar's series of studies of the rise of indigenous politics in Latin America is close to the thematic focus here.<sup>11</sup> As state reforms restricted indigenous people's access to public resources, reduced their opportunities for policy engagement with the state, "and jeopardized pockets of local political, material, and cultural autonomy that indigenous communities had carved out,"<sup>12</sup> such communities mobilized around their indigenous—as distinct from worker or peasant—identity instead. Two further elements proved crucial: concurrent political liberalization ensured them the right to organize, and preexisting rural networks provided organizational capacity they were able to leverage for political ends.

Yashar's argument is historically well grounded; it is well suited to explain the rise of indigenous politics in some Latin American countries and not others. But our puzzle is larger: the collapse and wholesale replacement of a well-established party system, which had proved itself robust to extraordinary shocks, with a new politics of identity. That requires a theory that can explain key ideological and organizational characteristics of the previous political system, why and how it might collapse, and the nature of the politics that replace it as one salient feature of a more general theory. The next section lays out the building blocks of such a theory.

Few studies investigate party collapse. Four that do are by Lupu, Morgan, and Cyr.<sup>13</sup> Lupu focuses on the breakdown of individual political parties, as distinct from party systems. Between 1978 and 2007, he points out, one-quarter of Latin America's parties suddenly became uncompetitive in national elections. Why? Lupu explains this as a combination of poor performance in office and "brand dilution": the muddying of

party identity through policy switches or opportunistic coalitions. Parties with clear, distinct “brands” can withstand a period of poor performance, and parties judged to have wielded power well can withstand brand dilution. But parties that muddy their identities and govern badly see support collapse.

As we shall see, that logic is very likely applicable to the MIR and MNR and possibly to the ADN too. But what happened in Bolivia goes beyond the collapse of individual parties. The process Lupu describes is a competitive dynamic in which voters switch preferences among established alternatives arrayed along a dominant axis. System collapse, by contrast, occurs when all parties collapse and take the dominant axis with them. In competitive terms, it is a singularity that destroys the possibility of a new equilibrium in the preexisting policy space. After the collapse, voters will be faced with a new axis of competition in which preferences are aggregated and policies designed in different ways. It is a fundamentally different phenomenon requiring different theoretical tools.

Morgan provides such tools, comparing political system collapses in Bolivia, Colombia, Italy, and Venezuela. Her theory is based on three distinct types of “linkage” that parties use to intermeditate between society and the state: (a) programmatic linkages, (b) clientelism, and (c) interest incorporation, in which benefits are restricted to a group but distribution is not controlled by the party. Examples include seats on party boards and spaces on party lists. Parties may blend different types of appeals. Each kind of linkage can fail, for different reasons. Programmatic linkages fail when the programmatic differences between parties become blurred; crises tend to provoke blurring. Clientelistic linkages fail when social change increases demand for benefits but available resources are constrained. And interest incorporation degrades when social transformation demands adjustment by party systems to emerging interests, but parties’ organizational constraints make that difficult. Morgan’s theory of party system collapse is simply the sum of all of these factors.

Morgan’s theory is carefully argued and matches her Venezuelan evidence well. But it is ultimately built around benefits and their conditionality. Although they are important, benefits are only part of the story and for Bolivia the less important part. Another is the policy dimensions, or issue areas, along which benefits and services of any given value are provided. It is not the same, for example, for a village government to spend \$1,000 on vaccines, machetes, or entertainment at the village fair, even if the cost is held constant and the same voters benefit. As parties choose among competing options, they also make implicit choices among competing values in a way that implies a particular development path for society. Rival parties, in competitive responses, will choose different expenditures based on different values. But they will do so along a given axis that represents coherent combinations in multidimensional policy space. A system’s major axis of political competition should match society’s underlying characteristics. The targeting of benefits is a separate question but not a more important one.

Cyr examines a time when parties were able to survive and rebound from national party system collapses in Bolivia, Peru, and Venezuela.<sup>14</sup> She finds that national-level comeback requires command over organizational and social resources. Absent one, a

party may be able to survive; absent both, it is likely to collapse alongside the party system. In another study Cyr examines social conflicts that led to party system change, arguing that ruling party elites deployed strategies of adoption, exclusion, co-optation, and appropriation to try to neutralize social conflicts and preserve the status quo in Bolivia.<sup>15</sup> The decisions they took shaped the impact of societal demands in ways that—intentionally or not—led to the collapse of the existing party system and the birth of a very different one. Accepting her argument about the importance of elite strategies, this article seeks to understand the underlying reasons why elite politics and social demands were critically mismatched and why that mismatch led to system collapse and the birth of a new kind of politics.

### *Cleavages and Competitive Dimensions*

To understand when and why party systems collapse, we must first understand the deeper forces from which they emerged and that continue to sustain them. We must go beyond the relatively narrow conception of politics as resource distribution and understand the underlying conflicts of ideas and values that characterize society. How are some of those selectively activated by political elites and mapped onto a party system?<sup>16</sup> This section develops a framework that marries Lipset and Rokkan's influential theory of social cleavages as the deep underpinnings of political party systems to Schattschneider's related concept of competitive dimensions and dimensional replacement in politics.<sup>17</sup>

In their seminal contribution, Lipset and Rokkan posit an alternative to the fluid, continuous adjustments assumed by the Downsian market-like mechanism for understanding how parties position and reposition themselves in response to changing voter sentiment.<sup>18</sup> In their conception, parties and party systems emerge in response to underlying sociopolitical cleavages in society. There is ideological and organizational "stickiness" in the process, and political cleavages can become frozen even as underlying social characteristics change. Hence adjustment, when it happens, is potentially more dramatic than in a Downsian world.

Because the cleavages that divide voters are systematic, their preferences are durably connected in multidimensional policy space: hence "issue coherence." Parties thus make programmatic commitments across different issues that are self-reinforcing. This implies punctuated processes of party system change in response to external shocks, which cause sudden jumps between equilibria or a lurch away from equilibrium altogether.

A second source of stickiness is parties' internal organization. According to Lipset and Rokkan, a party's strategic flexibility on important issues is constrained to the extent that it has a loyal constituency, activist volunteers, self-replicating leadership, clear programmatic identity, and possibly a decentralized internal structure. These attributes limit a party's ability to change position on issues of underlying conflict. Parties thus spend most of their lives seeking local, and not global, maxima.<sup>19</sup> Such discontinuities explain one of cleavage theory's fundamental claims—that party system change comes in the form of rising (new) parties, not established party adaptation.

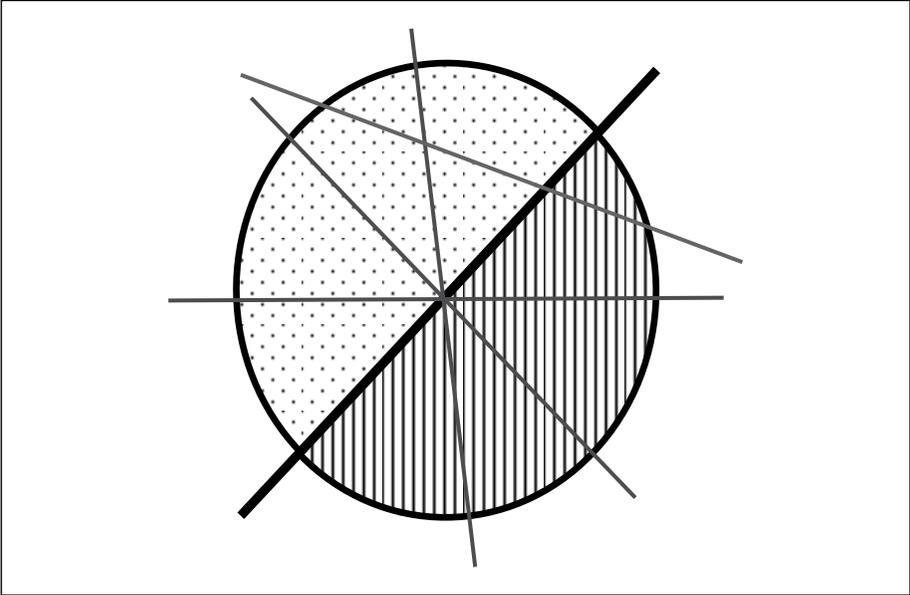
But what are the cleavages? In Western Europe, according to Lipset and Rokkan, two overarching historical processes produced four key cleavages. The national revolution produced cleavages (a) between centralizing nation-builders and (ethnically/religiously/linguistically) distinct communities in the periphery and (b) between the central state and the supranational Roman Catholic Church. The Industrial Revolution produced (c) an urban/industrial–rural/landholder cleavage and (d) a later one between workers and owners. Any society will contain additional cleavages of varying depth and importance. But in Western European countries these are the key conflicts that define political competition.

Lipset and Rokkan show that for Europe, the center-periphery, state-Church, and land-industry cleavages marked national party systems deeply; the owner-worker cleavage is the least important of the four. Bolivia has some similarities, as we shall see below: the 1952–53 National Revolution produced a stark center-periphery cleavage. But conditions never permitted a worker-owner cleavage to emerge, let alone to dominate.

The reason, in large part, is that throughout Latin America—indeed through much of the developing world—colonialism created powerful cleavages around race, ethnicity, and identity more broadly. In Latin America, the shock of colonialization caused a decline of the indigenous population in excess of 90 percent in many regions, which disrupted and remade societies more powerfully than nationalism or industrialization in Europe. And so race has proved the most powerful cleavage in many Latin countries. Colonialism produced a geographic cleavage too, as colonial powers divided land among and within colonies in historically novel ways.<sup>20</sup>

Iberian colonizers arrived in initially small numbers as a racially and culturally distinct group to extract minerals and labor and rule over their newly conquered lands. In Spanish America, colonial institutions codified and reified racial distinctions, imposing under the *República de Españoles* for whites separate obligations, privileges, and systems of justice from those for indigenous subjects under the *República de Indios*.<sup>21</sup> Institutional reinforcement and path dependence help explain how social differences initially based on genetics and visible racial markers survived extensive racial mixing over the five centuries that followed.

The landowning and commercial elites who led the region's movements of independence from Spain clung to the democratic ideals of the enlightenment. But in most of these countries they formed a small minority of the population. The political parties—and hence party systems—they founded at independence could not map the major racial cleavages that defined their societies without elites quickly losing control. Instead they established highly restricted democracies in which only white, propertied men could vote. And they founded political parties around the anticlerical/commercial (liberal)–clerical/landowning (conservative) cleavage that characterized their own social stratum but was meaningless to the disenfranchised indigenous and mestizo majority.<sup>22</sup> Over the century and a half that followed, those systems incorporated poorer, lower-status voters by shifting toward conventional left/worker–right/owner axes—a configuration that elites could continue to dominate, as distinct from one based on ethnicity.



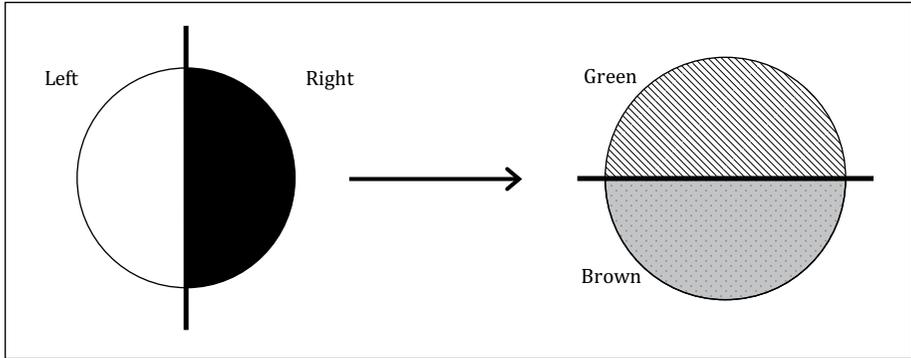
**Figure 1.** Major and Subordinate Social Cleavages.

**Source:** Author's elaboration.

How can a political system ignore a society's major cleavage? Schattschneider's theory linking political organization to dimensions of contestation offers a powerful way in.<sup>23</sup> Any society is full of cleavages, in the sense of fault lines that divide the population into coherent groups. They manifest themselves as competing priorities over values and resources and hence distinct alternatives in policy space. A stylized society might look like Figure 1, defined by a major (diagonal) cleavage (e.g., religion) but also subordinate cleavages (e.g., region, urban-rural, ethnicity, class)

Some of those cleavages are major, most are minor, and some may be trivial.<sup>24</sup> They can be of different sizes; I have drawn only one as a clear majority-minority split, but that is an arbitrary choice.

