# Revolution from Below:

# Cleavage Displacement and the Collapse of Elite Politics in Bolivia

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March 2019

**Abstract**

For 50 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? I propose a theoretical lens combining cleavage theory with Schattschneider’s concept of competitive dimensions, and then empirically analyze the structural and ideological characteristics of Bolivia’s party system between 1952-2010. Politics shifted from a conventional left-right axis of competition unsuited to Bolivian society, to an ethnic/rural vs. cosmopolitan/urban axis closely aligned with its major social cleavage. This shift fatally undermined elite parties, facilitating the rise of structurally and ideologically distinct organizations, and a new indigenous political class, that transformed the country’s politics. Decentralization and political liberalization were the triggers that made Bolivia’s latent cleavage political, sparking revolution from below. I suggest a folk theorem of identitarian cleavage, and outline 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 like the US and UK, 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, too, party systems are under severe stress. In many of the latter, entire systems have already given way, and it is their inheritors who now look poised to repeat the experience.

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

When a political party system collapses, it is not just a larger number of organizations that disappear, but an established axis of competition, political discourse, and ideological space previously understood to encompass a society’s most pressing needs. This is distinct from, for example, all of a country’s parties disappearing, and being replaced by new parties espousing positions along the same axis of competition, e.g. left/pro-worker vs. right/pro-capital. While certainly dramatic, such a change would not meet the strict definition of system collapse I employ. If, by contrast, all of a country’s parties collapsed *and* its axis of competition shift from, say, left-right to green/pro-environment vs. brown/pro-growth,[[1]](#endnote-1) or – equivalently – if the meanings of left and right changed substantially,[[2]](#endnote-2) then our 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.[[3]](#endnote-3) 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 of 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.[[4]](#endnote-4)

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[[5]](#endnote-5) refers to a ‘revolutionary period’ that took the country to the brink of civil war before the establishment was finally defeated.

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 six percent of the vote. By 2009 it, too, had disappeared from the ballot. They were replaced by new parties that were creatures of Bolivia’s rural, poor, ethnically diverse countryside.[[6]](#endnote-6)

How can we explain such revolutionary change in a nation’s politics? Understanding this case is important not just for its own sake, but because Bolivia opens an analytical window on how and why party systems collapse more generally. This, in turn, can help explain the ideological and organizational characteristics of the realigned systems that follow. Why Bolivia? Because its politics were never as institutionalized, nor its parties as strong, as the more developed countries of Latin America, let alone 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. There is an important sense in which 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 paper dissects the development of Bolivia’s political party system from the 1952-53 National Revolution through to its collapse and re-constitution in a very different form. Empirically, I combine the Bolivian Electoral Atlas[[7]](#endnote-7) – 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. To this I add survey data from Latinobarómetro, plus an extensive Bolivian bibliography. I use this 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, decisive political change.

I argue that in Bolivia’s incompletely institutionalized democracy,[[8]](#endnote-8) 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 maintained by their descendants. In so doing, elites in effect tried to re-write 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, this 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 this 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. These actors define a system that pits rurally-based, culturally defined parties that 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.[[9]](#endnote-9) 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 paper examines the components of my argument one by one.

# Theory: Stability and Collapse in Party Systems

I follow Sartori[[10]](#endnote-10) and Mainwaring and Scully,[[11]](#endnote-11) defining parties as political organizations that present candidates at elections and are thereby capable of placing individuals into public office. Party systems are the patterns of interactions resulting from inter-party 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 multi-dimensional policy/value space, as well as providing jobs, benefits, and other non-representational 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[[12]](#endnote-12) is close to our thematic focus. 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”,[[13]](#endnote-13) 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 pre-existing rural networks provided organizational capacity that they were able to leverage to political ends.

Yashar’s argument is historically well-grounded, and well-suited to explaining 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. This 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 replaces 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 Lupu,[[14]](#endnote-14) Morgan,[[15]](#endnote-15) and Cyr.[[16]](#endnote-16) 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 via a combination of ‘brand dilution’: the muddying of party identity through policy switches or opportunistic coalitions, and poor performance in office. 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, this logic is very likely applicable to the MIR and MNR, and possibly 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 amongst established alternatives arrayed along a dominant axis. System collapse, by contrast, is when all the 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 pre-existing policy space. Post-collapse, voters will be faced with a new axis of competition in which preferences are aggregated and policies designed in different ways. This 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 intermediate between society and the state: (i) Programmatic linkages; (ii) Clientelism; and (iii) Interest incorporation, where 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 this 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. While 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 $1000 on vaccines, machetes, or entertainment at the village fair, even if the cost is held constant and the same voters benefit. As parties choose amongst competing options, they also make implicit choices amongst 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 multi-dimensional policy space. This is a system’s major axis of political competition, which should match society’s underlying characteristics. The targeting of such benefits is a separate question, but not a more important one.

