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22: New Social Movements: The Indigenous Movement

Read: Warren and Jackson, "Introduction: studying indigenous activism in Latin America"

I. Background

A. We again ask the question: why, contrary to expectations, haven't the world's peoples shed their premodern "primordial" loyalties to blood, soil, and religion?

1. Certainly indigenous communities seemed the most likely to disappear

a. Small-scale (although not all of them)

b. Not "civilized"

c. **DISCUSS:** what else? Nagel?

1) Notion that they're rural, live on reservations, etc.

2) Not integrated fully into the market economy

II. What IS indigenous? WHO are indigenous?

A. Not problematic in the Western Hemisphere

1. Discussed in Warren and Jackson

2. However, elsewhere, Africa, for instance, which groups qualify is contested

B. Clearly not just any group that can establish descent from first inhabitants of a given territory

1. Additional requirements:

a. Marginalized status

b. They need to struggle in order to maintain cultural distinctiveness

c. Dispossession

d. Other forms of oppression carried out by the majority society, whether colonial or postcolonial

- C. Increasingly “self-definition” (subjective) criteria are used
 - 1. States can no longer unilaterally declare who is indigenous
 - 2. Discussed in Nagel
 - D. **DISCUSS:** the indigenous movement compared to other social movements?
 - 1. Differences?
 - 2. Similarities?
- III. Indigenous movement’s goals:
- A. States should be plural societies
 - B. Indigenous persons should be citizens of a country
 - 1. As well as special citizens
 - 2. Work for greater inclusion of indigenous peoples in the national political process
 - 3. While also encouraging them to remain distinct
 - C. Citizens who enjoy rights to cultural and ethnic distinctiveness
 - 1. Self-determination
 - 2. And autonomy
 - 3. Scholars term this “differentiated citizenship, or “ethnic citizenship”
 - D. Rights are claimed as distinct *peoples*, not as minorities
 - 1. *Inherent* rights are stressed
 - 2. Rather than make an appeal to liberal values (fairness, equality before the law, etc.)
 - 3. In order to establish and continue to confirm inherent rights as a distinct people, indigenous communities and their members must perform otherness
 - a. To gain the authority to speak and be listened to

- b. What is indigenous is problematic, not as clear as other identity-based movements (e.g., black nationalism, women's movement, gay and lesbian)
 - b. **DISCUSS:** potential problems with this strategy?
 - 1) Remember the Whitely article on Hopi language?
 - E. Also, of course, to protest, mobilize against serious oppression, racism, all kinds of unfair treatment
 - 1. With few exceptions, indigenous people are the poorest in a given country
 - F. These movements protest violence, especially that perpetrated by the state
 - 1. In Latin America: Peru, Colombia, Guatemala in particular
 - G. Most important: fight for land claims
 - H. Van Cott characterizes the indigenous movement's goals as:
 - 1. Self-determination and autonomy, with an emphasis on cultural distinctiveness
 - 2. Political reforms that involve a restructuring of the state
 - 3. Territorial rights and access to natural resources, including control over economic development
 - 4. Reforms of military and police powers over indigenous peoples¹
- IV. How these movements developed
- A. Cold War was ending
 - 1. Earlier movements:²
 - a. Popular mobilizations in the Third World previously organized around the "nation" aimed mainly at:
 - 1) National liberation from colonial rule

¹ Donna Lee Van Cott 2000: *The Friendly Liquidation of the Past: The Politics of Diversity in Latin America* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

² See Balakrishnan Rajagopal, 2003. Recoding resistance: social movements and the challenge to international law. In Rajagopal, *International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements and Third World Resistance*. Cambridge: Cambridge U Press: 233-271, p. 239.

