A New Dawn?: Ethnic Mobilization and Political Equality in Latin America*

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Abstract

This paper argues that the common assumptions about the deleterious role of ethnicity in politics may be liable to the type of ethnic cleavages present in a country. Two types of cleavages are distinguished: Ranked and unranked ethnic systems. The emerging ethnicization of politics in Latin America should be interpreted as ethnic mobilization within the former type. The results show that in ranked ethnic systems, the ethnicization of politics is likely to have a positive effect on democracy, namely on political equality between different ethnic groups, while not increasing the risk of civil conflict. The analysis of the causes of this ethnicization points at the particular importance of institutional conditions, specifically the electoral system.

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Introduction

Shortly after the asserted coup against Ecuador’s president Correa in September of last year, the indigenous party Pachakutik called for the overthrow of the government. In Ecuador’s neighbor Bolivia, the political reformations initiated by the country’s first indigenous president Evo Morales led to an open conflict with the department of Santa Cruz and secessionist ambitions of the department’s government. These events are illustrative for important recent developments in Latin America: While ethnicity was long of little importance, the last decades have seen an increasing ethnicization of the region’s politics: the political mobilization of indigenous and Afro-Latino groups both in the realms of civil society and of party politics (Birnir and Van Cott 2007; Hooker 2005; Madrid 2005; Stavenhagen 1992; Van Cott 2005, 2007; Yashar 2005).

The political consequences of these developments are not clear yet. Will the risk of political instability or even violent conflict increase in countries with strong political forces that explicitly champion the cause of formerly excluded peoples? The academic literature has traditionally viewed ethnicized politics as having a negative effect on both democracy and stability (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Clark 2008, 113; Horowitz 1985, 296-332; Huntington 1991; Reilly 2006, 811, 813; Wimmer 1997; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009). Indeed, in the past, ethnic mobilization has already been associated with rebellions in Mexico and Nicaragua. – Or, on the contrary, will these new actors contribute to more democratic states in a region plagued by severe political and economic inequality?

To the author’s knowledge, this paper constitutes the first large-n statistical analysis of both the roots and the consequences of the increasing ethnicization of politics in Latin America. It does so on the basis of a newly composed dataset on ethnic civil society in Latin America and on new data on the strength of ethnic parties in the region. In this way, it will attempt to disclose the links between institutional conditions such as the electoral system, the ethnicization of politics, democracy, and civil conflict in Latin America.

The paper also argues that the emerging ethnicization of politics in Latin America takes place under the conditions of a distinct type of ethnic cleavages – different from those usually discussed in the literature: cleavages in ranked ethnic systems, i.e. between hierarchically ordered ethnic groups. Thus, this paper highlights an important
theoretical distinction which has often been ignored in the literature on ethnic politics and civil conflicts but which has important empirical consequences. The following sections will elaborate on this theoretical argument. Sections 4 and 5 develop testable hypotheses regarding the causes and consequences of the ethnicization of politics in Latin America. The data used to test them are presented in section 6, followed by the statistical analyses and some concluding remarks.

1. Ethnic Politics and Civil Violence – Revisited

Scholars of political science have consistently pointed at the deleterious effects of ethnic politics on both stability and democracy. Ethnicity is usually understood as a person’s most basic identity, “connected to birth and blood” (Horowitz 1985, 51-2), related to such “innate” traits as language, religion, and color and other phenotypical features (Horowitz 1985). Based on such observable, descent-based markers ethnic groups are seen (and see themselves) as communities of a shared culture and common ancestry (Horowitz 1985; Weber 1976).

In multi-ethnic states the most important political cleavages are often of ethnic nature.1 In ethnically divided states ethnicity can function as a fictitious kinship from which shared loyalties and obligations to act in support of the group are deduced. Consequently, ethnic ties become the most important criterion for political alliances (Horowitz 1985, 74-81; Sambanis 2008, 14-6). In the context of scarce and state-controlled resources this leads to ethnic clientelism, i.e. the distribution of the state’s goods according to ethnic affiliation (Bratton 1989, 414; Wimmer 1997, 2002).

The result according to the literature is often a struggle between the elites of different ethnic groups over the access to the state and its resources – over political inclusion and exclusion – which can take on various forms from electoral violence and military coups to outright civil war (Horowitz 1985; Wimmer 1997, 2002). Indeed, recent research shows that this “ethnicization” of politics combined with political exclusion or discrimination along ethnic lines often leads to the outbreak of violent ethnic conflicts (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009).2 But even

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1 I use the term „cleavages“ here in accordance with the definition put forward by Bartolini (2000), i.e. structural conflicts within a society involving specific social constituencies with distinct, self-conscious identities mirrored in an organizational network representing the cleavage. Thus, cleavages do not refer to mere social differences but to their political translation, i.e. the political mobilization of a group X qua X. In ethnically homogenous/consolidated societies the politically relevant cleavages usually form around other factors than ethnicity, such as class, age, gender, habitat etc. (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Mann 2005, 57).

2 See also Vogt (2007) for an analysis of these mechanisms in the cases of Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal.
if violent conflict is avoided, ethnicized politics is assumed to have a negative effect on the functioning of democratic systems in general (Horowitz 1985; Reilly 2006). For one thing, this ethnicization of politics is closely tied to the arena of political competition, i.e. the party system, in democratic systems (Horowitz 1985, 2002). Political parties, as Reilly (2006, 811) notes, are “intimately linked to the rise and fall of conflict in ethnically plural societies.” Ethnic parties – characterized by their identification with a specific group’s interests – are assumed to disintegrate society with exclusivist, polarizing appeals. In ethnic party systems – where all parties try to mobilize their ethnically determined supporters – moderation gives way to radicalization (Clark 2008, 113; Horowitz 1985, 296-332; Huntington 1991; Reilly 2006, 811, 813).3

Besides the realm of political parties – the “primary link between state and society in modern democracies” (Van Cott 2005, 1) – ethnicization of politics may also occur in the sphere of civil society. It is generally acknowledged that where civil society organizations are the carriers of strong ethnic movements they may also incite ethnic competition and possibly violent conflict (Belloni 2008; Diamond 2000, 200; Gellner 1991, 133; Gyimah-Boadi 1996; Wimmer 1997). Thus, we can identify two dimensions of ethnicized politics: the ethnicization of civil society and the ethnicization of electoral politics, i.e. the party system.