Cyr[[17]](#endnote-17) examines when parties were able to survive and rebound from national party-system collapses in Bolivia, Peru and Venezuela. She finds that national-level comeback requires command over organizational and social resources. Absent one, a party may be able to survive, but absent both it is likely to collapse alongside the party system. A second study of Cyr’s[[18]](#endnote-18) examines when social conflicts lead to party-system change, arguing that ruling party elites deployed strategies of adoption, exclusion, cooptation and appropriation to try to neutralize social conflicts and preserve the status quo in Bolivia. The decisions they took shaped the impact of societal demands in ways that – intentionally or not – led to collapse of the existing party system and the birth of a very different new one. Accepting her argument about the importance of elite strategies, this paper seeks to understand the underlying reasons why elite politics and social demands were critically mismatched, and why this 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 which 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 these selectively activated by political elites and mapped onto a party system?[[19]](#endnote-19) This section develops a framework that marries Lipset and Rokkan’s[[20]](#endnote-20) influential theory of social cleavages as the deep underpinnings of political party systems, to Schattschneider’s[[21]](#endnote-21) related concept of competitive dimensions and dimensional replacement in politics.

In their seminal contribution, Lipset and Rokkan posit an alternative to the fluid, continuous adjustments assumed by the Downsian[[22]](#endnote-22) market-like mechanism for understanding how parties position and re-position themselves in response to changing voter sentiment. In their conception, parties and party systems emerge in response to underlying socio-political 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, causing 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.[[23]](#endnote-23) Such discontinuities explain one of cleavage theory’s fundamental claims – that party system change comes in the form of rising (new) parties, and not established party adaptation.

But what are these cleavages? In Western Europe, according to Lipset and Rokkan, two over-arching historical processes produced four key cleavages. The national revolution produced cleavages between: (i) centralizing nation-builders vs. distinct communities (ethnically/religiously/linguistically) in the periphery, and (ii) between the central state vs. the supranational Roman Church. And the industrial revolution produced: (iii) an urban/industrial vs. rural/landholder cleavage, and later (iv) one between workers vs. 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, and 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 dominate.

This is in large part because 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 indigenous population declines in excess of 90 percent in many regions, disrupting and remaking societies more powerfully than nationalism or industrialization in Europe. And so race has proven the most powerful cleavage in many Latin countries. Colonialism produced a geographic cleavage too,[[24]](#endnote-24) as colonial powers divided land amongst and within colonies in historically novel ways.

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 separate obligations, privileges, and systems of justice under the *República de Españoles* for whites vs. the *República de Indios* for indigenous subjects.[[25]](#endnote-25) 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. So instead they established highly restricted democracies where only white, propertied men could vote. And they founded political parties around the anti-clerical/commercial (Liberal) vs. clerical/landowning (Conservative) cleavage that characterized their own social stratum, but which was meaningless to the disenfranchised indigenous and mestizo majority.[[26]](#endnote-26) Over the century-and-a-half that followed, these systems incorporated poorer, lower-status voters by shifting towards conventional left/worker-right/owner axes – a configuration that elites could continue to dominate, as distinct from one based on ethnicity.

How can a political system ignore a society’s major cleavage? Schattschneider’s[[27]](#endnote-27) theory linking political organization to dimensions of contestation offers a powerful way in. Any society is full of cleavages, in the sense of fault lines that divide the population into coherent groups. These manifest themselves as competing priorities over values and resources, and hence distinct alternatives in policy space. A stylized society might look like figure 1 below, defined by a major (diagonal) cleavage, for example religion, but also subordinate cleavages, for example region, urban-rural, ethnicity and class. Some of these cleavages are major, most minor, and some may be trivial.[[28]](#endnote-28) They can be of different sizes; I have drawn only one as a clear majority-minority split, but that is arbitrary.



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

***Source:*** Author

Lipset and Rokkan’s insight is that major cleavages emerge from deep historical processes, and these 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 that are grounded in a particular cleavage, and ignoring or subsuming others. Often this happens at critical junctures in a country’s history,[[29]](#endnote-29) when previously dominant parties or elites are weakened, and power is in effect redistributed amongst 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.