- 2) And around “class”—fighting for structural transformation
2. Disillusionment with these strategies
 - a. Newer forms of mobilizing emerged, based on identity
 - b. Protesting new forms of exploitation and domination (migrant labor, urban squatters, women)
 3. Marxist analysis couldn’t explain these mobilizations
 - a. Many in the left saw them as regressive
- B. Neoliberal policies were being promulgated, instituted
1. A major goal: decrease the role of the state
 - a. Previously: corporatist state model, for both Western democracies and Communist bloc countries
 - 1) The state should provide the infrastructure, many services, etc.
 - b. Neoliberalism holds that privatization and decentralization will result in:
 - 1) A less corrupt and less bloated government
 - 2) A government that will depend less on clientalist (patronage) relations to get things done
 2. Political spaces opened up for NGOs
 3. Neoliberalism encourages a more participatory civil society that will take up the slack resulting from a shrinking government
 4. Neoliberal discourses emphasizing community solidarity and social capital
 - a. Help us understand why states recognized cultural rights
 - b. Searched for ways to include everyone in a country’s civil society
 - c. Make sure everyone *felt* included
 - d. Paralleled indigenous pueblos’ appeals to tradition and community

5. The discovery that the “move to markets” in development policy in the early 1990s (neoliberalist strategies)
 - a. Coincided with the move away from class to identity
- C. Search for a solution to the fiscal, legitimacy, and governability crises faced by so many Latin American countries (and elsewhere)
 1. Structural adjustment measures, part of neoliberal strategies, hit the poorest sectors of a society hard
 2. As did the neoliberal “openings” (NAFTA³ is an example) that eliminated national protectionist legislation intended to prop up a country’s manufactures, agriculture, etc. by limiting or taxing imports
 - a. Example of Colombia: domestic fruit marketing suffered because many kinds of imported fruits were cheaper
 3. The shrinking, decentralized state means that public services are drastically cut, elimination of price supports (e.g., for staples like bread) are a severe blow to small-scale agrarian sectors
 4. Privatization (of transport, petroleum, mines, even water) often hit the poor very hard as well
 5. When privatization is in the hands of international capital, protests employing a nationalist discourse often result
 - a. Bolivia: the prospect of the multinational Bechtel owning the country’s water resulted in huge demonstrations
- D. The state was also shrinking because of other forms of transnationalism, globalization (in addition to neoliberalism)
 1. State borders increasingly porous
 2. Suprastate entities like European Union, United Nations
- E. Indigenous activism and organizing emerged during the 1980s and 1990s (there were precedents)
- F. In Latin America: a period characterized by the “democratic transition”: political liberalization

³ North American Free Trade Agreement, mentioned in Messer’s discussion of the Zapatistas.

1. Democratic reform, followed by new legal frameworks
 2. Fewer repressive state responses to indigenous demands
 3. New constitutions in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, Ecuador, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela
 - a. Constitutions of many countries greatly increased the attention given to indigenous communities
 - b. Radical shift from earlier assimilationist policies
 - 1) Nagel's discussion of the philosophy behind termination is parallel
 - c. Assimilationist policies: The indigenous part of a country's identity was to exist in the form of historical memory, museum exhibits, folklore performance
- G. International law helped forestall this process
1. Treaties, covenants
 2. Legal leverage provided by the 1989 International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169
- H. And transnational organizing
1. Opened up new opportunities to influence national legislation
 2. And to work with international non-governmental organizations that focus on:
 - a. Development
 - b. Human rights
- I. Multiculturalism was in the ascendancy
1. Indigenous communities came to be seen (by some sectors) to represent:
 - a. Legitimacy
 - b. Democracy
 - c. Accountability

- d. Spirituality
 - 1) We saw the video “White shamans and plastic medicine men”
 - e. A moral reproach to status quo hegemonic institutions like the state, modern religions and market forces (materialism)
- V. Indigenous communities found that stressing renewal and recovery:
- A. Reindigenization in many communities
 - B. Validating claims to indigenous identity helped with efforts to reclaim land and other resources
- VI. Concerns:
- A. Intracommunity conflict
 - B. Negotiations between indigenous leaders and state representatives
 - C. “Pluralist” constitutions must confront “monist” judiciaries—judges who subscribe to Western law 100%
 - D. What do multiculturalist approaches to development—“ethnodevelopment”—look like?
 - E. Effects of neoliberalism
 - F. How to participate in politics: form parties? etc.
 - 1. Especially at the national level
 - G. Mobilizing across national borders
 - 1. The Maya in Mexico, Guatemala and Belize
 - 2. Guaraní in Bolivia and Argentina
 - H. Identification with one’s community (“pueblo”) and organizing along those lines versus organizing along pan-Indian lines
 - 1. Nagel discusses this
 - I. Continuing to question what indigenous identity means

1. Quite unstable: shifting terms of engagement
2. Indigenous people may be urban, cosmopolitan, professional, transnational

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