Ethnic cleavages are usually considered more problematic and conflict-prone than other social cleavages. For one thing, the descent-based and cultural nature of ethnic identity seems to make ethnic cleavages more profound. Class divisions, for example, can be transcended more easily through individual or group mobility than ethnic cleavages which are more likely “to survive over time and to encapsulate their respective communities” (Bartolini 2000, 21).4 Thus, although it is just one possible way of people’s identification and social organization (Chandra 2006) ethnicity is less malleable than other social identities and, thus, less susceptible to re-identification or re-organization.

Too often, however, this literature on ethnic politics has not distinguished sufficiently between different types of ethnic cleavages. It has usually treated all forms of ethnically divided societies equally despite large quantities of case studies alluding to dif-

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3 See, however, Chandra (2005) for a contrasting argument. Birnir (2007) argues that ethnic parties contribute to democratic stability if they have access to government. If electorally active ethnic groups are persistently shut out from executive power their conflict potential increases significantly.

4 For a similar distinction between classes and nations, see Gellner (1983, 116-7).
ferent patterns of historically formed ethnic relations in different countries and world regions. Moreover, by not distinguishing between different types of ethnic cleavages the standard literature has implicitly focused overwhelmingly on one specific type of ethnic cleavages and drawn most of the above described conclusions based on the analysis of this type: cleavages between horizontally structured, more or less equal ethnic groups. We find this type in most of Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, for instance, where the colonial principle of divide-and-rule led to a system of a priori equal groups situated below the foreign rulers who later “disappeared”. The state they left behind is not linked to any of these groups and, thus, none of them can legitimately claim to be the state-people. Exactly this unstable situation seems to be at the roots of most of the (violent) ethnic competition to which the literature on ethnic politics points.

In Latin America, in contrast, it was the white ruling class which constructed and dominated the new states upon independence from the colonial homeland. This led to a race-based system of vertically structured groups composed of the subjugated indigenous population\(^5\), the imported African slaves, and the white rulers (and, over time, a panoply of intermediate groups) (Pitt-Rivers 1994; Wagley 1994). Such systems of ethno-classes are distinguished as “ranked” systems from “unranked” systems by Horowitz (1985, 21-36). However, Horowitz (1985, 36) explicitly leaves the issue of ranked ethnic groups aside in his work.\(^6\)

It is the basic argument of this article that these different types of ethnic cleavages have an important impact on the role of ethnicity in politics. I will argue that in ranked ethnic systems such as we commonly find in Latin America the ethnicization of politics is not as dangerous as in unranked systems but in contrast has positive consequences for the quality of democracy.

2. **Ranked vs. Unranked Ethnic Systems**

Horowitz (1985, 22) defines ranked ethnic systems as societies where social class and ethnic origin coincide, whereas in unranked ethnic systems ethnic groups are

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\(^5\) By “indigenous” I refer to the usual meaning of the term denoting both these groups’ pre-Colombian presence and the racial category of “Indian”.

\(^6\) Gurr (2000) does use a separate “type” category for ethno-classes. However, in his global analyses based on the “Minorities at Risk” data usually the distinction is not given any relevance (see e.g. Gurr 1994, 2000; Gurr and Moore 1997). Moreover, the “Minorities at Risk” data includes yet another “type” category for indigenous peoples although indigenous groups almost always form ethno-classes in their countries of residence. In my view, this distinction is not very helpful but, in contrast, leads to conceptual confusion.
“cross-class”. Thus, “[t]he distinction rests upon the coincidence or noncoincidence of social class with ethnic origins”. Ranked ethnic systems always contain a dominant and subordinate group(s), and mobility opportunities for individuals are restricted by group identity. In unranked ethnic systems, on the other hand, and as already indicated above, the question of group superiority is not settled (Horowitz 1985, 22-3).

In reality, of course, these ideal-types are blurred. Especially, within the dominant (or “superordinate”) group there are usually significant class divisions: Certainly not all of its members are of upper-class standing nor are all of them above all members of the subordinate group. Subordinate groups, for their part, also have their own “elites”. Importantly, however, these “elites” are only acknowledged as such within their own group and not across ethnic lines (Horowitz 1985, 24-5).

This system of ethnic stratification and the inextricable fusion of ethnicity and class it signifies is aptly described by Tilley (2005) for the case of El Salvador: The condition of “Indiannness” in El Salvador is “infused with a class stigma”; being Indian means by definition being poor (Tilley 2005, 48). Ethnicity and class are thus “co-constituted”: the concepts are not the same but the inescapable social norm dictates that indigenous people are of lower social class (Tilley 2005, 58).

Such “ethnically stratified poverty” (Yashar 2005, 14) has grave consequences for the political equality. As Rueschemeyer (2004, 76) notes in a more general context, “[d]ominant groups can use their social and economic power resources more or less directly in the political sphere”. In ranked ethnic systems, the socio-economic hierarchy and, as a consequence, the political hierarchy are firmly and durably structured along ethnic lines.

As stated above, the existing literature on ethnic politics has paid surprisingly little attention to how these different ethnic cleavages might condition the role of ethnicity in politics, or in other words: how different types of ethnic cleavages might shape the consequences of ethnicized politics. The emerging ethnicization of politics in Latin America provides us with a unique opportunity to analyze more precisely the causes and effects of ethnicized politics in ranked ethnic systems.

3. Ethnic Politics in Latin America

Of course, ranked ethnic systems are not confined to Latin America. Former settler colonies like the United States, Australia, South Africa and many other countries also
exhibit systems of vertically structured ethnic groups. But as a whole Latin America is the world region which most homogenously consists of ethnically ranked societies. The nation-states constructed by the white post-independence rulers envisaged a mono-ethnic nation where there was no place for indigenous peoples. Their distinct identities were supposed to melt into an all-encompassing “mestizo race” championed by leading Latin American intellectuals as the dominant racial-nationalist project in the early 20th century. According to this vision, civilized nation-states could only be built if the racially inferior non-white components were dissolved into this new cosmic race. This project led to various state policies designed to accelerate either indigenous groups’ disappearance or their social incorporation (through educational and economic development) (Stavenhagen 1992; Tilley 2005, 189-203; Yashar 2005, 287-8). In reality, however, ethnic identities persisted and Latin American societies today all reflect the system of ethno-classes – often called “social races” (Pitt-Rivers 1994; Wagley 1994) – described above. The indigenous population – constituting up to 60% of the national populations – and African descendants have been economically and politically subjugated ever since colonization and are still found at the very bottom of the social hierarchy (Centeno 2002, 67-8; Pitt-Rivers 1994; Stavenhagen 1992; Tilley 2005, 43-4, 48, 50, 55-8; Van Cott 2005, 5, 35; Wagley 1994; Yashar 2005, 14, 20, 286-7).