## Dimensional Replacement = Political Collapse

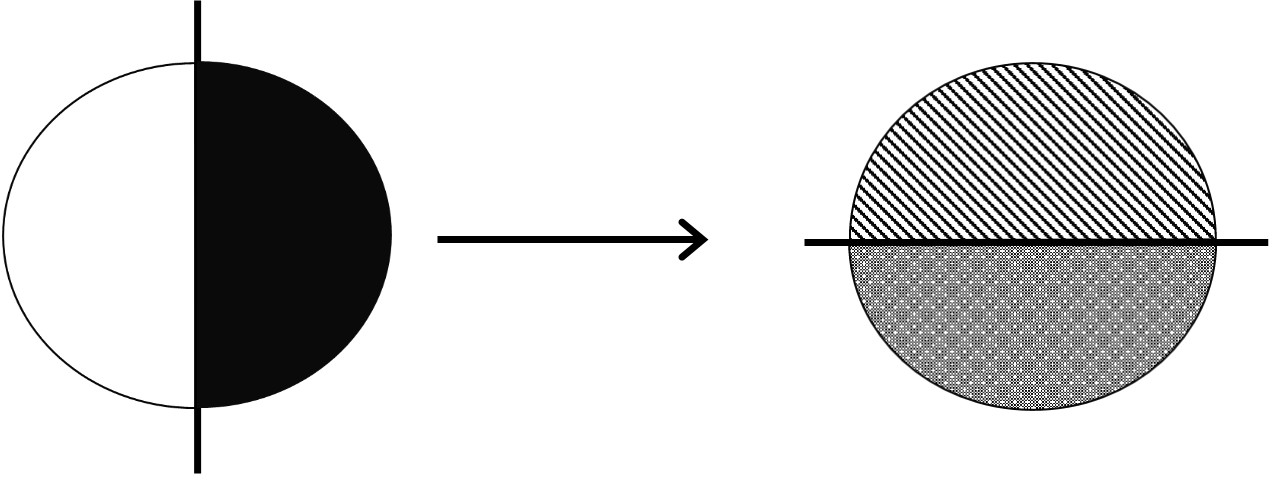
Schattschneider emphasizes that democratic political outcomes depend on how people are divided into competing groups, and by extension on which of the many conflicts become dominant. Hence the definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power. And the most devastating strategy is the substitution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

Figure 2, for example, shows politics aligned along a classic left/workers vs. right/owners cleavage. In such a system, a party invests heavily not just to convince floating voters 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 the dominant set of conflicts with a new set in a different dimension. We might read our illustration as the substitution of left-right with a green/environmental vs. a brown/pro-growth axis, for example; or – as in Bolivia – one based on ethno-linguistic identity. Dimensional replacement destroys the reputations, political capital, and ideological assets of established parties not by sullying them, but by making them irrelevant in a new politics that divides voters along a different plane.

Left

Right



Green

Brown

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

***Source:*** Author

# Political Disintegration: Party System Collapse from Below

Now let us turn to empirical evidence on Bolivia’s political parties and the system they comprise. 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 shocks, followed by the collapse of this system – not just individual parties – and 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.

This is clear in table 1, which illustrates how a remarkably small number of politicians dominated Bolivia’s politics between 1952-2002. 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 militaryregimes interrupted this exchange, which resumed with the restoration of democracy in 1982. If their duopoly finally ended with the election of Jaime Paz Zamora in 1989, 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.

**Table 1: Elected Presidents of Bolivia**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Party\* | President |
| 1952 | MNR | Victor Paz Estenssoro |
| 1956 | MNR | Hernán Siles Suazo |
| 1960 | MNR | Victor Paz Estenssoro |
| 1964 | MNR | Victor Paz Estenssoro |
|  | *(A succession of military regimes)* | |
| 1982 | MNRI-MIR § | Hernán Siles Suazo |
| 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 |

\* Governing party, or lead party(s) of a governing coalition.

§ The MNRI was a leftist offshoot of the main MNR.

***Source*:** Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas.[[30]](#endnote-30)*

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



**Figure 3.** General Election Voting Patterns

***Source:*** Tribunal Supremo Electoral

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 post-revolutionary dominance.

So goes the commonly told tale of Bolivia’s political transformation. 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 20th 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.[[31]](#endnote-31) Hence I limit myself here to some of the more important facts about each.