Lipset and Rokkan's insight is that major cleavages emerge from deep historical processes and that those in turn determine political party systems. Schattschneider adds agency. Any country, he emphasizes, has many social cleavages, and it is political elites who select which to activate politically—actively or passively—in the sense of founding parties and articulating demands and political discourses grounded in a particular cleavage, ignoring or subsuming others. Often that happens at critical junctures in a country's history,<sup>25</sup> when previously dominant parties or elites are weakened and power is in effect redistributed among social groups. The cleavage they choose may or may not be the country's primary social divide. But a safe bet is that it will be convenient to the actors doing the choosing. In Bolivia, convenience clearly trumped primacy, as we shall see below.



**Figure 2.** Political Competition as Dimensional Replacement.

**Source:** Author's elaboration.

### *Dimensional Replacement = Political Collapse*

Schattschneider emphasizes that democratic political outcomes depend on how people are divided into competing groups and by extension on which of the many conflicts become dominant. Hence the definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power. The most devastating strategy is the substitution of conflicts.

Figure 2, for example, shows politics aligned along a classic left/workers–right/owners cleavage. In such a system, a party invests heavily to convince floating voters not just that one side of the dominant divide is superior but also that it is the most competent exponent of that position. Politicians invest throughout their careers to demonstrate their vote-winning ability and their implementational skill once in office. Emerging rivals who compete with established actors on these terms are ultimately incrementalists, even when they succeed.

The way to vanquish established parties—the transformative play—is to substitute for the dominant set of conflicts a new set in a different dimension. We might read our illustration as the substitution of left-right with a green/environmental–brown/pro-growth axis, for example, or as in Bolivia one based on ethnolinguistic identity. Dimensional replacement destroys the reputations, political capital, and ideological assets of established parties not by sullyng them but by making them irrelevant in a new politics that divides voters along a different plane.

### **Political Disintegration: Party System Collapse from Below**

Now let us turn to empirical evidence on Bolivia's political parties and the system they make up. If my thesis is correct, what would we expect to see? An array of parties along a left/worker–right/capital axis that persists over time and through diverse

**Table 1.** Elected Presidents of Bolivia.

Year	Party	President
1952	MNR	Victor Paz Estenssoro
1956	MNR	Hernán Siles Zuazo
1960	MNR	Victor Paz Estenssoro
1964	MNR	Victor Paz Estenssoro
•		
•		
•		
1982	MNRI-MIR*	Hernán Siles Zuazo
1985	MNR	Victor Paz Estenssoro
1989	MIR	Jaime Paz Zamora
1993	MNR	Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada
1997	ADN-MIR	Hugo Banzer
2002	MNR	Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada

**Note:** “Party” is the governing party or lead party or parties of a governing coalition. The three vertical dots indicate that the period between 1964 and 1982 was marked by a succession of military regimes, interspersed with a few civilian presidencies, in a context of high political instability.

**Source:** D. Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook*, vol. 2: *South America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

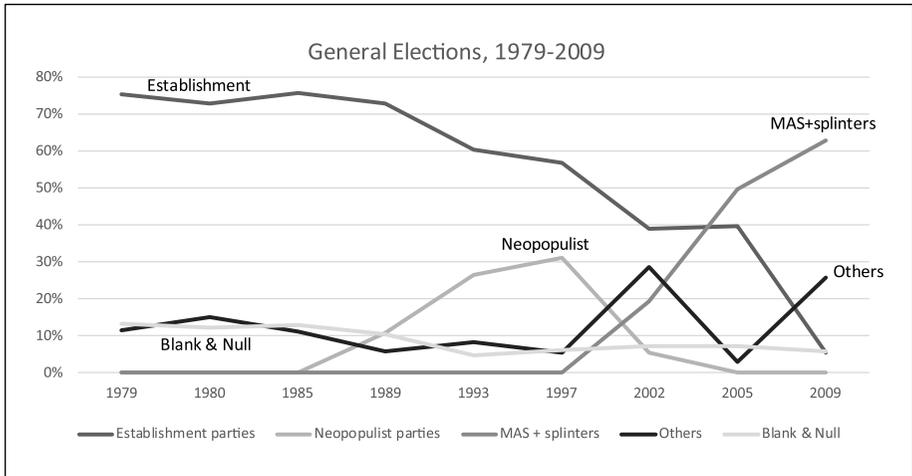
\*The MNRI was a leftist offshoot of the main MNR.

shocks, followed by the collapse of this system—not just individual parties—and its replacement by a new set of new parties arrayed along a different competitive axis. Rather than conventional left-right, the new axis should map onto Bolivia’s major ethnic-identitarian cleavage.

### *A Stable Axis of Competition*

Bolivia’s 1952–53 National Revolution endowed it with a top-down, elite-led political party system. Although competing parties espoused very different ideologies, their internal structures were remarkably similar, with a charismatic leader at the center who exercised power directly and demanded personalized loyalty from party members. Internal party centralization mimicked the country’s administrative organization: power flowed from the presidency directly down to the lowliest rural official lost on the altiplano or the great Eastern plains. And so Bolivia’s governing parties were tightly run by a small group of social and economic elites living in the wealthy neighborhoods of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz.

Table 1 illustrates that a remarkably small number of politicians dominated Bolivia’s politics between 1952 and 2002. Between 1952 and 1985, Bolivia’s revolutionary heroes, Victor Paz Estenssoro and Hernán Siles Zuazo, handed power back and forth to each other. A dark succession of military regimes interrupted this exchange, which resumed with the restoration of democracy in 1982. Their duopoly finally ended with



**Figure 3. General Election Voting Patterns.**  
**Source:** Tribunal Supremo Electoral, <https://www.tse.gob.sv/>.

the election of Jaime Paz Zamora in 1989, but elite politics did not. Paz Zamora had been Siles Zuazo’s vice-president in 1982, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada had been Paz Estenssoro’s minister of planning, and Hugo Banzer—dictator during the 1970s—led the coalition that sustained Paz Zamora.

How did the system evolve beneath the presidential level? Figure 3 shows general election trends between 1979 and 2009, with parties characterized as Establishment, Neopopulist, MAS, and Others (see App. 1). We see that the MNR’s initial hegemony in the 1950s and 1960s had, by 1979, become an establishment hegemony. Together, the MNR and its left-wing offshoots, the MIR and MBL, along with the right-wing ADN reliably captured three-quarters of the popular vote in the four elections between 1979 and 1989. This fraction declined to around 60 percent after 1989 and 40 percent in the early 2000s, before collapsing to 5 percent in 2009.

What caused this collapse? The rise of the neopopulist UCS and Condepa, much feared both within Bolivia and beyond, proved short-lived; both are now defunct. A better explanation for the establishment’s sustained decline is the rise of the MAS, from zero in 1997 to two-thirds of the vote by 2009—similar to the MNR’s postrevolutionary dominance.

So goes the tale of Bolivia’s political transformation as commonly told. But beneath it lies a deeper tale of dimensional replacement. To understand it, consider that Establishment + Other parties together defined a primary, left-right axis of competition typical of many twentieth-century systems. The programmatic alignment of establishment parties along a left-right, labor-capital axis is well documented by students of Bolivian history and politics.<sup>26</sup> Hence I limit myself here to some of the more important facts about each.

At the left-most extremes stood such parties as the Workers' Vanguard and the Revolutionary Worker's Party, advocating for workers and the proletariat. The "mining Marxism" they crafted

represented a programmatic transplant from European Trotskyite parties, with few concessions to the Bolivian reality. This political current proclaimed the central role of the working class in the coming Bolivian socialist revolution, where peasants were subordinate and indigenous issues were not even mentioned.<sup>27</sup>

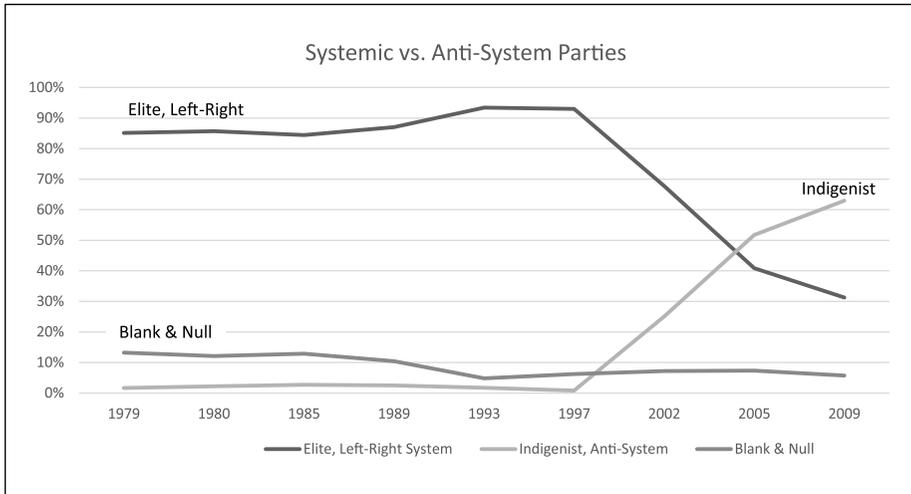
The less radical and, over time, more establishment MIR and MBL favored workers and also peasants. Discarding the far left as ideologically blinkered and with low capacity for action, they sought instead a feasible path to socialism that passed first through urbanization and industrialization.<sup>28</sup>

The MNR straddled the center. It was led for decades by an educated, petit-bourgeois faction that reached out leftward to workers and peasants and rightward to businessmen and professionals. Initially founded as a multiclass, hegemonic party in the style of Mexico's PRI, it denied the existence of ethnic or indigenous cleavages and sought instead to mix the races and build a new, mestizo middle class.<sup>29</sup> The effect of that stance was to suppress Bolivians' ethnicities and rewrite their identities in class terms. Although the MNR did mobilize many (initially most) indigenous voters and channeled benefits to them, it did so as workers, not as indigenous people. The MNR dominated elections through 1964; but it then lost its hegemony as splinters on its left and right wings sought their own voices and vehicles. That process of hegemonic decomposition served also to construct Bolivia's multiparty system, arrayed along a left-right axis of competition, which by the 1980s had gelled into a stable form.

The pro-business, small-state, law-and-order ADN grew out of the 1970s dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer and stood on the center-right. Defending the interests of the urban middle class and especially Eastern business groups, it sought to foment economic growth that was "rapid but orderly."<sup>30</sup> Further to the right, those elements of the older FSB not absorbed by the ADN lived on in the political fringe, strongly pro-Church and modeled on early twentieth-century European fascists.<sup>31</sup>

Neopopulists did not challenge that system in any cogent way. Both the UCS and Condepa were highly personalized, programmatically weak parties that subtracted votes from the establishment, but they did not propose identifiable alternatives to either left-wing or right-wing positions. They approached their peri-urban poor electorate not with proposals to change society but rather with "expressions of solidarity, moral and quotidian in the case of Palenque [Condepa] . . . and economic, via the construction of local public works, in the case of Fernández [UCS]."<sup>32</sup>

Only a few small indigenist parties such as the MITKA and MRTKL remained to offer a genuine challenge to the dominant axis of competition. Those parties, and the indigenous intellectuals who typically led them, transcended the worker-capital debate, viewing Bolivia instead through an explicitly ethnic lens. They rejected the dominant elite, its class-based analysis, and its "modernizing" pretensions as foreign to Bolivia's land and people. Their programmatic appeals rejected capitalism and the



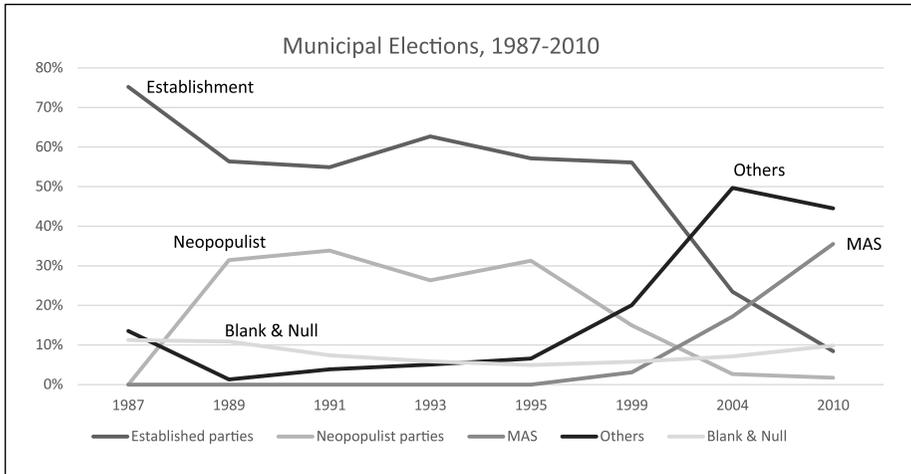
**Figure 4.** Cleavage Shift: National Electoral Results by Major Cleavage, 1979–2009. **Source:** Tribunal Supremo Electoral, <https://www.tse.gob.sv/>.