However, since scholars have usually ignored the specific characteristics of ranked ethnic systems, it is small wonder that Latin America’s ethnic divisions have received little attention in the standard literature on ethnic politics. The region has commonly been described as a peculiar exception in the global pattern where ethnicity did not become politicized (Gurr et al. 1993; Horowitz 1985; Young 1976). But this has changed dramatically in the last decades.

Since the 1970s, indigenous groups have begun to organize politically. Explicit ethnic claims are made for equal treatment, for indigenous rights, especially land rights and the right to bilingual/-cultural education, and often also for self-determination in specific territories (Stavenhagen 1992; Van Cott 2001, 2007; Yashar 2005). This ethnic mobilization first occurred in the realm of civil society, via powerful civic movements (Yashar 2005). More recently, ethnicity has also become an important factor in Latin American party politics and, thus, in the realm of political competition.

7 A notable exception is Wimmer (2002).
8 But see Cleary (2000).
Ethnic parties – not seldom created by experienced indigenous civic movements – have successfully participated in electoral processes and, in the case of Bolivia, even gained political power (including the highest political office) (Van Cott 2005). Less prominent than indigenous mobilization but still noteworthy has been the increasing ethno-political mobilization by African-descendant minorities. Hooker (2005) argues that this Afro-Latino mobilization has been successful only when black communities were able to portray themselves as indigenous-like groups with distinct ethnic identities – as was the case in Honduras, for example (Anderson 2007). Significant political mobilization of Afro-descendant groups has also occurred in Panamá, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica (Harpelle 1993; Hooker 2005; Priestley 2004; Priestley and Barrow 2008; Van Cott 2000; Vilas 1989).

But what are the political consequences of this new development? Will the risk of violent ethnic conflict increase in Latin America as the mainstream literature on ethnic politics would suggest? Before we try to answer these questions let us have a closer look at what causes the ethnicization of politics in the first place, i.e. what factors encourage or halt ethnic mobilization.

4. Causes of Ethnicized Politics

Ethnic civil society organizations and ethnic parties do not just automatically emerge where ethnic cleavages and/or ethnic grievances exist; their formation depends on the existence or absence of certain institutional conditions (Birnir 2004; Van Cott 2005; Yashar 2005). This section starts with the ethnicization of civil society as in Latin America this took place prior to the ethnicization of electoral politics.

*Ethnic Mobilization within Civil Society*

Yashar (2005) highlights the importance of favorable structural conditions for ethnic grievances to be translated into ethnic mobilization. Two factors seem to be particularly relevant: political associational space, i.e. civil liberties, and broader civil society networks (“transcommunity networks”), such as unions, churches and NGOs, whose existing structures may provide organizational capacity to newly emerging ethnic movements. It seems, however, that the influence of these civil society networks depends largely on the agenda and composition of the specific organizations. In some instances such in principle non-ethnic organizations may actually deter the ethnicization of politics. Thus, in a quantitative study where we cannot control for such
nuances, I do not expect civil society networks in general to have an effect on ethnic civil society mobilization. However, another factor relating to mobilizational resources can certainly be expected to have a stimulating effect: the relative size of the historically marginalized ethnic groups compared to the entire population. Since ethnic mobilization in Latin America in the last half century has exclusively been an affair of these groups, their relative size is an indicator of “constituency size”. A large constituency, i.e. a large pool of potential followers, certainly bolsters mobilization.

From qualitative studies, there is also strong evidence for a diffusion effect. Successful ethnic mobilization in some countries has fuelled mobilization in other countries. This effect not only operates between neighboring countries but also on a greater transnational scale as these ethnic organizations come together – and even plan joint actions – in international fora and are promoted by international organizations such as the United Nations (Brysk 1996; Tilley 2005, 224-37; Van Cott 2005, 41-3, 225-6; Yashar 2005, 4-5, 80-2).

It also seems reasonable to expect the current political position of the “subordinate” groups to have an effect on their propensity to mobilize. Although indigenous people and Afro-Latino groups have traditionally been on the lowest tier of the social and political hierarchy from a relative view, their access to political power in absolute terms has varied over time and across countries. While political discrimination against non-whites was still widespread in the decades after WWII, in some countries – Colombia and Panama, for instance – indigenous groups have now achieved a high degree of regional autonomy, and in Bolivia they have even gained governmental power. In general, if large proportions of the population are excluded from political power on the basis of their ethnic identity, their propensity to mobilize in alternative sites and forms – say in civic movements – may be higher.

Thus, we can deduce four empirically testable hypotheses from this first part:

H1.1: More civil liberties lead to stronger ethnic civil society mobilization.

H1.2: The higher the population share of historically subordinate ethnic groups, the stronger the ethnicization of the country’s civil society.

H1.3: The higher the previous level of ethnic mobilization in the region, the stronger is the ethnicization of civil society in the individual countries.
H1.4: The larger the population share of politically excluded ethnic groups in a country, the stronger the ethnicization of the country’s civil society.

The Ethnicization of Electoral Politics

The structure of the party system is to a great extent a product of the electoral system (Duverger 1954; Rae 1967). But which electoral systems promote the formation of ethnic parties is highly debated in the literature. In large part due to Lijphart’s (1977, 2002) famous concept of consociationalism, proportional representation (PR) systems have become linked to images of ethnically fragmented politics (e.g. Reilly 2006, 814). However, empirical evidence shows that strong ethnic parties are actually more likely to appear in majoritarian systems (Muñoz-Pogossian 2008, 191; Reynolds 1995) – particularly if ethnic groups are geographically concentrated (Van Cott 2005, 23, 29). In districts where a specific ethnic group finds itself in a demographic majority ethnicity can become an easy-to-use and promising mobilizational tool.