At the left-most extremes stood parties like 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”.[[32]](#endnote-32) 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.[[33]](#endnote-33)

The MNR straddled the center, led for decades by an educated, petit-bourgeoisie faction that reached out leftwards to workers and peasants, and rightwards to businessmen and professionals. Initially founded as a multi-class, hegemonic party in the style of Mexico’s PRI, it denied the existence of ethnic or indigenous cleavages, seeking instead to mix the races and build a new, mestizo middle class.[[34]](#endnote-34) The effect of this stance was to suppress Bolivians’ ethnicities, and re-write 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 then lost its hegemony as splinters on its left and right wings sought their own voices and vehicles. This process of hegemonic decomposition served also to construct Bolivia’s multi-party 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 Gen. 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’.[[35]](#endnote-35) 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-century European fascists.[[36]](#endnote-36)

Neopopulists did not challenge this system in any cogent way. Both the UCS and Condepa were highly personalized, programmatically weak parties that subtracted votes from the establishment, but 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]”.[[37]](#endnote-37)

This left only a few, small indigenist parties like the MITKA and MRTKL to genuinely challenge the dominant axis of competition. These 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 ‘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.[[38]](#endnote-38) Until 2002, these parties made little impact.

Figure 4 shows the utter dominance of left-right politics in the 1980s and ‘90s. Elite-led parties that accepted the dominant debate won between 84-97 percent of the vote between 1979-1997; anti-systemic, indigenist parties won no more than three percent. After 1997 the pattern changes. Systemic parties enter steep decline, and anti-system parties an equally steep ascent. The lines cross in the early 2000s as Bolivia’s main cleavage shifts, and by 2009 anti-system parties were polling twice the old establishment’s vote.



**Figure 4.** Cleavage Shift: National Electoral Results by Major Cleavage, 1979-2009

***Sources:*** Tribunal Supremo Electoral

## Bottom-Up Disintegration

How did this come about? To understand the drivers of this 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 seven parties in 1991, to 18 in 1999, to 388 in 2004. Most of this last group are highly specific to a province, town, or even a neighborhood. Most garner very few votes nationwide, and some get no votes at all. Figure 5 shows that the establishment’s collapse is 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 this, we must understand that these are no longer the ‘Other’ parties of the 1980s-90s, which were mainly extreme projections on the left-right axis. Rather, these are new, and in their immense majority highly local, parties that only came into being in the early 2000's. Born in the political turmoil that overthrew the establishment, they accompanied the MAS’ 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 even today take place. But we miss this if we focus only on the national level.



**Figure 5.** Municipal Election Voting Patterns

***Sources:*** Tribunal Supremo Electoral

Categorizing these new political parties ideologically is difficult given their organizational weakness and sheer number. Rather than Systemic vs. Anti-System, figure 6 classifies local parties as Elite, Left-Right vs. 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.** Cleavage Shift: Local Electoral Results by Major Cleavage, 1987-2010

***Sources:*** Tribunal Supremo Electoral

Figure 6 shows the elite was completely dominant locally as well until 1995, when its vote share began a decline from 90 percent to ten percent three elections later. In parallel, we see the rise and rise of the new localism, from three percent of the vote in 1995 to 80 percent in 2010. By 2010, Bolivia’s principal cleavage has comprehensively shifted, overturning its political party system. It’s not just an important party, but an enduring system of politics defined by a left-right, worker-capital axis of competition, that has died. 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 – to 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 vs. 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 anti-competitive 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 rooted in local, often rural society, and 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.



**Figure 7.** Explaining Party System Collapse

***Source:*** Author

## 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 this 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, though militant and highly organized during the 1950s-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 30 industrialized countries of the OECD, it is dominated by 160+ non-OECD countries, including economies like 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 non-trivially below the world average, and so has a low level of industrialization compared to the world economy. But a country with low population density and difficult topography is perhaps better suited to service sector-led development, where transport costs are arguably less important? Panel (b) shows that Bolivia significantly – and increasingly – lags the worldwide average there too. If neither manufacturing nor services is 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).



**Figure 8.** Bolivian GDP by Sector

***Sources:*** World Bank, OECD

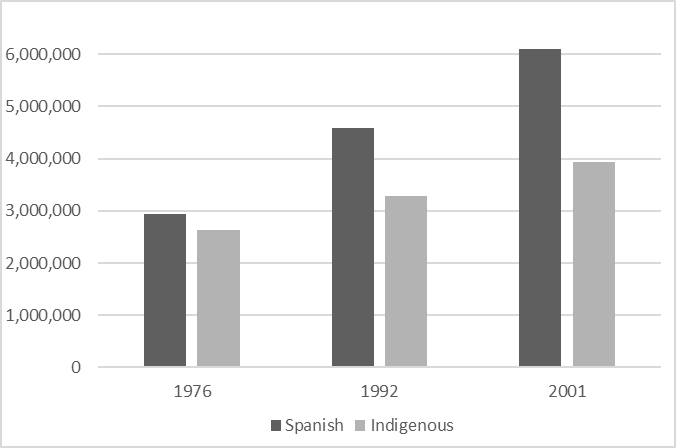
So an economy where industrial and service workers, and capital, were comparatively scarce was instead abundant in agriculture and natural resource extraction. Could the mining sector – both its capital and its workers – have been large enough to constitute on its own a social cleavage that organized the nation’s politics? Alternatively, is it possible that non-manufacturing, non-service 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 the largest share of its workforce – agricultural laborers – alongside its militant, dominant miners.[[39]](#endnote-39)