“capitalist model of society” in favor of a return to pre-Columbian forms of collective property ownership, community self-government, and indigenous traditions of representation and decision making. Indigenism can be viewed as a Lipset-Rokkan reaction of the periphery against the centralizing tendencies of the state and its elites, who sought to build a homogeneous, Spanish-speaking, mestizo society that would subsume Bolivia’s diverse local identities.<sup>33</sup> Until 2002, such parties made little impact.

Figure 4 shows the utter dominance of left-right politics in the 1980s and 1990s. Elite-led parties that accepted the dominant debate won between 84 and 97 percent of the vote between 1979 and 1997; antisystemic, indigenist parties won no more than 3 percent. After 1997 the pattern changes. Systemic parties entered a steep decline and antisystem parties an equally steep ascent. The lines cross in the early 2000s as Bolivia’s main cleavage shifted, and by 2009 antisystem parties were polling twice the old establishment’s vote.

### *Bottom-Up Disintegration*

How did that come about? To understand the drivers of such radical change, we must analyze local electoral dynamics. Figure 5 shows voting trends across all municipalities, summed to national totals. Parties are again categorized as Establishment, Neopopulist, Others, MAS, and Blank + Null votes. The key factors driving these trends is the complete fracture of Bolivian politics, from 7 parties in 1991, to 18 in 1999, to 388 in 2004. Of this last group, most are highly specific to a province, town, or even neighborhood; most garner very few votes nationwide; and some get no votes at all. Figure 5 shows that the establishment’s collapse is



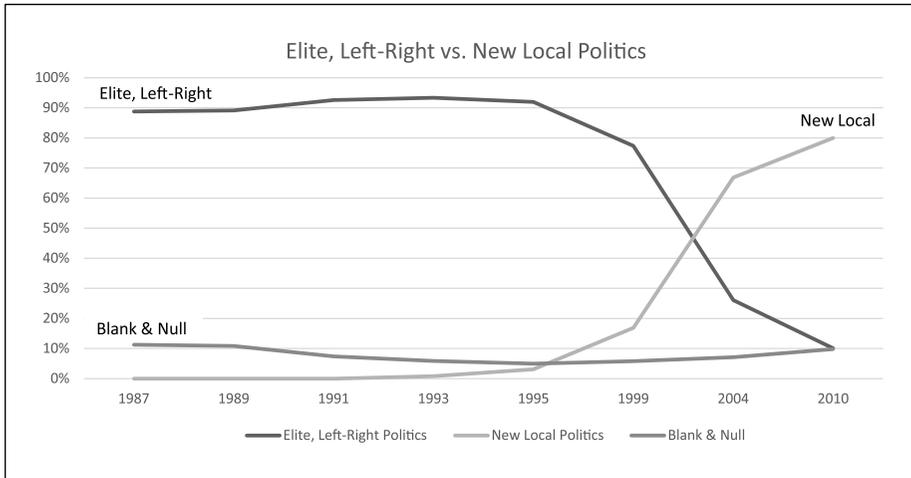
**Figure 5. Municipal Election Voting Patterns.**  
 Source: Tribunal Supremo Electoral, <https://www.tse.gob.sv/>.

mirrored at the local level, where it begins sooner. The biggest difference with national trends is the sustained rise of Other parties, which both precedes and exceeds the rise of the MAS locally.

To understand that rise, we must understand that these are no longer the “Other” parties of the 1980s and 1990s, which were mainly extreme projections on the left-right axis. Rather, these are new and, in their immense majority, highly local parties that came into being only in the early 2000s. Born in the political turmoil that overthrew the establishment, they accompanied the MAS’s rise to national dominance. They are the organizational and ideological cradle of the MAS and active components of its federal structure to this day. The local level is where most of Bolivia’s new politics originate and take place even today. But we miss that fact if we focus only on the national level.

Categorizing these new political parties ideologically is difficult in view of their organizational weakness and sheer number. Rather than systemic versus antisystem, Figure 6 classifies local parties as Elite, Left-Right versus the New Local Politics, the latter often based in social or civic organizations. Although such parties are difficult to characterize programmatically, they do share certain broad characteristics: leadership drawn from “brown Bolivians”; a rural mindset that flourishes in small-town and peri-urban migrant society; localism, meaning political identification with subnational place; a rejection of “neoliberalism,” variously defined; and the rejection of the single, centrally defined concept of “Bolivianness” in favor of “pluri/multi Bolivia” as a collection of different identities.

Figure 6 shows that the elite was completely dominant locally as well until 1995, when its vote share began to decline from 90 percent to 10 percent three elections later. In parallel, we see the rise of the new localism, from 3 percent of the vote in 1995 to 80 percent in 2010. By 2010, Bolivia’s principal cleavage had comprehensively



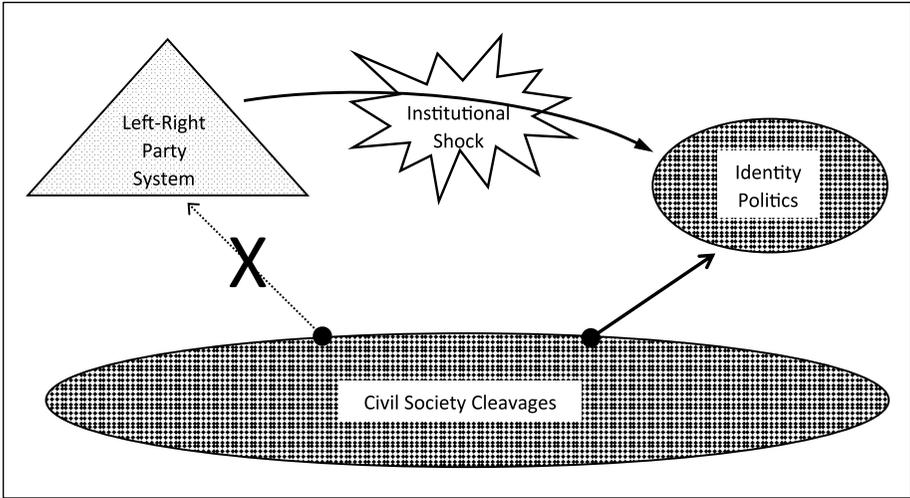
**Figure 6.** Cleavage Shift: Local Electoral Results by Major Cleavage, 1987–2010. **Source:** Tribunal Supremo Electoral, <https://www.tse.gob.sv/>.

shifted, overturning its political party system. What died was not just an important party but an enduring system of politics defined by a left-right, worker-capital axis of competition. In its place is a new system centered on one large federal party, with hundreds of tiny parties revolving around it, defined by the politics of ethnic identity and organizationally rooted in the places that gave them birth. Though still forming, this new system is strikingly different—both ideologically and organizationally—from the politics that came before.

### Explaining Party System Collapse

What caused Bolivia’s political revolution? Why did Bolivian voters abandon stable loyalties to parties and candidates that had withstood political and economic shocks of an extremity unknown in countries not at war? Why did the appeal of well-established parties with stable cadres and extensive experience of government suddenly pale in comparison to new parties that lacked both?

In a nutshell, I argue that a political system organized around a workers-capital dominant axis was wrong for a country that has always lacked both. Bolivia’s party system suited the urban elites who ran the country but was fundamentally disconnected from the society it sought to represent. It survived via a centralized administration that concentrated power in the capital and anticompetitive regulations that repressed new party formation and rural turnout. Decentralization and political liberalization removed these constraints, unleashing a flood of new politicians and parties from Bolivia’s grass roots. This is deeply ironic, as decentralization was explicitly intended to shore up support for establishment parties but ended up giving birth to new political actors that overthrew them. These new actors were deeply



**Figure 7.** Explaining Party System Collapse.

**Source:** Author's elaboration.

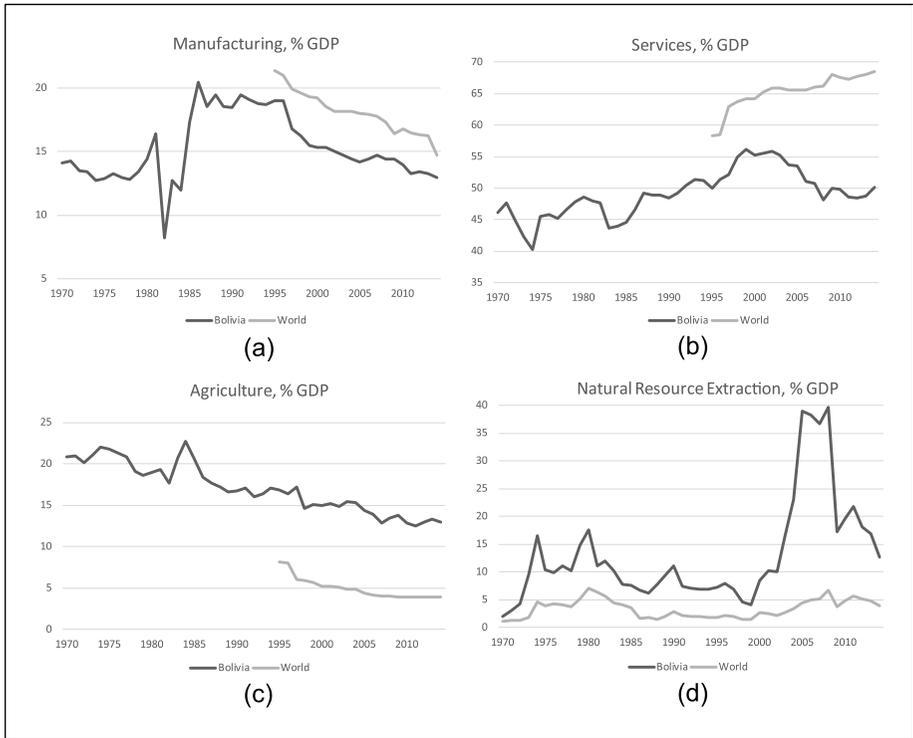
rooted in local, often rural society and were sociologically and organizationally distinct from the establishment. Figure 7 depicts my argument graphically: a double institutional shock catalyzes the collapse of established parties predicated on a false cleavage and the rise of a new system anchored in society's true cleavages.

### *False Cleavage*

The system that arose from the 1952 revolution presided over an economy that was overwhelmingly agricultural and a society that was overwhelming rural. A politics predicated on the opposition of labor to capital was deeply unsuited to both. Attempts to industrialize, which might have caught the country up to that politics, unambiguously failed. Even today, more than six decades later, Bolivia's economy is still dominated by agriculture and natural resources. And its working class, although militant and highly organized from the 1950s to the 1980s, is—and has always been—comparatively small.

As evidence, consider Figure 8, which breaks down Bolivian economic activity by sector. All four panels compare Bolivia to world averages over the period 1970–2014. Although the world average includes the thirty industrialized countries of the OECD, it is dominated by the more than 160 non-OECD countries, including such economies as Bangladesh, Honduras, Malawi, and Zambia. “The world” is thus not a very demanding comparison.

Panel *a* shows the proportion of GDP from manufacturing, a common measure of industrialization. We see that Bolivia lies consistently and nontrivially below the world average and so has a low level of industrialization compared to the world economy.



**Figure 8.** Bolivian GDP by Sector.  
**Source:** World Bank Open Data (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), <http://data.worldbank.org>;  
 OECD Data (Paris: OEDC, 2019), <https://data.oecd.org/>.

But is a country with low population density and difficult topography perhaps better suited to service sector–led development, where transport costs are arguably less important? Panel *b* shows that Bolivia significantly—and increasingly—lags behind the worldwide average there too. If neither manufacturing nor services are relatively important, what is? Panels *c* and *d* provide the answer. Agriculture’s contribution to the Bolivian economy is more than three times the world average. And the contribution of natural resource extraction ranges between two and nine times the world average (varying with world price swings).