PR, on the other hand, seems to be associated with less party system ethnicization (Huber 2010). On the one hand, in PR systems every single vote counts for the distribution of seats and, thus, districts are not lost or won “beforehand”. Consequently, parties and their leaders should have an incentive to moderate and develop broader, non-ethnic agendas in order to gather votes beyond ethnic boundaries (Diamond 2000, 207; Horowitz 1985, 641-2, 647, 651). On the other hand, PR systems have also lower barriers of party entry compared to majoritarian systems. Since political interests within a given ethnic group are usually not homogeneous, a broad variety of parties are likely to emerge in PR systems making electoral appeals to a broad variety of issues (not only ethnicity). Thus, parties competing in districts with a dominant ethnic group have more incentives to make non-ethnic electoral appeals – which diffuses group voting (Huber 2010). I argue, therefore, that majoritarian systems are more conducive to the ethnicization of politics than PR systems.

Another institutional factor furthering the emergence of ethnic parties are reserved seats or quotas in the parliament for specific ethnic groups (Van Cott 2005). Ethnic mobilization within civil society may also fuel the ethnicization of electoral politics. Specifically, Van Cott (Van Cott 2005) highlights the role of mature and politically successful indigenous movements in creating viable indigenous parties. On the other
hand, Yashar (2005, 304-5) objects that successful mobilization in the realm of civil society does not directly nor easily translate into electoral success.

Finally, the same arguments regarding the relative size and the current political position (i.e. the current degree of ethnic exclusion) of the “subordinate” groups outlined above can be made with regard to ethnic voting. Ethnic groups which are politically excluded may attempt to form parties which explicitly defend their interests within the political system. And the larger the pool of potential voters, the more promising the prospects.

Therefore, five more testable hypotheses follow from these considerations:

**H2.1:** Proportional electoral systems lead to less ethnicization of electoral politics.

**H2.2:** Ethnic quotas in the legislature increase the ethnicization of electoral politics.

**H2.3:** Higher levels of ethnic civil society mobilization increase the ethnicization of electoral politics.

**H2.4:** The higher the population share of historically subordinate ethnic groups, the stronger the ethnicization of the country’s electoral politics.

**H2.5:** The larger the population share of politically excluded ethnic groups in a country, the stronger the ethnicization of the country’s electoral politics.

### 5. The Consequences of Ethnicized Politics in Ranked Ethnic Systems

Several recent works on the topic have argued that the emerging ethno-political mobilization in Latin America might actually have a positive effect on democracy in these countries. Ethnic parties and ethnic civil society movements – as representatives of historically subordinated ethnic groups – could at last give these groups a voice and political influence. Thereby they might improve the representativeness of the political system and force (other) political parties to become more integrative regarding both their composition and their agenda (Madrid 2005; Van Cott 2005, 228-9, 232, 235; 2007, 134-6; Yashar 2005, 300, 307-8).9

It is clear that the absence of ethnic discrimination and citizens’ equal participation in politics independent of their ethnic origin are important aspects of democracy. The

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9 Cp. Edwards (2004, 80-2) who makes a similar point about particularistic pressure groups in the United States. Cp. also Rueschemeyer (2004, 86-7): “[S]trong and autonomous organization of subordinate interests is the most important counterbalancing factor” to the almost ubiquitous political inequality.
central point here is political equality. Political equality should be considered a critical indicator of the quality of any democratic system (Rueschemeyer 2004). Specifically, in ranked ethnic systems political equality is strongly related to ethnic equality, i.e. equal access to political power for all ethnic groups in a country.

The ethno-political mobilization of subordinate groups in ranked ethnic systems may advance this ethnic equality. The civil rights movement in the United States, especially in the 1960s, enhanced the scope and depth of democracy by eliminating (or decreasing) racial discrimination, for example. Thus, in ranked ethnic systems I expect the ethnicization of politics to have a positive impact on democracy, namely on ethnic equality and the political position of the historically marginalized ethnic groups.

The effect on political stability, however, is less clear at first view. Madrid (2005) argues that political violence, too, should decrease as suppressed groups acquire alternative means to express their grievances. Nevertheless, if these ethnic representatives trying to improve their groups’ situation become radicalized, political conflicts may turn violent as well. The destabilizing potential of indigenous movements on state systems has already been foreshadowed by the events in Bolivia and Ecuador during the last 15 years (Van Cott 2007, 136; Yashar 2005, 24). In some instances, the political discourse has become more ethnically polarized and extreme (Van Cott 2007, 138). Mexico and Nicaragua provide other examples where ethnic mobilization became connected to – in these cases – violent political conflicts.

Horowitz (1985, 30) notes that ethnic warfare in ranked ethnic systems “takes the form of a social revolution”. Indeed, conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi between Hutu and Tutsi – who constitute actual ethno-classes – became murderous to the degree of genocide. Nevertheless, as Mann (2005, 56-7, 69) points out, social classes are usually more interdependent than different ethnic groups – what should restrain political conflicts and violence. This might generally be true for ethno-classes as well. Moreover, if the political power “distance” between the dominant and subordinate groups is large enough, the former might not be worried over its own status but willing to make small concessions in order to appease mobilized subordinate groups while maintaining its own position.10 Only if the situation gets really threatening for the dominant group – as after the election of Evo Morales in Bolivia – a conflict seems more likely. Overall, whereas in unranked ethnic systems the ethnicization of politics goes hand in hand with a dangerous struggle between more or less equal
groups over the state, ranked ethnic systems should be more stable and less prone to civil violence. This leads me to my last two hypotheses:

H3.1: The ethnicization of politics has a positive effect on the political position of historically subordinate ethnic groups in ranked ethnic systems.

H3.2: The ethnicization of politics does not increase the likelihood of civil conflicts in ranked ethnic systems.

The following section will present the data used to test these hypotheses empirically.

6. Data and Operationalization

My analysis will include all Latin American countries apart from the Caribbean island states. This includes the following 17 countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. As explained above, I distinguish between two separate dimensions of ethnicized politics: the ethnicization of civil society and the ethnicization of electoral politics, i.e. the party system. This article presents new data for both variables. To measure the ethnicization of civil society, in particular, I composed a completely new dataset on ethnic civil society organizations in Latin America.

The Ethnicization of Electoral Politics

The degree of the ethnicization of electoral politics of a country can be quantitatively captured by the electoral strength of ethnic parties. Thus, I collected data on the vote share of ethnic parties in lower-house legislative elections and their share of seats in the lower chamber of parliament (expressed in percentage of the total seats) from 1946 to 2009. Logically, the values remain constant in the years between elections. Both vote share and share of seats are expressed in values ranging from 0 to 1.