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[[40]](#endnote-40) 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 four percent of the population. This is consistent with Dunkerley’s[[41]](#endnote-41) estimates of a total manufacturing labor force (including non-unionized workers) of four percent of the population, and a total mining labor force of 3.2 percent of the population, in 1952. By 1989 unionized workers had risen slightly to an estimated 150,000+, 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.[[42]](#endnote-42) 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.[[43]](#endnote-43) Figure 9(a) 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 has grown in importance over time, indigenous languages are still primary for 40 percent of the population.

But this 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 9(b): while 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. Lastly, figure 9(c) 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.[[44]](#endnote-44)



**Figure 9(a).** Bolivian Population by Primary Language Spoken

***Source:*** Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)[[45]](#endnote-45)



**Figure 9(b).** Bolivian Population by Language First Spoken (4 Years+)

***Source:*** INE, 2001 Census[[46]](#endnote-46)



**Figure 9(c).** Population Shares by Self-Identified Indigenous Group (15 Years+)

***Source:*** INE, 2001 Census

Ethnicity and culture are thus major factors that divide Bolivian society much more deeply than class.[[47]](#endnote-47) We should expect them to inform political demands and shape political contestation. But figure 9 hints at a rural-urban divide that also cleaves society in important ways. Figure 10 shows Bolivia’s urban transition between 1950-2001, the period during which society transformed from three-quarters rural to two-thirds urban.



**Figure 10.** Evolution of Rural and Urban Populations

***Source:*** INE, 1950, 1976, 1992 and 2001 Censuses

## 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 world-view. 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.[[48]](#endnote-48) 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.[[49]](#endnote-49) 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 type (i), center-periphery dimensions of difference were real, 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 1: Decentralization

Why did party system collapse occur in the way and at the time that it did? If dimensional shift provides the macro logic of Bolivia’s party system collapse, decentralization and liberalization provide powerful micro mechanisms.[[50]](#endnote-50) 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[[51]](#endnote-51) and Faguet and Shami[[52]](#endnote-52) 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: (i) The relentless electoral decline of the MNR, once the “natural party of government”; (ii) Regional threats of secession by business elites in the East, used strategically to extract fiscal transfers from La Paz;[[53]](#endnote-53) and (iii) 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 later ridiculed as ‘legislating participation’.[[54]](#endnote-54) 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 re-capture 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. Lastly, 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 was more moderate and establishment parties were stronger.

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

1. Responsibility for the provision of primary services: education, health, transport, etc., and related infrastructure, were transferred from central government to municipalities.
2. Twenty percent of national tax revenues were transferred to municipalities.
3. Transfers were allocated amongst 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 grass-roots 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 grass-roots participation in local planning and accountability mechanisms in Bolivia’s towns and villages.[[55]](#endnote-55) 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.[[56]](#endnote-56) Decentralization quickly became a defining national characteristic. Not even the political earthquake of 2003 could undo this reform.

A secondary, unplanned[[57]](#endnote-57) but ultimately fateful, 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. This happened when 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 like 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[[58]](#endnote-58) shows, these new political agents not only did not do badly, they performed better than the elite-run central government at basic tasks of first-order importance, like building primary schools, running health clinics, and clearing and paving local roads. This 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. This was partly from habit, but more importantly because of high barriers to political entry. Pre-1994 there were few local and no regional elections, and hence politics was by construction national. New parties were registered at the national level only, and were required, *inter alia*, to raise a petition signed by two percent of the national electorate before they could register. This was the case even if they intended to run in only a few localities.[[59]](#endnote-59) These restrictions originated with the 1952 revolution; their effect was to sustain a political oligopoly run by a rich, white, urban elite.[[60]](#endnote-60)

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 hyper-local parties and movements, the MAS was easily able to sense the grassroot 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, de-aligned politics from the worker-capital chimaera and re-aligned 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 grass-roots energy and innovation that reform unleashed. But they did not.[[61]](#endnote-61) 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, and also failed.[[62]](#endnote-62)