So an economy in which industrial and service workers and capital were comparatively scarce was instead abundant in agriculture and natural resource extraction. Could the mining sector—both its capital and its workers—have been large enough to constitute on its own a social cleavage that organized the nation’s politics? Alternatively, is it possible that nonmanufacturing, nonservice workers unionized in sufficient numbers to sustain a left-right political axis? The MNR and the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB, the country’s chief trades union federation) sought to engineer such an outcome, compensating for Bolivia’s lack of industrial workers by attempting to unionize



**Figure 9.** Bolivian Population by Primary Language Spoken.

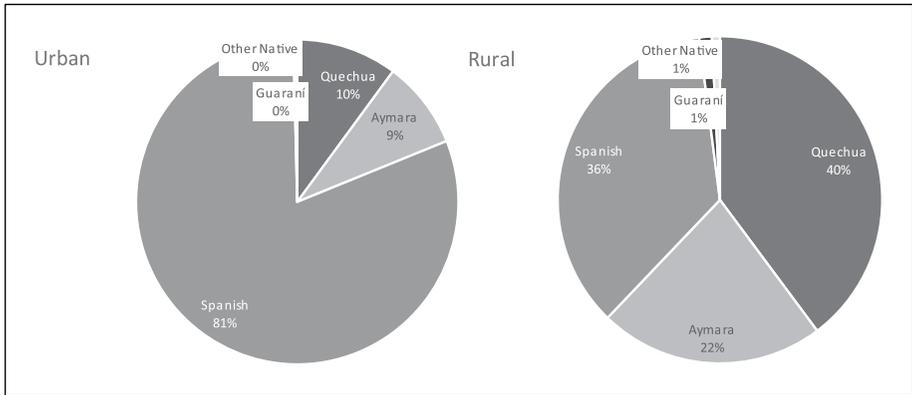
**Source:** Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Censo nacional de población y vivienda* (La Paz: INE, 1992, 2001, 2010).

the largest share of its workforce—agricultural laborers—alongside its militant, dominant miners.<sup>34</sup>

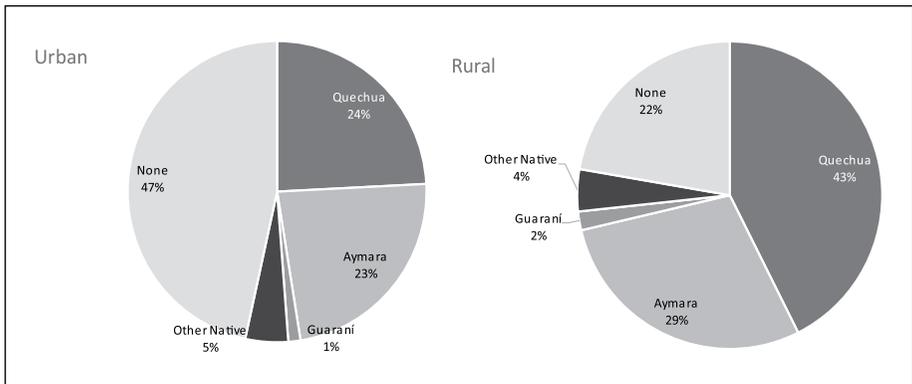
Historical unionization rates for Bolivia are surprisingly hard to find, but three of the most credible estimates suggest the answer to both questions is no. Mitchell estimates that in 1960, at the height of its power, the COB's total membership was some 147,500 members in a national population of 3.7 million, or about 4 percent of the population.<sup>35</sup> This is consistent with Dunkerley's estimates of a total manufacturing labor force (including nonunionized workers) of 4 percent of the population, and a total mining labor force of 3.2 percent of the population, in 1952.<sup>36</sup> By 1989 unionized workers had risen slightly to an estimated 150,000 plus, but the population was now 6.7 million, yielding a unionization rate of 2.3 percent. Bolivia boasted the second-most agricultural economy in South America after Paraguay and the second-least industrialized after Peru.<sup>37</sup> We can safely conclude, as Lipset and Rokkan might have predicted, that neither industrial workers nor the labor movement represents a fundamental cleavage in Bolivia.

### *True Cleavages*

What are Bolivia's true cleavages? Answering this requires looking beyond cities and mining and considering the characteristics of the larger society. Let us begin from the bottom up, with ethnicity and culture.<sup>38</sup> Figure 9 shows population by primary language spoken. In 1976, almost half the population spoke an indigenous tongue (mainly Quechua and Aymara) as their primary language. Although Spanish



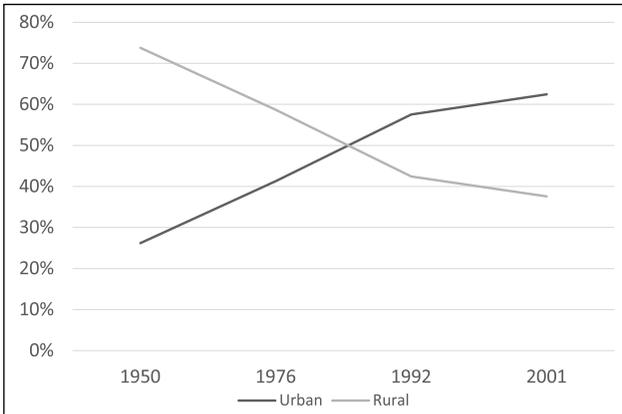
**Figure 10.** Bolivian Population by Language First Spoken (Four Years and Older). **Source:** INE, *Bolivia: Características de la población* (La Paz: INE, 2001).



**Figure 11.** Population Shares by Self-Identified Indigenous Group (Fifteen Years and Older). **Source:** INE, *Bolivia: Características de la población* (La Paz: INE, 2001).

has grown in importance over time, indigenous languages are still primary for 40 percent of the population.

But that figure likely overstates the importance of Spanish, which many Bolivians speak as a second language, in the market and their interactions with the state, while preferring indigenous languages at home. A better sense is provided by Figure 10: whereas 81 percent of urban Bolivians first learn to speak in Spanish, in rural areas only one-third do, with two-thirds speaking an indigenous language first. Last, Figure 11 shows Bolivians’ self-identification by indigenous group. Fifty-three percent of urban Bolivians identify with an indigenous group, but in rural areas fully 78 percent do, yielding a national rate of 62 percent.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 12.** Evolution of Rural and Urban Populations.

**Source:** INE, *Bolivia: Características de la población* (La Paz: INE, 1950, 1976, 1992, 2001).

Ethnicity and culture are thus major factors that divide Bolivian society much more deeply than class.<sup>40</sup> We should expect them to inform political demands and shape political contestation. But Figures 9–11 hint at a rural-urban divide that also cleaves society in important ways. Figure 12 shows Bolivia’s urban transition between 1950 and 2001, the period during which society transformed from three-quarters rural to two-thirds urban.

### *A Folk Theorem of Identitarian Cleavage*

The rural-urban dimension is important in its own right, but even more so because of how it interacts with cultural identities. In a country where urban, official society has traditionally been Spanish-speaking and (to a lesser extent) white, and the countryside is dominated by brown skin and indigenous languages, the rural-urban divide becomes one of culture, identity, and worldview. And the process of migration essential to urbanization is one of cultural clash, in which indigenous people come into direct, everyday contact with the dominant, Spanish-speaking minority often for the first time.<sup>41</sup> In so doing, their ethnic identities—present but latent in the countryside, where they are dominant—are activated via the discrimination they experience and activated also by the felt poverty of an urban life largely defined by consumer goods that the countryside lacks.

This suggests a “folk theorem” of identitarian cleavage: ethnic and cultural identities become politically relevant when countries reach intermediate thresholds of income and urbanization. Before then, traditional identities are latent politically precisely because they are majoritarian in rural settings, allied to poverty in urban areas, and hence anti-aspirational. Income growth is required to break the link between identity and poverty; and social mixing is required to activate ethnicity and culture politically, via the inequality and discrimination that urban migrants face.

My evidence shows that a worker-capital axis of politics was wrong from the start for a society in which most people lived and worked beyond the industrial economy and to whom the tension between workers and capital was irrelevant. How, then, did it persist for so long? Much of Bolivian society—in particular rural, agrarian Bolivia—lived largely in ignorance of a politics that was urban and elite-dominated, because the latter appeared to impinge so little on the former.<sup>42</sup> From the perspective of a rural villager, politics was a foreign pursuit undertaken in a foreign language by foreign people who chanted slogans—“Revolution of the proletariat!” “The sanctity of property!”—unconnected to her pressing concerns. The sheer poverty of rural life, and the high cost of reaching the urban core, helped ensure that the two—axis and cleavage—remained largely insulated from each other for decades.

But increasing urbanization gradually brought rural, indigenous, peripheral Bolivia into intimate contact with the nation’s politics and state, emanating from the center. Different elements of society saw each other fully; essential differences were revealed. These center-periphery dimensions of difference were real and deep and embraced the bulk of society. But they were strangely unreflected in parties’ ideologies, in the terms of political contestation, or in the promises politicians made. And so an elite party system, so dominant until then, found itself first discredited and then abandoned wholesale by millions of voters to whom it suddenly did not matter.

### *Institutional Shock I: Decentralization*

Why did party system collapse occur in the way and at the time that it did? If dimensional shift provides the macrologic of Bolivia’s party system collapse, decentralization and liberalization provide powerful micromechanisms.<sup>43</sup> Bolivia decentralized in 1994 via the Law of Popular Participation, which sought to improve public sector performance and increase the legitimacy of the state by creating hundreds of municipalities throughout especially rural Bolivia, so taking government “closer to the people.”

As Sánchez and Faguet and Faguet and Shami<sup>44</sup> show, and contrary to popular belief, decentralization in Bolivia was not a World Bank or other external imposition but rather a Bolivian reform designed to solve three pressing problems faced by the ruling coalition: (a) the relentless electoral decline of the MNR, once the “natural party of government”; (b) regional threats of secession by business elites in the East, used strategically to extract fiscal transfers from La Paz;<sup>45</sup> and (c) rising populist parties, based in large cities, feared by both establishment parties and the business community.

Bolivia’s decentralization was initially ignored by the World Bank, IMF, and IDB, and it was later ridiculed as “legislating participation.”<sup>46</sup> But it was in fact a carefully designed response that sought to “give” local governments to rural voters, descendants of the beneficiaries of land reform, which might in turn provide the services so often lacking in their communities and so recapture the rural vote for the MNR. And it would simultaneously undermine regional elites by decentralizing beneath the level of the regions, to Bolivia’s municipalities. Last, decentralization would shift power and

resources out of the hands of urban centers, where the populist threat was greatest, to hundreds of localities where politics were more moderate and establishment parties were stronger.

The reform was strikingly simple and straightforward. Its five main points were as follows.

1. Responsibility for the provision of primary services (education, health, transport, etc.) and related infrastructure was transferred from central government to municipalities.
2. Twenty percent of national tax revenues were transferred to municipalities.
3. Transfers were allocated among municipalities on a strict per capita basis.
4. New municipalities were created and existing ones expanded to incorporate all Bolivian citizens and territory.
5. Oversight committees consisting of natural civic organizations (e.g., peasant unions, neighborhood committees, *ayllus*, *mallkus*) were designed into municipal government, thus building in grassroots accountability.

From the start, the instruments of local government were embraced by especially rural Bolivians. Voter turnout increased 127 percent nationwide at the next election, and there was massive grassroots participation in local planning and accountability mechanisms in Bolivia's towns and villages.<sup>47</sup> Decentralization's effects on public sector investment patterns were dramatic. Resources shifted from a small number of rich districts to Bolivia's smaller, poorer, traditionally abandoned rural municipalities. The Bolivian state became more responsive to local needs because of the actions of its municipalities.<sup>48</sup> Decentralization quickly became a defining national characteristic. Not even the political earthquake of 2003 could undo this reform.

A secondary, unplanned, but ultimately fateful<sup>49</sup> consequence was that decentralization extended a ladder from the nation's public and political life down into its rural, indigenous society. It allowed large numbers of rural Bolivians to become political actors in their own right for the first time. Candidates for hundreds of local offices throughout the land were not the usual political elites—who did not live in these places—but rather bricklayers, truck drivers, and peasants with surnames such as Callisaya, Mamani, and Choquehuanca.

For the first time in 500 years, members of Bolivia's ethnic and cultural majority ran for public office in large numbers, were elected, and proceeded to wield (local) power. As Faguet shows, these new political agents did not only not do badly; they performed better than the elite-run central government at basic tasks of first-order importance, such as building primary schools, running health clinics, and clearing and paving local roads.<sup>50</sup> Thus it was demonstrated in the most obvious way that ordinary Bolivians were perfectly capable of assuming political leadership, ruling themselves, and doing it well.

They did so initially under the banners of established, elite political parties, partly from habit but also, and more important, because of high barriers to political entry. Before 1994 there were few local and no regional elections, and hence politics were by construction national. New parties were registered at the national level only. They were required, *inter alia*, to raise a petition signed by 2 percent of the national electorate before they could register, even if they intended to run in only a few localities.<sup>51</sup> Those restrictions originated with the 1952 revolution; their effect was to sustain a political oligopoly run by a rich, white, urban elite.<sup>52</sup>

The new *modus operandi* quickly became apparent: party representatives arrived in distant municipalities shortly before a local election, distributed gifts and propaganda, organized rallies, and then returned to their urban enclaves to await the next cycle. Local party leaders were selected by the national structure. The top-down conduct of national politics continued, albeit in more distributed form.