For operational purposes I relied on the definition of ethnic parties by Van Cott (2005, 3) which includes aspects of both party composition and agenda: the majority of the

11 Guyana is a South American but not a Latin American state. The country is a former colony of Great Britain and anglophone. The same is true for Belize in Central America. French Guiana, on the other hand, continues to be a French overseas region.
party’s leaders and members belong to a given ethnic group\textsuperscript{12} and ethnic or cultural demands are a central part of the party’s electoral platform. To identify ethnic parties, I drew on data from Birnir (2007), on Nohlen (2005), the qualitative information presented by Van Cott (2003, 2005), the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (Minority Rights Group International 2007), and (in a few cases) on Wikipedia.\textsuperscript{13} I consulted the following sources for precise election results and the composition of parliaments: Nohlen (2005), Van Cott (2003, 2005), the “Parline” database (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2011), Adam Carr’s Election Archive (Carr 2011), and (in a few cases) Wikipedia. If ethnic parties formed part of a larger multi-party alliance, their individual vote share (if available at all) was not counted. Ethnic parties working together with non-ethnic parties are certainly neither promoting nor a sign of the ethnicization of politics. Figure 1 shows the electoral strength of ethnic parties in Latin America over time (both the maximum and the regional mean value per year). As we can see, the ethnicization of electoral politics is a rather recent phenomenon in the region. And: To a great extent it is propelled by the success of Evo Morales’ MAS in Bolivia which has achieved the greatest electoral strength of an ethnic party ever in Latin America.

[Figure 1]

\textit{Civil Society}

Cross-sectional data on civil society strength are rare, and even more so over time. I followed Forbis (2008) who developed an indicator of NGO density based on information from the Yearbooks of International Organizations (YIO).\textsuperscript{14} This information is available from 1960 on so the civil society indicator covers all years from 1960 to 2009. It has been argued that the number of NGOs in a country is not an important aspect of civil society’s strength (Edwards 2004, 95). But Forbis (2008, 2, 34) shows that his

\textsuperscript{12} Van Cott restricts her definition to “nondominant” ethnic groups. I do not agree with this restriction because it seems to result in unnecessary conceptual problems. On the one hand, how are we to define “nondominant”: from a demographic or historical-political perspective? And how would we specify the definition concretely in either form? On the other hand, although ethnic parties are more common for minorities, it seems neither necessary nor sensible to exclude parties of large/dominant ethnic groups a priori. However, in the Latin American sample this definitional discrepancy was irrelevant as only the historically subordinate groups (which are usually the demographic minority as well) have founded ethnic parties.

\textsuperscript{13} I would like to thank Jóhanna Birnir and Nil Satana for providing me with their data on Latin America.

\textsuperscript{14} Since this data was not publically available I had to collect the information from the Yearbooks of International Organizations myself.
density measure (the number of NGOs divided by population) correlates very strongly with World Values Survey data on micro-level engagement in all types of civil society organizations and is also able to capture temporal changes in civil society strength due to political changes. However, this indicator will only be used as a control variable in the present study and to construct my own measure of the *ethnicization* of civil society.

*The Ethnicization of Civil Society*

If quantitative data on civil society strength are rare, data on ethnic civil society mobilization are completely lacking. To my knowledge, this study presents the first cross-sectional time-series data on ethnic civil society. The dataset covers all of the above mentioned Latin American states from 1946 to 2009. It includes a large number of ethnic civil society organizations in each of these countries with information about the ethnic group(s) an organization represents and its year of foundation (and of dissolution in a few cases). Ethnic civil society organizations were operationally defined as non-governmental organizations whose *explicit* and *main* purpose is to promote the political interests or defend the rights of a specific ethnic group vis-à-vis the state. Importantly, this is not a complete count of all existing ethnic civil society organizations in the region but a sample compiled on the basis of various sources. The representativeness of this sample was ensured by relying on *several* and *cross-sectional* sources. The cross-sectional nature of the sources\(^{\text{15}}\) inhibits biases resulting from different levels of depth and precision of different sources. If different sources had been used for each country, differences between countries might just reflect different recording styles of the sources. But since most of these sources covered all countries, the cross-sectional representativeness of the sample should be ensured. And even if we assume that a given source covers certain countries better and more profoundly than others, the use of several different cross-sectional sources should compensate for that and diffuse possible biases. Overall, thus, there is good reason to believe this sample to be a representative sample.

The following sources were consulted to compose the dataset:

- Qualitative data from the Minorities at Risk Dataset (Minorities at Risk Project 2009)

\(^{\text{15}}\) Six out of the nine consulted sources included all countries. The other three covered at least five of the 17 states included in the dataset.
Based on these sources, a list of ethnic civil society organizations was composed for each country. However, only organizations which at least in part advocate the political interests/rights of ethnic groups were included. Organizations with an exclusively cultural focus – for example, associations of artisans promoting their group’s traditional craftworks, or museum associations – were excluded from the list. An overview of all restrictions applied in the compilation of the sample can be found in Appendix 1. For each organization I confirmed that the specified requirements were met relying on the organization’s website (if existent), academic and journalistic literature, and online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia. The same sources were used to establish the organizations’ foundation (and sometimes dissolution) years and whose group's interests they represent.\footnote{Additionally, I recorded whether the organization constitutes an “umbrella” organization consisting of various independent member organizations.}

Based on the foundation and dissolution years, I constructed a count variable over time indicating the number of organizations in each country in each year. This count variable was then put in relation to the country’s population size.\footnote{Population data stem from Gleditsch and Ward (1999), extended to the year of 2009 on the basis of data from the United Nations Population Division (2009).} Finally, the resulting values were in turn put in relation to the “size” of the general civil society, i.e. the NGO density indicator presented above. This results in a quantitative measure of the degree of the ethnicization of civil society (ECS), namely the “size” of ethnic civil so-
ciety compared to the one of general civil society. Since data on the latter is only available from 1960 on, the ECS indicator also goes back to 1960 only. Constituting a (pseudo-)proportion, the indicator’s natural range is from 0 to 1 (although 1 is never achieved). Figure 2 shows the degree of ethnic mobilization in Latin America from 1960 to 2009 (giving the mean values of the whole region by year).