On the right, the ADN made similar attempts at internal reform, beginning in 1995, when it asked its entire membership to re-register, 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 this stage the reform collapsed in a power struggle between ‘historical party leaders’. The crisis was resolved only when ex-dictator Gen. Banzer was declared ‘Maximum Historical Leader’, and permitted to choose all the party’s authorities himself.[[63]](#endnote-63)

The most serious attempt at reform was probably the MNR’s, 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 Suazo, the party attempted to democratize itself internally in 1992, when it adopted a new party statute. New party *comandos* were created at cantonal and neighborhood levels, and then free elections held for leaders all the way from neighborhoods to the national level. While 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.[[64]](#endnote-64) The old guard fought modernizers to a draw, and the principle of internal democracy failed to take root. This was exemplified when soon-to-be President Sánchez de Lozada was threatened with a revolver by Ciro Humboldt, a de-selected old guard congressman and leader of the MNR in Chuquisaca. Sánchez fled to Tarija to obtain Paz Estenssoro’s blessing.[[65]](#endnote-65) 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 due to their penetration by experienced politicians from the establishment.[[66]](#endnote-66) 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.”[[67]](#endnote-67) 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.[[68]](#endnote-68) In sum, Bolivia’s institutions and political actors changed, but its political parties did not.[[69]](#endnote-69)

## Institutional Shock 2: Liberalization

Unsurprisingly, this late-1990s dispensation proved not 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, and 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 two 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 was 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’ origins – described with analytical insight by Anria,[[70]](#endnote-70) Anria and Cyr,[[71]](#endnote-71) and Van Cott,[[72]](#endnote-72) and a huge wealth of empirical detail by Zuazo[[73]](#endnote-73) – lie in rural, highly local social movements of self-government and agricultural producer groups. Bolivia’s decentralization created over three hundred spaces of local politics that had not previously existed in a highly centralized country where politics was by construction national.[[74]](#endnote-74) Such groups took advantage of these 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 ofthe *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.[[75]](#endnote-75) This is very different from the top-down organization and clientelistic appeals of traditional parties.[[76]](#endnote-76) This distinct institutionalization made the MAS far more effective and accountable.

In terms of policy positions, the MAS has also departed from established norms. If its stated ideology and discourse are decidedly left-indigenist,[[77]](#endnote-77) many of the policies it has pursued represent a novel blend of traditionally right and left-wing positions. This 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’.[[78]](#endnote-78) 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 15 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, congressmen were overwhelmingly white, male, urban-based businessmen, professionals, and landowners. They penetrated politics laterally at the national level. By 2009, half of congressmen were new political actors from rural and peri-urban Bolivia.[[79]](#endnote-79) They penetrated politics locally, rose vertically, and had very different educations, work experiences, and surnames than the politicians they replaced. This change of political class was even sharper in the constitutional assembly of 2006-07.[[80]](#endnote-80)

Or consider 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.

**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/pop. | 31% | 27% | 28% | 24% | 24% | 29% | 35% | 34% | 49% |

***Sources:*** Tribunal Supremo Electoral; World Bank

## 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 was 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 Annex 2.

Figure 11 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 the center-most, with about 30 percent of voters in 1996-97; the other nine left-right categories are all far lower, clustered below ten 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 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 2006 onwards, 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 11.** Voters’ Self-Reported Ideological Identification

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro[[81]](#endnote-81)

Figure 12 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.



**Figure 12.** Equality Before the Law\*

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro

\* 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.

The result of a politics more representative of Bolivians, and of institutions more accessible to them, is a state citizens judge relevant and that inspires confidence. Figure 13 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 is swept away and the new politics gels. 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” halves from 68 to 35 percent. Bolivians feel they can rely on a state run by the new politics.



**Figure 13.** Confidence in the State

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro

# 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 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 these explanations, but logic is not. Bolivia has been a mobilized society for decades, where workers are highly organized and protest is common.[[82]](#endnote-82) 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. While we might expect such demonstrations to weaken the political party in power, 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 14, which plots economic growth in Bolivia between 1961-2015. 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 eight percent cumulatively in 1982-1983. It is not credible that a period of increasing growth[[83]](#endnote-83) of between 2-5 percent caused politics to fall apart.