But at the local level something very different was happening, accelerated by the structure of the MAS. An umbrella federation of hundreds of hyperlocal parties and movements, the MAS was easily able to sense the grassroots problems and demands that decentralization revealed. These are born of poverty and inequality, discrimination, social and economic exclusion, exploitation, corruption, and oppression—phenomena natural to the deep ethnic and cultural divides that characterize society. These concerns—which define the lives of most Bolivians—were hidden or ignored by the old elite politics. Decentralization shone a light on them. Competing for votes and acting on them, as new actors did, dealigned politics from the worker-capital chimera and realigned it with an axis that mirrors how most Bolivians experience their lives.

It is not inconceivable that Bolivia's elite parties might have been able to survive the new politics. Significant adaptation would have been required—not just ideological and programmatic but to parties' internal structures and incentives. At a minimum, parties would have had to decentralize themselves if they hoped to harness some part of the grassroots energy and innovation that reform unleashed. But they did not.<sup>53</sup> In 1998, for example, the left-wing MIR attempted a thorough, bottom-up reform that opened its leadership to internal elections. According to Erika Brockman, MIR leader and ex-senator, "this was a true failure," defeated by entrenched party elites who did not want it to succeed. A separate attempt at indigenous inclusion in the early 2000s was carried out in a top-down, voluntaristic manner; it also failed.<sup>54</sup>

On the right, the ADN made similar attempts at internal reform, beginning in 1995, when it asked its entire membership to reregister and then proceeded to elect its departmental and regional leaders via secret ballot. This process should have resulted in the election of the party's national leadership and the adoption of a new legal statute. But at that stage the reform collapsed in a power struggle between "historical party leaders." The crisis was resolved only when ex-dictator General Banzer was declared "Maximum Historical Leader" and permitted to choose all the party's authorities himself.<sup>55</sup>

The most serious attempt at reform was probably that of MNR, Bolivia's best-organized party subnationally. Born with a strong belief in the top-down decision making of its revolutionary heroes, Paz Estenssoro and Siles Zuazo, the party attempted to democratize itself internally in 1992, when it adopted a new party statute. New party commandos were created at cantonal and neighborhood levels, and then free elections were held for leaders all the way from neighborhoods to the national level. Although reform succeeded in displacing some of the MNR old guard and opened spaces for the emergence of new local and regional leaders, it did not remake the party as intended.<sup>56</sup> The old guard fought modernizers to a draw, and the principle of internal democracy failed to take root. For example, when Sánchez de Lozada, soon to be president, was threatened with a revolver by Ciro Humboldt, a deselected old-guard congressman and leader of the MNR in Chuquisaca, Sánchez fled to Tarija to obtain Paz Estenssoro's blessing.<sup>57</sup> Peace was restored in the MNR but at the cost of its internal democracy.

Even in Condepa and the UCS—supposedly distinct organizationally and culturally from Bolivia's political establishment—a privileged elite and central control were the rule. Their organization mimicked established parties structurally, in large part because they were penetrated by experienced politicians from the establishment.<sup>58</sup> An attempt to democratize Condepa was swiftly overturned by its founder and leader, Carlos Palenque, who expelled those responsible—including his wife—declaring, "Here we don't have consultations, we have instructions! Condepa is a military organization."<sup>59</sup> And in the UCS, reform was never even attempted. The party was run by its founder, Max Fernández, in a relentlessly top-down manner as the political arm of his beer company. Its internal statute was a formal nicety with no practical effect; reforming it would have been pointless.<sup>60</sup> In sum, Bolivia's institutions and political actors changed, but its political parties did not.<sup>61</sup>

### *Institutional Shock 2: Liberalization*

Unsurprisingly, this late-1990s dispensation proved not to be an equilibrium. During the decade following reform, it became clear to local leaders that toeing the party line was detrimental to getting elected. During the 1980s and 1990s, complementary reforms to facilitate citizen documentation and voter registration, as well as to extend voting places deeper into the countryside, had greatly facilitated electoral participation. Then in 2004, the final pillar sustaining elite oligopoly fell, and a tidal wave was unleashed. The 2004 Ley de Agrupaciones Ciudadanas y Pueblos Indígenas (Law of citizen associations and indigenous peoples) liberalized election law significantly, permitting civic associations to participate in elections and allowing groups to register in only those municipalities in which they wished to compete. The 2 percent bar now applied to local, not national, electorates. A people that had discovered it could represent itself could now form its own political organizations. During the months that followed, 388 new parties registered for local elections. Electoral participation surged again. Elite politics were no more.

### *Organizational and Ideological Distinctiveness*

This is the context in which the MAS rose to prominence in 2002. In sharp opposition to the parties discussed above, the MAS is a bottom-up political organization, formed initially in the rural Chapare region by militant coca growers and displaced miners. The MAS's origins—described with analytical insight by Anria, Anria and Cyr, and Van Cott and a huge wealth of empirical detail by Zuazo<sup>62</sup>—lie in rural, highly local social movements of self-government and agricultural producer groups. Bolivia's decentralization created over 300 spaces of local politics that had not previously existed in a highly centralized country where politics were by construction national.<sup>63</sup> Such groups took advantage of those spaces to compete for, win, and exercise local power.

How did the MAS grow so rapidly? By agglomerating hundreds of independent local organizations under its political umbrella. Inspired by the ideology of the *indigenista* movement, the MAS adopted a “leading by following” approach in which incorporation was grass roots upward, privileging indigenous people as actors and agents in their own right. More than a slogan, these principles were followed in practice and made the MAS a highly distinctive organization in the Bolivian context. Its internal characteristics were organized around self-representation and the attainment of power (local and national) by the Bolivian majority.<sup>64</sup> That is very different from the top-down organization and clientelistic appeals of traditional parties.<sup>65</sup> Its distinct institutionalization made the MAS far more effective and accountable.

In terms of policy positions, the MAS has also departed from established norms. Its stated ideology and discourse are decidedly left-indigenist,<sup>66</sup> but many of the policies it has pursued represent a novel blend of traditionally right- and left-wing positions. This fact is clearest in its economic management of the country, where it has combined large transfers and the creation of extensive entitlements to poor and rural populations with highly orthodox macroeconomic management, signaled by persistently tight monetary policy, low inflation, and large fiscal surpluses that set it apart from other members of Latin America's “pink tide.”<sup>67</sup> Such policies borrow from both the left-wing UDP government of the early 1980s—while avoiding their rampant money creation and attendant hyperinflation—and also from center-right governments of the MNR and ADN, which tightened fiscal policy but at the expense of social programs. Indeed, Bolivia's tight policy stance, sustained over most of the past fifteen years, has left it in a position of fiscal strength that countries like Brazil and Venezuela can only envy.

To understand the magnitude of the Bolivian transformation, consider how decentralization changed the composition of Congress. Before reform, members were overwhelmingly white, male, urban-based businessmen, professionals, and landowners. They penetrated politics laterally at the national level. By 2009, half the members were new political actors from rural and peri-urban Bolivia.<sup>68</sup> They penetrated politics locally, rose vertically, and had educations, work experiences, and surnames very

**Table 2.** Electoral Turnout, 1979–2009 (Millions).

	1979	1980	1985	1989	1993	1997	2002	2005	2009
Total votes	1.69	1.49	1.75	1.59	1.73	2.32	2.99	3.10	4.73
Population	5.50	5.60	6.20	6.70	7.30	7.90	8.65	9.10	9.76
Votes/population	31%	27%	28%	24%	24%	29%	35%	34%	49%

**Source:** Tribunal Supremo Electoral, <https://www.tse.gob.sv/>; World Bank Open Data (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), <http://data.worldbank.org>.

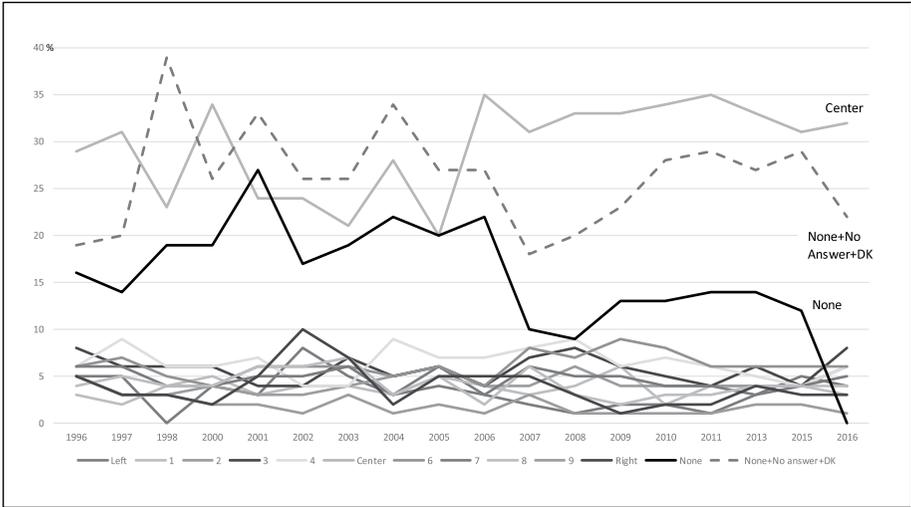
different from those of the politicians they replaced. The change of political class was even sharper in the constitutional assembly of 2006–7.<sup>69</sup>

Consider too the increase in voter mobilization that the new identitarian cleavage produced. If it is true that Bolivia had long been a relatively mobilized country compared to its Latin American and developing-country peers, it is also true that decentralization and cleavage displacement each increased mobilization further. Table 2 shows that electoral turnout was on a downward trend between 1979 and 1993, fluctuating in absolute terms around 1.65 million votes but decreasing steadily in proportional terms from one-third to one-quarter of the population. Following decentralization (1994), turnout jumps ten percentage points to 35 percent of the population and 2.99 million votes in 2002. Following cleavage shift, turnout increases again, this time to 4.73 million votes in 2009, equivalent to 49 percent of the population. Voting as a share of the population is a reasonable measure of political mobilization. By this measure, mobilization in 2009 is 40 percent more than it was before cleavage shift and more than twice what it was before decentralization.

### Survey Evidence

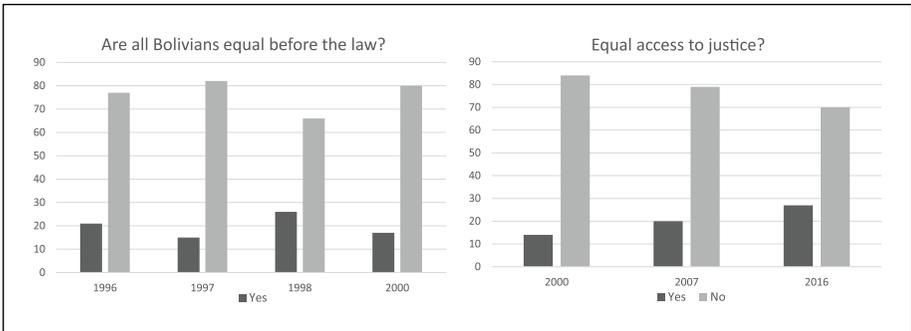
Polling by Latinobarómetro over the past two decades provides further evidence that (1) the politics of a party system based on a conventional left-right divide were foreign to citizens' concerns and exclusive of the majority, and (2) the emergence of a new politics arranged around Bolivia's identitarian cleavage solved both problems. Before the crisis, a large majority of citizens felt unequal before the law and regarded an unresponsive state with distrust. By contrast, the new party system inspires far more confidence in voters; it runs a state that Bolivians find more capable, more responsive, and more legitimate. A few key pieces of evidence follow below, with additional evidence detailed in Appendix 2.

Figure 13 shows voters' self-reported ideological identification on a scale of 1 (left-most) to 10 (right-most). As is typical of party systems measured this way, the largest category is Center, with about 30 percent of voters in 1996–97; the other nine left-right categories are all far lower, clustered below 10 percent. What is surprising about this figure is how many Bolivians reject the left-right scheme entirely. The second-largest category through 2015 is None—voters who actively reject all ten bins on a left-right axis. In 2001, on the eve of Bolivia's party system



**Figure 13. Voters' Self-Reported Ideological Identification.**

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.