The resulting pattern corresponds very much to the information we have from the qualitative literature on ethnic mobilization in Latin America (Stavenhagen 1992; Van Cott 2007; Yashar 2005). Ethnic civil society mobilization in Latin America really gained strength in the 1970s, while a second major impulse occurred in the 1990s – around the time of (and probably stimulated by) the United Nation’s launch of an “International Decade of the World’s Indigenous People”. Interestingly, there is a visible drop in the last decade – precisely when the ethnicization of electoral politics “took off”. This is not coincidental and indeed, the quantitative analyses below will show that civil society mobilization and electoral mobilization constitute two separate but complementary strategies of Latin America’s subordinate ethnic groups.

It seems also that the cross-country variation accurately reflects the empirical reality. Table I displays rankings of “country decades”, i.e. average ECS values per decade. Ecuador’s last three decades occupy the first three ranks what corresponds to Yashar’s (2005, 23) assessment of Ecuador’s indigenous movement having emerged as the most prominent in Latin America by the late 20th century. On the other hand, the rankings confirm that ethnicity has never been an important factor in Uruguay’s politics and that it was neither very relevant in Costa Rica nor in Venezuela during the 1970s and 1980s. In Guatemala and Chile, ethnic mobilization was effectively suppressed in the 1970s by a brutal civil war (including targeted ethnic violence) and

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18 Note that the values cannot be interpreted substantively since one part of the division represents a full count of existing organizations and the other only a (representative) sample. A value of 0.3, for instance, does not mean that 30% of a country’s civil society is ethnicized. These values are abstract measures to compare the degree of ethnicization over time and across countries.
19 To give more meaning to the table, the 1960 country-decades – of which many have an ECS value of 0 – were left out.
20 The first national ethnic civil society organization in Venezuela was formed in 1989 (CONIVE) (Van Cott 2003, 34), in Costa Rica in 1994 (MNI).
a repressive dictatorship, respectively.\textsuperscript{21} In sum, we can confidently assume this new indicator to exhibit high empirical validity, both over time and across countries.

[Table I]

In order to assess transnational diffusion effects I also constructed a regional indicator which records for each country-year the average ECS value of all other countries in that year.

\textit{Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups and Their Political Status}

The data on ethnic groups and their access to political power stems from the EPR (Ethnic Power Relations) dataset (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010). The dataset contains information about all politically relevant ethnic groups in all countries with a population of at least 500,000, from 1946 (or the year of independence) to 2009.\textsuperscript{22} Ethnic groups' political position is indicated in categories ranging from “monopoly power” to “discriminated”.\textsuperscript{23}

A broad distinction can be made between politically \textit{included} groups (groups with the status of “monopoly”, “dominant”, “senior partner”, and “junior partner”) and \textit{excluded} groups (status of “powerless”, “discriminated”, or “separatist autonomy”).\textsuperscript{24} Put simply, the distinction rests upon the access to or exclusion from executive power.

A special note concerns the status of “discriminated”: Ethnic groups are considered as discriminated in EPR if group members are subjected to active and targeted discrimination with the intent of excluding them from political power – based on their ethnic identity (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010, 101).\textsuperscript{25}

Consistent with the notions in the pertinent literature (see e.g. Van Cott 2005, 12), we find three “types” of politically relevant ethnic groups in Latin America: “mestizos” and whites (as a combined group), indigenous groups, and Afro-Latino groups. Due to the process of (forced) “mestizaje” described above, whites and “mestizos” are common-

\textsuperscript{21} Cp. Yashar (2005, 25, 78) for the effect of the civil war on Guatemalan indigenous mobilization. For the ethnic dimension of the Guatemalan military violence, see Ball, Kobrak, and Spirer (1999, 89-94), and Lunsford (2007).

\textsuperscript{22} The original data is available to the year of 2005. This study uses the newly updated version.

\textsuperscript{23} See Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010, 100-1) for precise definitions of each category.

\textsuperscript{24} Note that this deviates from the original definition used by Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010) in one detail: I do not consider the status of “regional autonomy” as politically excluded. In the specific context of Latin America where regional autonomy has been the core claim of almost all ethnic mobilization, it makes sense to distinguish between complete powerlessness and the achievement of this core demand.

\textsuperscript{25} This can be formal (by law) or informal (systematic practice). Indirect discrimination (disadvantages in the economic or educational sphere) is not included in this definition.
ly seen as one self-conscious, politically relevant ethnic group (Pitt-Rivers 1994; Wagley 1994). Indigenous groups are usually combined to one single group as well – unless different indigenous groups have experienced historically distinct paths of political mobilization and/or exhibited significant inter-group rivalries in the national political arena.  

Consistent with its level of analysis, this study draws on EPR’s country-level dataset which includes aggregated measures of the size of the included, excluded, and ethnically discriminated population in a country. Hence, the relative demographic sizes of, say, all discriminated groups are added and related to the total size of all politically relevant ethnic groups. 

For the purpose of this study, I constructed an additional aggregated measure denoting the demographic size of the subordinated groups (indigenous and Afro-Latino groups) in each country. Historically determined, this value remains constant over time. As we are interested in ethnic equality and the present political status of these subordinate groups, I created an additional “political power dummy”: This is a dummy variable recording for each country in each year whether one of the subordinate groups has some sort of political power, i.e. whether it is either politically included (as defined above) or enjoys regional autonomy.

Other Variables
To measure civil liberties and the level of democracy, I rely on the Freedom House indicators of “civil liberties” and “political rights” (Freedom House 2011), and – alternatively – on the Polity index (version IV) by Gurr, Jaggers, and Moore (1989). Freedom House data distinguish between two distinct dimensions of democracy but have the disadvantage that they are only available from 1972 to 2009. Values range from 1 to 7 with higher values denoting less freedom/democracy. 

Data on electoral systems stem from Golder (2005), extended and amended on the basis of Norris (2008) and the Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001). I constructed dummy variables to check for the influence of PR systems compared to

26 An example for the first case is Panama where the Kuna group experienced an unusually early political mobilization and where all three relevant indigenous groups were entitled with some regional autonomy at different points in time. Nicaragua is the prime example for the second variant as the Miskito and Sumu groups have continually engaged in inter-ethnic rivalries relevant for national politics. 
Regarding a common ethnic identity of Latin American indigenous peoples see Van Cott (2005, 12) and Yashar (2005, 71).
majoritarian and mixed systems. Information about ethnic quotas in the legislature were taken from Htun (2004) based on which a simple dummy variable was constructed indicating the presence or absence of ethnic quotas.