**Figure 14.** GDP Growth (%, annual)

***Data sources:*** World Bank, OECD[[84]](#endnote-84)

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 post-revolutionary 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 15 shows the 1984 deficit in excess of 17 percent of GDP. A deficit half as large in 2002, while not healthy, is comparatively unimpressive, and similar to other periods in Bolivia’s recent history when its politics did not collapse. More to the point, expenditure actually increased through 2003-04, contracting only around 2005-06 as a result of political turmoil, before increasing again in 2007-08. So fiscal contraction cannot have been the cause.



**Figure 15.** Expenditure, Revenue and Deficits, 1952-2015

***Source:*** Kehoe and Machicado.[[85]](#endnote-85) Reproduced with permission.

# 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 non-racial, non-cultural axis of competition obviously suited the educated sons of Bolivia’s then-tiny middle class. But it was also strategically astute. Amongst 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, and 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 post-revolutionary period, reliably capturing 70+ percent of the vote as late as 1989. More impressively, 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. Elite politics proved as resilient as it was 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 the same 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, though 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 vs. 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, which 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 this 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. This produced a new axis of competition linking the MAS, MIP, and other indigenist parties of the western highlands at one pole, with cosmopolitan parties that deny, or seek to minimize, identity differences at the other. The former is strongest on the rural *altiplano*, seat of Bolivia’s ancient civilizations, while the latter is strongest in the migrant-rich eastern lowlands, and cities more generally.

Might Bolivia’s new parties not be just a re-branding of the old politics? Not a new cleavage but a new strategy to mobilize the old cleavage? This paper has shown tri-fold evidence that Bolivia’s political axis has shifted. First, ideology: 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, which 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 is implicit in the MAS exceeding 50 percent of the national vote, as it has done regularly these past 15 years. These are not simply the old parties re-branded. And thirdly, 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. But ironically, it was decentralization – intended to shore up establishment parties – and political liberalization that provided the triggers by which this 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 micro-parties with ultra-local concerns, constituted and run by ordinary, unprivileged Bolivians. And in the midst of them the MAS, a vehicle for social movements that agglomerates local parties for general elections, and carved out ideologically novel positions in-between traditional left and right. These structural attributes have aligned a still-forming system far more readily with the real, ethnic/rural-vs.-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 it, an effervescent civil society had changed out of all recognition, but with little political effect. 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.

Which leads to a final question: How many other non-industrial countries feature party systems arrayed along the wrong axis? Whether hangovers of European colonialism, relics of the Cold War, or products of ideological mimicry, left/worker vs. right/capital systems are in principle ill-matched to the dominant cleavages of developing societies actually shaped by ethnic, cultural or regional factors. Such a politics is 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*.

# Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Gustavo Bonifaz for expert research assistance. Thanks to the political science department at UNC Chapel Hill for hosting me during sabbatical, to Elliott Green, Kathryn Hochstetler, Evelyne Huber, Salvador Romero and Erik Wibbels for insightful advice, and to Teddy Brett, Alberto Díaz-Cayeros, Claire Dunn, Germán Feierherd, Stephan Haggard, Jonathan Hartlyn, Liesbet Hooghe, Javier Jahnsen, Gary Marks, Kate McKiernan, Zoila Ponce de León, Moira Zuazo, seminar participants at Duke, LSE, Stanford, UNC Chapel Hill, and LASA, and the editors of *Politics & Society* for very useful comments. Remaining errors are my own.

# Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declares no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

# Funding

No funding sources to declare for this research.

# Annex 1: 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. This task is complicated by the ‘splinterism’ to which politics in Bolivia – like many countries – is prone. This is particularly so on the left, where 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.[[86]](#endnote-86)

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 these parties 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 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 9th 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 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 their votes mainly subtract from the established mother party, I class these as part of the establishment.

At the margins of the establishment parties, I define ‘Others’ as a collection of minor, non-splinter 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. These were built around the charismatic personalities of successful entrepreneurs – in the case of *Conciencia de Patria* (Conscience of the Fatherland, Condepa) television and radio personality Carlos Palenque, and in the case of *Unión Civica Solidaridad* (Solidarity Civic Union, UCS) Bolivia’s biggest beer magnate, Max Fernández. 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 upon moving to the city. Both parties were organizationally weak. Neither survived the death of its founder, and neither has fielded a presidential candidate since 2002.

# Annex 2: Additional Survey Evidence

This annex presents additional survey evidence from Latinobarómetro on Bolivian’s attitudes towards political parties, elections, the state, and national priorities. Figure A2.1 shows the evolution of Bolivians’ confidence in political parties between 1996 and 2015. The crisis is clearly visible here. 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 seven 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.