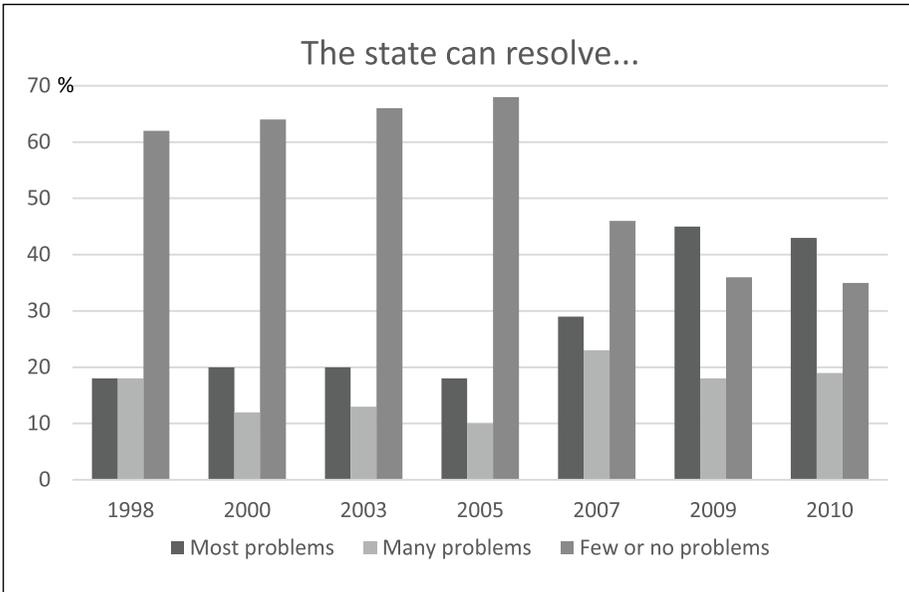


**Figure 14. Equality before the Law.**

**Note:** The wording of this question was changed in 2000 to improve consistency of response; hence I present a graph for each. Both questions were asked in 2000.

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.

collapse, None surpasses Center to become the single largest group. If we sum None + No Answer + Don't Know (dashed line), we see a more complete picture of voters who feel unrepresented by Bolivia's party system. This category surpasses Center in 1998 and remains the largest for five of the following six years. Remember that our categories are not particular parties but, rather, fine gradations on a left-right scale. By contrast, Center becomes the largest category again from



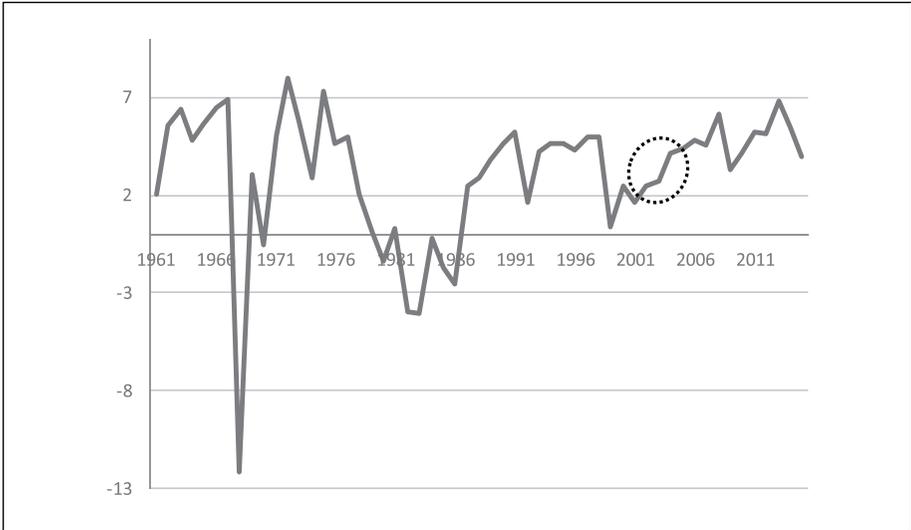
**Figure 15.** Confidence in the State.

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.

2006 onward, as Bolivia’s new politics begin to emerge. After 2015, None declines to zero. This evidence is consistent with a conventional left-right party system unable to incorporate large numbers of citizens, many of whom actively reject its main axis of competition.

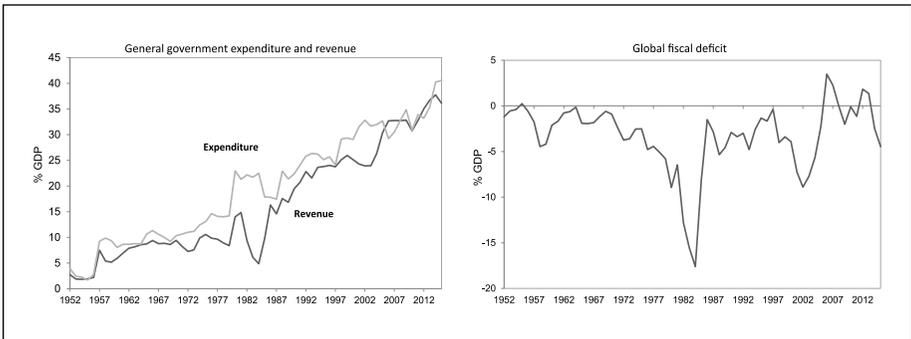
Figure 14 shows how many Bolivians believe they enjoy equality before the law. Remarkably, four-fifths answered negatively in 1996, 1997, and 2000. But after the collapse of establishment parties, No responses decline from 84 percent to 70 percent in 2016, while Yes responses double from 14 to 27 percent. This implies a large majority of Bolivians who felt that an elite, left-right political system ran a state that discriminated against them. Such institutional legacies do not change quickly, and 70 percent is still absurdly high. But the increase in the number of Bolivians who feel they have access to justice under the new politics is nonetheless impressive.

The result of politics more representative of Bolivians and of institutions more accessible to them is a state that citizens judge relevant and that inspires confidence. Figure 15 shows low and decreasing trust in a state run by left-right politicians; by 2005, 68 percent of respondents judge the state capable of resolving few or none of their problems. But there is a marked inversion after the old politics are swept away and the new politics gel. The proportion of respondents reporting that the state can solve most or all of their problems more than doubles, from 18 to 43 percent, while “Few or no problems” almost halves, from 68 to 35 percent. Bolivians feel they can rely on a state run by the new politics.



**Figure 16.** GDP Growth (Annual Percentage).

**Source:** World Bank Open Data (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), <http://data.worldbank.org/>; OECD Data (Paris: OEDC, 2019), <https://data.oecd.org/>.



**Figure 17.** Expenditure, Revenue, and Deficits, 1952–2015.

**Source:** T.J. Kehoe and C.G. Machicado, “The Fiscal and Monetary History of Bolivia, 1960–2005,” manuscript (Minneapolis: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 2014). Reproduced with permission.

### Alternative Explanations

Alternative explanations are widespread but unconvincing. The 2003 “gas war” disturbances, which led to a massacre of protestors by security forces, clearly led to the resignation of the MNR president, Sánchez de Lozada. But did they, or the early-2000 “water war” protests in Cochabamba, cause Bolivia’s political party system to collapse? Timing is an attractive element of such explanations, but logic is not. Bolivia

has been a mobilized society for decades, in which workers are highly organized and protest is common.<sup>70</sup> Although both sets of protests were impressive in scope, they were neither the largest nor the most disruptive in Bolivia's history. Other public disturbances were large, occasionally involved massacres, and caused governments and dictatorial regimes to fall. But those did not undermine Bolivia's political system. We might expect such demonstrations to weaken the political party in power; but we would also expect a countervailing strengthening of opposition parties, which would strengthen the established party system by validating its dominant axis of contestation. Instead, both were undermined.

Other explanations appealing to economic or fiscal "crises" are also unconvincing. The supposed economic crisis of the late 1990s and early 2000s simply did not exist. For evidence consider Figure 16, which plots economic growth in Bolivia between 1961 and 2015. The dotted circle denotes the dates of political system collapse. Bolivia's politics had withstood economic shocks that reduced GDP by 12 percent in the late 1960s and 8 percent cumulatively in 1982–83. It is not credible that a period of increasing growth<sup>71</sup> of 2–5 percent caused politics to fall apart.

Arguments about a fiscal crisis are on firmer ground, as the fiscal account during the early 2000s was at least in deficit. But the magnitude of this "crisis" is modest. The real crisis of the postrevolutionary period was during the mid-1980s, when Bolivia's economy melted down, its fiscal accounts collapsed, and the government attempted—but ultimately failed—to survive by printing heroic amounts of money. Figure 17 shows the 1984 deficit in excess of 17 percent of GDP. A deficit half as large in 2002, although not healthy, is comparatively unimpressive and similar to other periods in Bolivia's recent history during which its politics did not collapse. More to the point, expenditure actually increased through 2003–4, contracting only around 2005–6 as a result of political turmoil before increasing again in 2007–8. So fiscal contraction cannot have been the cause.

## Conclusion

Why did the revolutionaries of 1952 design a party system around a dominant axis unconnected to Bolivia's economy and society? The first answer is that they did not. Party systems and dominant axes are not "designed" in that way. But it is nonetheless true that a result of revolutionaries' actions—both discursive and organizational—was to plant the seeds of such a system. Why?

The assertion of a nonracial, noncultural axis of competition obviously suited the educated sons of Bolivia's then tiny middle class. But it was also strategically astute. Among the revolutionary forces that Paz Estenssoro and Siles Zuazo led to victory, the workers' unions—especially miners—were the best organized, most militant, and most threatening to any government. Declaring a social cleavage centered on workers cemented their alliance with the MNR; it further ensured that the MNR was in some sense baked into not just the nation's politics but its identity. Such an idea was easy to sell mid-twentieth century, when the conflict between workers and capital was the dominant ideology of advanced countries. It was also

aspirational—a sort of investment in the future. If the state-led industrialization revolutionaries hoped to catalyze succeeded, an expanding worker class would richly benefit the MNR.

The new system was extraordinarily successful. The principal parties of the establishment dominated the postrevolutionary period, reliably capturing more than 70 percent of the vote as late as 1989. More impressive, the broader system of elite-led, left-right parties won 80–97 percent of the vote in both national and local elections as late as 1997. Elites proved as resilient as they were dominant, able to withstand extraordinary shocks—hyperinflation and economic collapse, coups d'état, guerrilla insurgency, civil disturbances, and deep social change—only to see the same parties, leaders, and axis of competition prevail again and again.

Why did it collapse? Why did not just governing parties but the entire elite-led edifice fall to pieces? Conventional explanations are unconvincing. Popular mobilizations around gas and water supplies, although significant, pale in comparison to the shocks and violence the system had previously withstood. The fiscal challenges of the early 2000s were, in context, unremarkable. And Bolivia's "economic crisis" did not exist.

Explaining political change of this magnitude requires a cause that is consequential, as distinct from a current event. A far better candidate is the replacement of Bolivia's primary axis of political competition—which described a society it patently was not—with a new axis better matched to its major social cleavage. Political competition over workers versus capitalists never made sense in a country that lacked both. The historical process that created the ethnic/identitarian cleavage—Spanish colonization over 300 years—was a significantly more powerful and sustained experience that changed society in far deeper ways than Bolivia's modest industrialization. By channeling benefits to workers, owners, and professionals, elite parties were able to sustain a system based on voters' secondary identities for a surprisingly long time. But ignoring Bolivia's main social cleavage was not indefinitely sustainable.

The evidence is clear that by 2000 most Bolivians did not identify with conventional left-right politics, did not trust the parties that tried to mobilize them in that way, and felt excluded by the state such politicians administered. Competing over ethnicity and cultural identity made much more sense in a society riven by both. The system that rose up from the ashes of collapse was the product of Bolivia's dominant ethnic-identitarian cleavage interacting with its distinct geographic cleavage, per Lipset and Rokkan. The result was a new axis of competition linking the MAS, MIP, and other indigenist parties of the western highlands at one pole and cosmopolitan parties that deny or minimize identity differences at the other. The former axis is strongest on the rural altiplano, seat of Bolivia's ancient civilizations, whereas the latter is strongest in the migrant-rich eastern lowlands and cities more generally.

Might Bolivia's new parties not be just a rebranding of the old politics? Not a new cleavage but a new strategy to mobilize the old cleavage? This article has shown tri-fold evidence that Bolivia's political axis has shifted. First, ideology has shifted: the

MAS and its many allies compete for voters with ethnic, linguistic, and geographic appeals. They claim to represent not the interests of rural workers but rather Aymara, Quechua, and other “sons of the soil,” “the original inhabitants and stewards of these lands,” in a way that reifies ethnic identity. This is very different from the suppression—and even erasure—of ethnicity through racial mixing to create a homogenized class of worker-citizens that the old system sought to achieve.

Second, the new system aggregates voters differently. Municipal-level electoral results show clearly how the MAS (and other parties) draws core votes from across the previous left-right divide. This fact is implicit in the MAS’s exceeding 50 percent of the national vote, as it has done regularly these past fifteen years. These are not simply the old parties rebranded. Third, in terms of outputs, the policies the MAS government has implemented break the old left-right divide, mixing extensive transfers to the poor with large fiscal surpluses and tight monetary policy.