Besides the measure of NGO density mentioned above, three other control variables are used in the analyses: a GDP per capita variable taken from the World Development Indicators of the World Bank (The World Bank 2011) in order to account for economic development, a population variable based on Gleditsch and Ward (1999), and a legislative fractionalization variable. The argument has been made in the qualitative literature that a high party system fragmentation facilitates the entrance and electoral success of new parties including newly emerging ethnic parties (Van Cott 2005, 34-5, 221, 224). Of course, party system fragmentation is itself partly a product of the electoral system. So it is necessary to control for the former to establish an independent effect of the latter on party system ethnicization. The variable is based on the Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al. 2001) and the Political Constraints Index (POLCON) (Henisz 2006).

Information on civil conflicts stems from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts Dataset. However, since (ethnic) civil conflicts in the region have been extremely rare since 1960, the conflict analysis will mainly build on a qualitative rather than a statistical approach. Appendix 2 lists all conflicts in Latin America between 1960 and 2009.

The data is structured in a country-year format. The following table (Table II) gives a summary of the main independent variables used in the analyses. Overall, the dataset consists of 1088 country-years. However, due to the ECS and the Freedom House indicators all models in this study are based on either of two different time frames: 1961-2009, and 1972-2009.

[Table II]

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27 This is the most sensible manner of proceeding. Majoritarian systems are extremely rare in Latin America, and it does not make sense to compare mixed systems to both PR and majoritarian systems.
28 In constant 2000 US$.
30 The dataset defines a conflict as a contested incompatibility over government or territory between two parties of which at least one is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths per year (Gleditsch et al. 2002).
31 I disregard conflicts erupting before 1960 here because for data reasons (ECS indicator) the analysis only covers the time period from 1960 to 2009.
32 The lag of the (regional) ECS indicator leads to the loss of the 1960 observations.
There are 635 observations (i.e. country-years) characterized by a PR electoral system, and 28 country-years with legislative ethnic quotas. Table II reveals that many of the main variables are highly skewed. Logged versions were used in the following statistical analyses.

7. Analysis

The Ethnicization of Civil Society

Let us start with an analysis of the emergence of ethnic civil society mobilization in Latin America. Since the dependent variable is restricted to a range from 0 to 1, I use a logit transformation where \( \hat{y} \) is not the predicted probability of an event \( y \) but simply the predicted value of a dependent variable \( y \).\(^{33}\) Confidence intervals and \( p \)-values are calculated based on robust standard errors with clustering on the 17 countries. Table III shows the results of these first models. Models 1 and 2 refer to the 1972-2009 period using the Freedom House indicators for civil liberties and political rights; Models 3 and 4, relying on the Polity IV indicator, to the 1961 to 2009 period. Within these time horizons there are no missing observations.

All models include three control variables: GDP per capita, civil society strength in general, and a time trend. The values of regional ethnic mobilization are lagged by one year as we are interested in the impact of prior ethnic mobilization in the rest of the region on current ethnicization in a given country within this region.

[Table III]

The only hypothesis confirmed by the empirical analysis is hypothesis H1.2. In countries with large proportions of historically marginalized ethnic groups ethnic civil society mobilization is stronger. Since ethnic mobilization in Latin America in the last half century has exclusively been an affair of these groups, it seems clear that countries where they form a larger part of the population will experience more ethnic mobilization as civic movements can draw on a larger pool of (potential) followers.

In contrast, the results of Models 1 and 3 show that the ethnic exclusion variable does not have a significant effect on conventional statistical levels. In Model 3, it is weakly significant but this is not enough to confirm hypothesis H1.4. Thus, ethnic ex-

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\(^{33}\) OLS regression is not an efficient method here since it would predict \( y \)-values above 1 and below 0 which are meaningless in this context.
clusion does not really seem to fuel the ethnicization of civil society in Latin America. This supports the argument made in the literature that the presence of ethnic grievances does not automatically translate into ethnic mobilization. Not excluded ethnic groups seem to be as likely to mobilize as those whose political status is really precarious.\textsuperscript{34}

Neither does the level of democracy have an effect on ethnic civil society mobilization. In none of the models are the different democracy indicators statistically significant. This is somewhat surprising considering the general impression that authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships crushed indigenous or Afro-Latino mobilization more resolutely (and even violently) than democratic governments – the regimes in Argentina and Paraguay being among the most prominent examples.\textsuperscript{35} But the statistical results reject hypothesis H1.1.

The same is true for hypothesis H1.3. The average value of ethnic civil society mobilization in the rest of the region does not influence the ethnicization of an individual country’s civil society in the following year. However, there is a time trend effect which is statistically significant on the highest level in all models. Importantly, this seems not to be merely the product of the effect of ethnicization in one country-year on the ethnicization in the next country-year. If a lagged version of the dependent variable is introduced, the time trend effect is still (weakly) significant.\textsuperscript{36} This means that there is a general time trend towards more ethnic civil society mobilization in Latin America caused by factors other than transnational diffusion and not captured in our statistical model.

The other control variable which turns out statistically significant is GDP per capita. Richer countries experience less ethnicization of the civil society. As expected the strength of civil society in general does not have an effect on the degree of ethnic mobilization within this sphere.

Models 2 and 4 use the more specific ethnic discrimination variable instead of the exclusion variable. Interestingly, it exerts a significant negative effect on the ethnicization of civil society (although it is only weakly significant in the larger sample). This is only at first view surprising: Discriminated (or repressed) groups might simply lack

\textsuperscript{34} Using lagged values or a dummy variable indicating the mere presence of ethnic exclusion – independent from the size of the excluded population – does not change the results.

\textsuperscript{35} See, for instance, Barié (2003, 464) for Paraguay, and Gordillo and Hirsch (2003, 18) and Van Cott (2005, 189) for Argentina.