**Figure A2.1.** Citizens' confidence in political parties

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro[[87]](#endnote-87)

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 (figure A2.2). A plurality further responded that voting did not matter, and did not have real-world effects (figure A2.3). Over the long-term, such beliefs can only be corrosive to democracy.



**Figure A2.2.** Were the last elections clean or fraudulent?

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro (2000)



**Figure A2.3.** Does voting matter? Does it have real-world effects?

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro (2000)

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, and then turning strongly negative in the political chaos of the early 2000s, before recovering to strongly positive levels by 2013 as the new party system was consolidated.



**Figure A2.4.** Democracy requires parties? Net Yes–No

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro

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 (figure 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.



**Figure A2.5.** How serious a problem is corruption in Bolivia?

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro

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, this 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 number of respondents who rank this first shrinks by more than half, to thirteen percent.

**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 | 1080 | 1242 | 1200 |

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro

A bigger change is evident when Bolivians are asked Can you trust your leaders to do what is correct (figure A2.6)? Going into the crisis, fully 81 percent of respondents say No, and only eleven percent say Yes. But by 2008, Yes responses have grown four-fold to 45 percent, while No has declined to 51 percent. Though 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.



**Figure A2.6.** Can Bolivia’s leaders be trusted to do what is correct?

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro

Lastly, it is instructive to consider a more general question that has been asked consistently since 1996: Is Bolivia progressing, stagnant or moving backwards? 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 backwards (figure A2.7). By 2000-2005, Bolivians’ views of their country had become abysmal: fewer than fifteen percent of respondents thought Bolivia was progressing, and 85 percent thought it was stagnant or moving backwards. 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, coincides with a remarkable improvement in Bolivians’ views of the direction in which their country is headed.

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**Figure A2.7.** Is Bolivia progressing, stagnant or moving backwards?

***Source:*** Latinobarómetro

# Annex 3: Interview List

Gonzalo Aguirre, Congressman (MBL), interview, La Paz, 30 September 1997.

Mauricio Balcázar, Director of Encuestas y Estudios (polling company) and ex-Minister of Communications, interview, La Paz, 13 October 1997.

Mauricio Balcázar, ex-Minister of Communications, interview, Washington, DC, November 2017.

Guillermo Bedregal, Historic MNR leader who participated in the 1952-3 Revolution, ex-President of the lower chamber and ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, *inter alia*, interview, La Paz, July 2011.

Juan Carlos Blanco, UCS leader for Viacha (municipality) and CBN bottling plant director, interview, Viacha, 16 October 1997.

Erika Brockmann, Senator (MIR), interview, La Paz, 6 October 1997.

Erika Brockmann, ex-Senator (MIR), interview, La Paz, April 2013.

Fernando Cajías, ex-Prefect (La Paz, MIR), interview, La Paz, 25 February 1997.

Victor Hugo Cárdenas, ex-Vice President of Bolivia, interview, October 2011.

Walter Guevara, Director of the Democratic Development and Governance Projects (USAID), interview, La Paz, 3 December 2007.

Enrique Ipiña, ex-Minister of human development and ex-Secretary of education, interview, La Paz, 26 February 1997.

Carlos Hugo Molina, Secretary of popular participation, interview, La Paz, 10 March 1997.

Carlos Hugo Molina, ex-Secretary of popular participation, interview, La Paz, 10 December 2007.

Maria Teresa Paz, ex-Congresswoman (MNR), interview, La Paz, March 2015.

Salvador Romero, President of the National Electoral Court, interview, La Paz, 6 December 2007.

Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, ex-President of Bolivia and MNR leader, interviews, Washington, DC, 31 March-1 April 2011.

Antonio Soto, MIR leader for Viacha (municipality), interview, Viacha, 10 October 1997.

Freddy Teodovitch, Senator (MNR), interview, La Paz, 6 November 1997.

Carlos Toranzo, economist, ILDIS (research foundation), interview, La Paz, 3 March 1997.

Enrique Toro, ADN national chief, interview, La Paz, 16 October 1997.

Javier Torres Goitia, Sub-Secretary of health, interview, La Paz, 13 October 1997.

David Tuchschneider, World Bank rural development officer, interview, La Paz, 14 February 1997.

David Tuchschneider, World Bank rural development officer, interview, La Paz, 3 May 1997.

David Tuchschneider, World Bank rural development officer, interview, La Paz, 3 December 2007.

Miguel Urioste, Congressman and MBL party leader, interview, La Paz, 3 October 1997.

\* Specific dates indicate in-person interviews. Monthly dates indicate (more extended) telephone and email interviews. Interviewees’ main attributes are given with reference to the topics discussed.

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