In an incompletely institutionalized democracy with partial incorporation and great urban-rural divides, the wrong cleavage could remain frozen in place for decades. What catalyzed change? Increasing urbanization activated the dormant cultural cleavage, as more and more Bolivians felt the primacy of identity over class. Ironically, however, it was decentralization—intended to shore up establishment parties—and political liberalization that provided the triggers by which that cleavage could become political. By creating hundreds of municipalities, decentralization generated hundreds of new political spaces in which the indigenous and mestizo majority could become political actors in their own right. Over time new politicians generated their own proposals, found their own political lexicon, and exercised local power successfully. The irrelevance of the dominant system revealed itself to them not analytically but through learning by doing. Over the course of a decade, these new political actors abandoned first the ideological discourse of the elite party system and then the parties themselves.

When electoral regulations were changed to facilitate voter registration and party entry, the dam broke, unleashing a flood of new parties and a surge in electoral participation that drowned the establishment. Politics disintegrated from the bottom up. A tightly controlled oligopoly run by privileged urban elites gave way to hundreds of microparties with ultralocal concerns, constituted and run by ordinary, unprivileged Bolivians. In their midst MAS, a vehicle for social movements that agglomerates local parties for general elections, carved out ideologically novel positions between traditional left and right. These structural attributes have aligned a still-forming system far more readily with the real, ethnic/rural–cosmopolitan/urban social cleavage that defines Bolivia.

The application of Lipset and Rokkan to the Bolivian case suggests a more general mechanism linking deep social cleavages to sudden political change. Political party systems can be, as in Bolivia, or become, through sociological evolution, disconnected from the deeper social cleavages that define a society. But “path dependence” is not enough to explain the persistence of such mismatches. Specific—not necessarily obvious—institutional features are required to sustain a political system whose natural foundations are (now) lacking. These need not be grand. In Bolivia,

apparently minor electoral regulations sufficed to uphold a detached status quo even after decentralization. Beneath that status quo, but with little political effect, an effervescent civil society had changed out of all recognition. Hence a lesson: where a political system is misaligned with a society's principle cleavage, modest revisions to key institutional features that sustain that system can bring about sudden, transformative change.

And thus we are led to a final question: How many other nonindustrial countries feature party systems arrayed along the wrong axis? Whether hangovers of European colonialism, relics of the Cold War, or products of ideological mimicry, systems that pit left/workers against right/capital are in principle ill matched to the dominant cleavages of developing societies actually shaped by ethnic, cultural, or regional factors. Such politics are likely to degrade democratic legitimacy and reduce public sector efficiency. The implication is a swathe of countries ripe for revolution from below *a la Boliviana*.

## **Appendix I. Counting and Characterizing Bolivia's Parties**

To analyze party system collapse, we need to understand the evolution of the main parties that defined the system and compare their performance to both marginal parties and rising challengers. The task is complicated by the "splinterism" to which politics in Bolivia, as in many countries, is prone. Particularly on the left, personal disagreements and battles for leadership compound ideological and programmatic differences, leading small parties—often no more than personal vehicles—to splinter off from the main party, test their electoral strength for one or two cycles, and then (mostly) return to the fold or disappear.<sup>72</sup>

I begin by aggregating the vote shares of the MIR, MNR, and ADN as Bolivia's "establishment parties," which defined its major left-right axis of political competition. Through 2003, one of the three always anchored Bolivia's governments, and another always anchored its opposition. To these I add splinters, which I categorize not as political forces with distinct ideologies, programs, and electorates but rather as ephemeral pieces of the establishment. The task quickly becomes hairy. For example, the 1980 election featured four variants of the MNR, three of them joined in two broader alliances and one competing alone. It can also be less than obvious: both the Movement of the National Left (MIN) and the Ninth of April Revolutionary Vanguard (VR-9), for example, are excisions of the MNR. I categorize using the name and origin of each group, and then I track the political trajectory of leading figures in each. Where new parties are led by politicians who rose to national prominence through the ranks of an established party, and where their votes mainly subtract from the established mother party, I class them as part of the establishment.

At the margins of the establishment parties, I define "Others" as a collection of minor, nonsplinter parties, mostly of the left, originating usually in the workers' movement or radical intelligenstia and led typically by labor leaders or left-wing

intellectuals. Examples include the Trotskyite Vanguardia Obrera (Workers' Vanguard, VO) and the Partido Socialista 1 (PS-1) of Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, a journalist, writer, and academic. "Others" also includes the remains of the right-wing Falange Socialista Boliviana (FSB), which never polled above 1.5 percent of the vote during this period. A last, ideologically influential component of this category is left-wing indigenous parties promoting the rights and culture of Bolivia's indigenous majority. Examples include the Movimiento Indio Túpac Katari (Túpac Katari Indian Movement, MITKA) and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Katari de Liberación (Túpac Katari Revolutionary Liberation Movement, MRTKL). Although small, these parties were important crucibles of an emerging *indigenista* ideology.

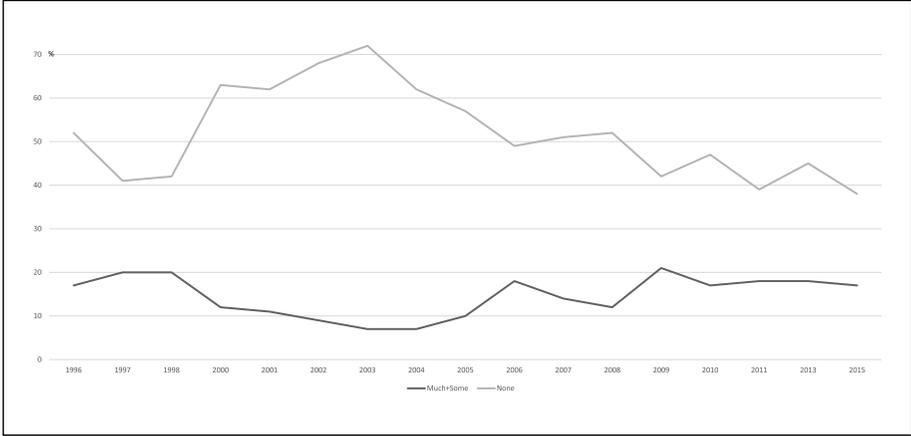
A distinct category of neopopulist parties gained importance during the late 1980s. They were built around the charismatic personalities of successful entrepreneurs—television and radio personality Carlos Palenque, in the case of Conciencia de Patria (Conscience of the Fatherland, Condepa), and Bolivia's biggest beer magnate, Max Fernández, in the case of Unión Cívica Solidaridad (Solidarity Civic Union, UCS). Both parties combined populist appeals to poor, peri-urban migrants often employed in precarious informal sector jobs with a racially tinged discourse that echoed their complaints and disorientation on moving to the city. Both were organizationally weak. Neither survived the death of its founder, and neither has fielded a presidential candidate since 2002.

## Appendix 2. Additional Survey Evidence

Latinobarómetro provides additional survey evidence regarding Bolivians' attitudes toward political parties, elections, the state, and national priorities. Figure A2.1 shows the evolution of Bolivians' confidence in political parties between 1996 and 2015, where the crisis is clearly visible. The proportion of respondents declaring No Confidence in political parties peaks at 72 percent in 2003, in the throes of Bolivia's political collapse, with Much + Some falling to 7 percent. But No Confidence drops by roughly half during the years that follow, as the new political system gels, and Much + Some Confidence increases between two- and threefold.

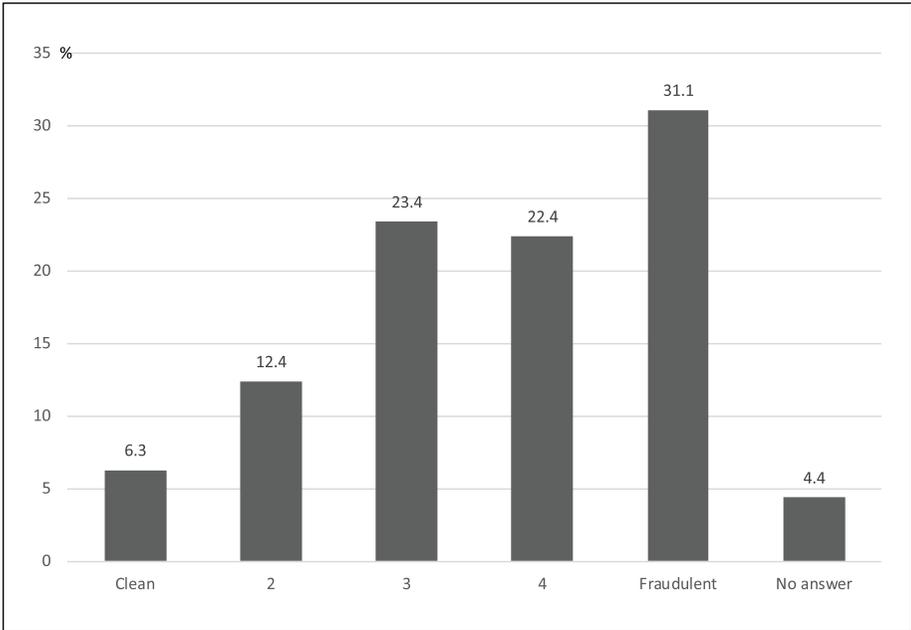
Not surprisingly, citizens with such little confidence in parties showed little faith in their electoral options or in voting more generally, as Figures A2.2 and A2.3 show. Asked in 2000, going into the crisis, about the quality of the previous elections, a clear plurality of Bolivians answered that they were fraudulent (Fig. A2.2). A plurality further responded that voting did not matter and did not have real-world effects (Fig. A2.3). Over the long term, such beliefs can only be corrosive to democracy.

Lacking confidence in their parties and faith in elections, Bolivians began to wonder whether democracy requires parties at all. Figure A2.4 shows previously strong support for the role of parties in Bolivian democracy evaporating after 2000, then turning strongly negative in the political chaos of the early 2000s,



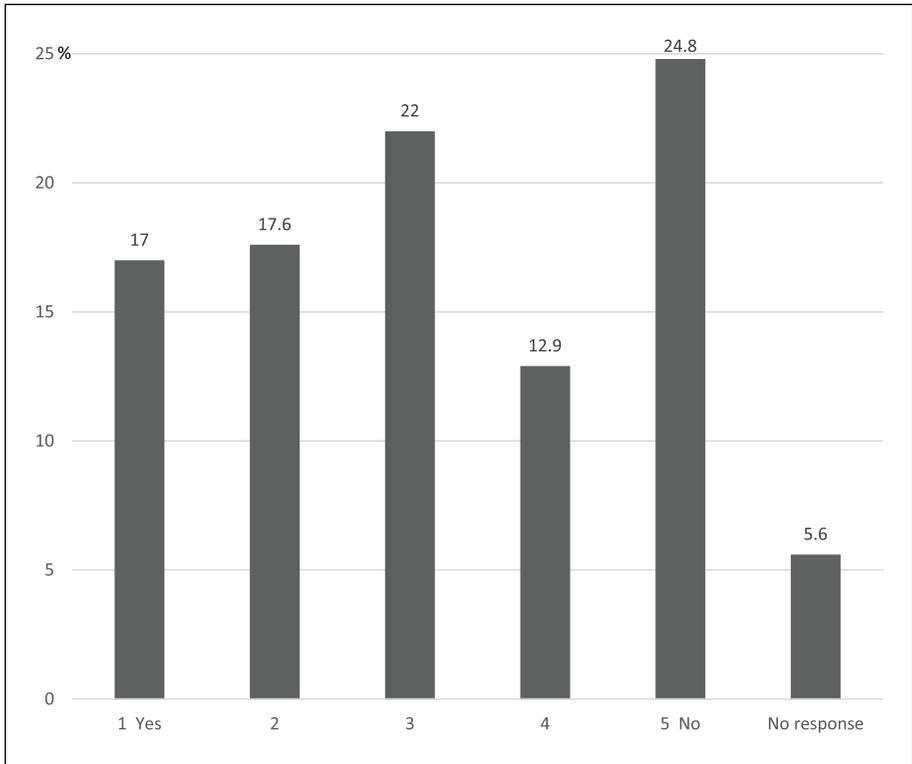
**Figure A2.1.** Citizens' Confidence in Political Parties.

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.



**Figure A2.2.** Were the Last Elections Clean or Fraudulent? (2000 Survey.)

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.



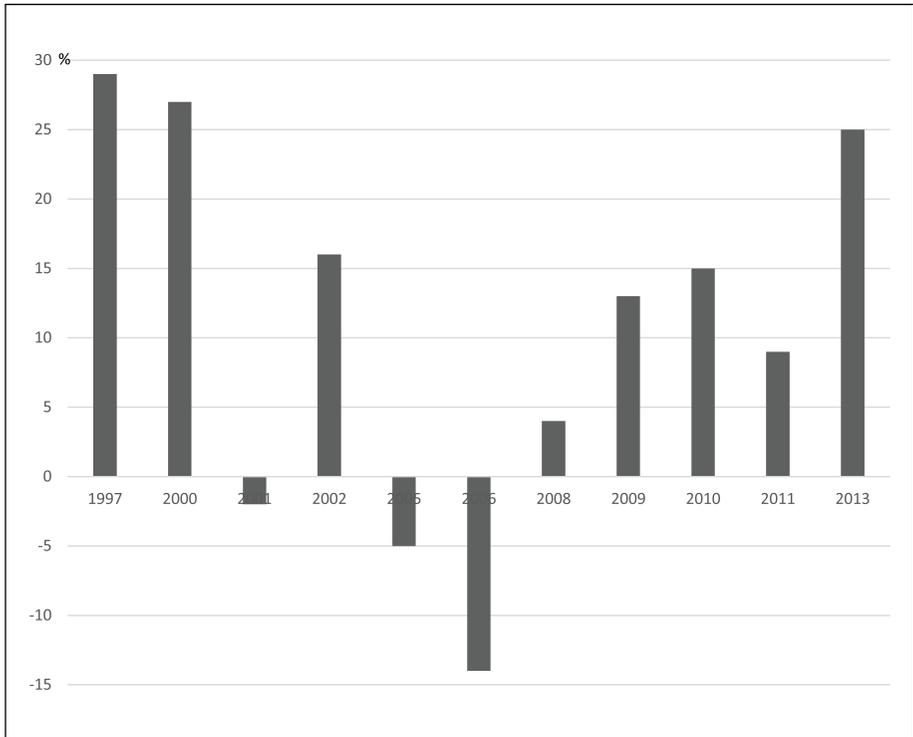
**Figure A2.3.** Does Voting Matter? Does It Have Real-World Effects? (2000 Survey.)

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.

before recovering to strongly positive levels by 2013 as the new party system was consolidated.

Before the political collapse, Bolivians consistently viewed corruption as a broad problem above and beyond the conduct of elections. Asked four times between 1997 and 2001, between 95 and 97 percent responded that corruption was a serious problem for Bolivian society (Fig. A2.5). Unfortunately Latinobarómetro changed this question, and responses after 2001 are not comparable. But the persistence of such a dire view of corruption in Bolivia before the collapse is notable.

Asked what was the most important challenge facing the country, a third of Bolivians in 1996, 1998, 2000, and 2002 responded “increasing citizens’ opportunities to participate in decision making.” While lower than “maintaining order,” typically a high priority across many countries, that is higher than any other response, such as “combating price rises” or “protecting freedom of expression” (Table A2.1). It is notable that by 2008, as the new, grass-roots-based party system is consolidating, the



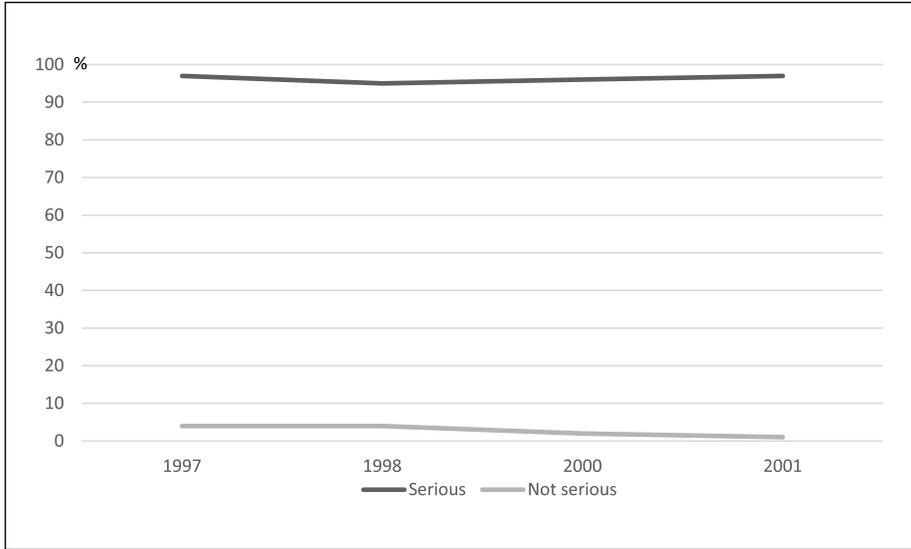
**Figure A2.4.** Democracy Requires Parties? Net Yes-No.

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.

number of respondents who rank “increasing citizens’ opportunities” first shrinks by more than half, to 13 percent.

A bigger change is evident when Bolivians are asked, “Can you trust your leaders to do what is correct?” (Fig. A2.6). Going into the crisis, fully 81 percent of respondents say No, and only 11 percent say Yes. But by 2008, Yes responses have grown fourfold to 45 percent, while No has declined to 51 percent. Although net trust is still negative, Bolivia’s consolidating politics, it would seem, produced leaders far more trusted than the old politics did, and the trend was strongly positive.

Finally, it is instructive to consider a more general question that has been asked consistently since 1996: Is Bolivia progressing, stagnating, or moving backward? Responses to this question indicated a poor state of affairs in 1996, with only a third of Bolivians responding Progressing, and two-thirds responding Stagnant or Moving backward (Fig. A2.7). By the period 2000–2005, Bolivians’ views of their country had become abysmal: fewer than 15 percent of respondents thought Bolivia was



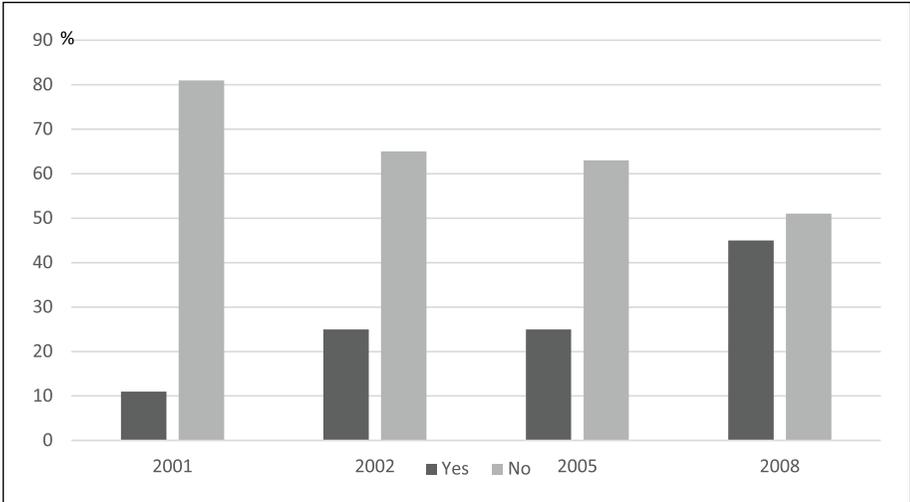
**Figure A2.5.** How Serious a Problem Is Corruption in Bolivia?

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.

**Table A2.1.** Most Important Challenge Facing the Country (%).

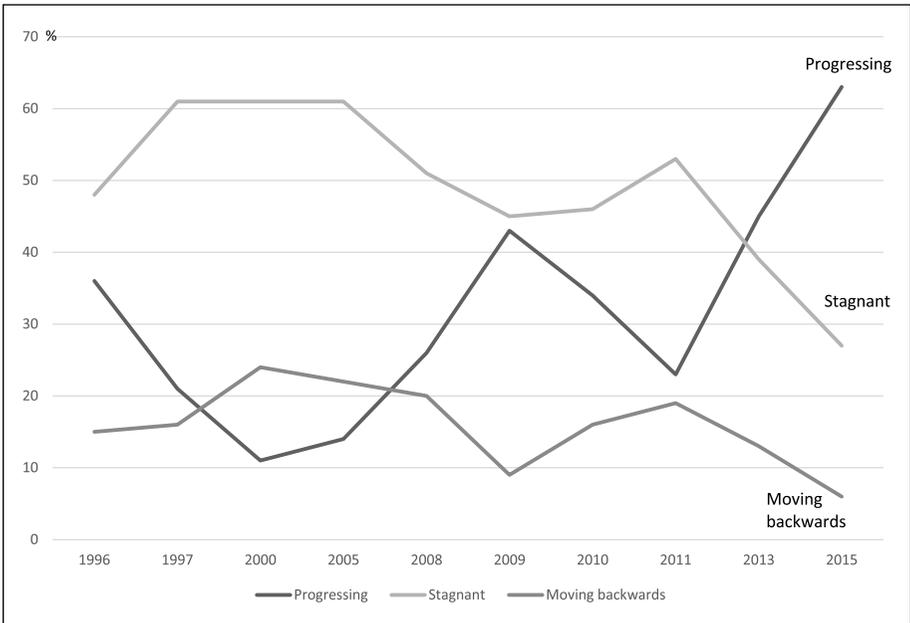
	1996	1998	2000	2002	2008
Maintain order	43	40	37	43	47
Increase citizens' opportunities to participate in decision making	31	28	29	27	13
Combat price rises	16	15	16	12	29
Protect freedom of expression	9	9	12	13	7
No answer	1	6	0	5	1
Don't know	0	3	6	0	2
N	772	794	1,080	1,242	1,200

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.



**Figure A2.6.** Can Bolivia's Leaders Be Trusted to Do What Is Correct?

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.



**Figure A2.7.** Is Bolivia Progressing, Stagnant, or Moving Backward?

**Source:** Latinobarómetro, *Análisis de datos online* (Santiago de Chile, 2018), <http://www.latinobarometro.org/latOnline.jsp>.

progressing, and 85 percent thought it was stagnant or moving backward. But Bolivians' views become remarkably better thereafter, with Progressing exceeding Stagnant in 2013 and reaching 63 percent of respondents by 2015. The emergence and consolidation of a new political party system based on the identitarian cleavage that defines Bolivian society, and the administration of government by these politicians, coincide with a remarkable improvement in Bolivians' views of the direction in which their country is headed.

### Appendix 3: Interview List

Dates given as month, day, and year indicate that the interview was in person. Dates given as month and year indicate (more extended) telephone and email interviews. Interviewees' main attributes are given with reference to the topics discussed.

- Gonzalo Aguirre, congressman (MBL), La Paz, September 30, 1997.  
 Mauricio Balcázar, director of Encuestas y Estudios (polling company) and ex-minister of communications, La Paz, October 13, 1997.  
 Mauricio Balcázar, ex-minister of communications, Washington, DC, November 2017.  
 Guillermo Bedregal, historic MNR leader who participated in the 1952–53 Revolution, ex-president of the lower chamber and ex-minister of foreign affairs, *inter alia*, La Paz, July 2011.  
 Juan Carlos Blanco, UCS leader for Viacha (municipality) and CBN bottling plant director, Viacha, October 16, 1997.  
 Erika Brockmann, senator (MIR), La Paz, October 6, 1997.  
 Erika Brockmann, ex-senator (MIR), La Paz, April 2013.  
 Fernando Cajías, ex-prefect (La Paz, MIR), La Paz, February 25, 1997.  
 Victor Hugo Cárdenas, ex-vice president of Bolivia, October 2011.  
 Walter Guevara, director of Democratic Development and Governance Projects (USAID), La Paz, December 3, 2007.  
 Enrique Ipiña, ex-minister of human development and ex-secretary of education, La Paz, February 26, 1997.  
 Carlos Hugo Molina, secretary of popular participation, La Paz, March 10, 1997.  
 Carlos Hugo Molina, ex-secretary of popular participation, La Paz, December 10, 2007.  
 Maria Teresa Paz, ex-congresswoman (MNR), La Paz, March 2015.  
 Salvador Romero, president of the National Electoral Court, La Paz, December 6, 2007.  
 Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, ex-president of Bolivia and MNR leader, Washington, DC, March 31–April 1, 2011.  
 Antonio Soto, MIR leader for Viacha (municipality), Viacha, October 10, 1997.  
 Freddy Teodovitch, senator (MNR), La Paz, November 6, 1997.  
 Carlos Toranzo, economist, ILDIS (research foundation), La Paz, March 3, 1997.  
 Enrique Toro, ADN national chief, La Paz, October 16, 1997.  
 Javier Torres Goitia, sub-secretary of health, La Paz, October 13, 1997.  
 David Tuchschnieder, World Bank rural development officer, La Paz, February 14, 1997.  
 David Tuchschnieder, World Bank rural development officer, La Paz, May 3, 1997.  
 David Tuchschnieder, World Bank rural development officer, La Paz, December 3, 2007.  
 Miguel Urioste, congressman and MBL party leader, La Paz, October 3, 1997.

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