\textsuperscript{36} This robustness test did not change any of the other results either.
the organizational means for effective mobilization. Suppression may be so severe that the slightest attempts of mobilization are met with decapitating state violence as was the case in Guatemala during the 1970s, for example. Overall, the general picture does not change if we use different time horizons. In sum, the ethnicization of civil society in Latin America tends to occur less developed countries with higher shares of historically marginalized ethnic groups. There is no evidence that the level of democracy or civil liberties have any effect on ethnic civil society mobilization. The only hypothesis that receives unambiguous support from the analysis is hypothesis H1.2. A robustness test with simple OLS regressions did not change the results substantively.\(^{37}\)

**The Ethnicization of Electoral Politics**

The analysis of the roots of ethnicized electoral politics in Latin America is summarized in Table IV. The same estimation method is used as in Models 1 to 4 above. All models build on the extended time frame (1961-2009), and the dependent variable is always the share of seats of ethnic parties in the lower house of parliament.\(^{38}\) Model 5 constitutes the “base model”, including two control variables from the civil society models above. The countries’ ECS values are lagged one year as ethnic civil society mobilization, if at all, will not immediately translate into ethnicized electoral politics. As we are interested in the effect of the electoral system on the strength of ethnic parties, of course, we can only include countries in the analysis where elections take place. This brings the sample down to 648 country-years.

We immediately see that institutional factors play an important role. Both the electoral system in place and the absence or presence of legislative ethnic quotas have a strong effect on the ethnicization of electoral politics which is statistically significant on the highest level. PR systems are associated with less electoral strength of ethnic parties compared to mixed and majoritarian systems; legislative quotas strengthen ethnic parties. This confirms hypotheses H2.1 and H2.2.

In contrast to the civil society models, also the ethnic exclusion variable turns out as a statistically significant predictor of ethnic party strength. The larger the share of politically excluded ethnic groups, the more ethnicization of electoral politics a country is

\(^{37}\) Another robustness test (not reported here) used the Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization Index as a control variable. (Both of the diverging indices from Fearon (2003) and Alesina et al. (2003) were used.) But ELF does not have a statistically significant effect itself and did not change any of the results either.

\(^{38}\) The vote share variable contains four missing observations. But the regression results are almost identical.
likely to see. Thus, when it comes to present political exclusion (and the consequential grievances) historically subordinate ethnic groups seem more likely to mobilize in the sphere of party politics. At the same time, these two different mobilization types are not related to each other: The ethnicization of civil society does not seem to fuel ethnicized electoral politics. On the contrary: If anything, the effect goes in the other direction. We can thus reject hypothesis H2.3.

Again, countries with larger shares of historically subordinate populations are more likely to experience strong ethnicization of electoral politics. Thus, with regard to electoral ethnic mobilization, both grievances and resources seem to play a role. Both hypotheses H2.4 and H2.5 are supported by the empirical results.

Also the time trend variable is significant at the highest statistical level in all models. Furthermore, poorer countries are again more likely to experience the ethnicization of politics.

In Model 6 the logged legislative fractionalization variable is added. This reduces the sample further by twelve observations. The results make clear that the electoral system has a significant and strong effect on the strength of ethnic parties independent from party system fragmentation. At the same time, legislative fractionalization seems to be associated with less ethnicization as well. Apparently, parties other than ethnic ones are able to benefit more from lower entry barriers in a political environment historically characterized by very little ethnicization.

Model 7 additionally controls for ethnic fractionalization. Ethnically diverse countries are more likely to experience the ethnicization of politics – including higher rates of ethnic voting – than homogenous countries (see e.g. Huber 2010). I rely on the fractionalization index presented by Alesina et al. (2003) which also includes racial groups and thus seems best suited for the Latin American region.

The results do not change substantively. As expected, ethnic fractionalization is positively associated with the ethnicization of politics. The institutional variables in turn lose some of their weight. The ethnic quota dummy, for instance, remains only weakly significant. Reversely, the ethnic exclusion variable becomes even more important.

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39 Ethnic discrimination, however, does not have an effect on the ethnicization of electoral politics (model not reported here). Clearly, discriminated groups do not find the resources to form parties and compete electorally. Using the discrimination instead of the exclusion variable does not change any of the other results.

40 Cp. Birnir and Van Cott (2007, 112-3). The model was also run with Fearon’s (2003) ELF measure which led to no substantive changes.
Ethnic exclusion leads to the ethnicization of politics independent from a country’s degree of ethnic diversity.

The most significant change concerns the effect of the size of the subordinate population which becomes insignificant with the introduction of the fractionalization index. But this is simply a product of multi-collinearity as the two variables correlate quite strongly with each other.

Thus, the picture emerging from these three models is highly consistent: Institutional variables – particularly electoral institutions – are very important predictors of the ethnicization of politics. PR systems are strongly and robustly associated with less ethnicization while legislative quotas for specific ethnic groups strengthen ethnic parties. Moreover, large shares of historically subordinate ethnic groups will increase the degree of ethnicization a country is likely to experience. And while grievances resulting from political exclusion did not have an effect on ethnic mobilization within civil society, they do seem to lead to ethnic party formation and ethnic voting.

Finally, the ethnic mobilization taking place within civil society has not influenced the ethnicization of electoral politics. Both ethnic civil society mobilization and electoral mobilization within conventional party politics are strategic actions employed by Latin America’s historically marginalized ethnic groups in order to improve their situation – but they are employed as separate strategies independent from each other.41

Overall, we find good evidence for hypotheses H2.1, H2.2, H2.4, and H2.5, while hypothesis H2.3 is not confirmed by the empirical analysis.

**Ethnicized Politics and Ethnic Equality in Latin America**

Let us finally turn to the analysis of the consequences of this emerging ethnicization of politics in Latin America. The literature has traditionally associated ethnicized politics with democratic instability and conflict. However, the present study focuses on ranked ethnic systems which have been mostly ignored by this same literature.

Above, I have argued that in ranked ethnic systems the ethnic mobilization of historically subordinate groups may have a positive influence on democracy by improving ethnic equality, i.e. improving the political status of these subordinate groups (H3.1).

For the following empirical analysis, I will rely on the political power dummy variable described above which records for each country in each year whether the country either includes such groups into the government or grants them regional autonomy.

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Simple logit regressions with clustering on the 17 countries for robust standard errors are used to model the occurrence of such “events”. Table V summarizes the results. Again, Models 8 and 9 are distinguished by their different indicators for democracy and the resulting difference in sample size. There are no other missing observations. In order to attribute some degree of causality to the effects, we need to lag the ethnicization variables. Apart from the familiar variables, I include population as an additional control variable.

[Table V]

The results show immediately that the ethnic mobilization described above has worked: Countries where politics became more ethnicized were more likely to include these mobilized subordinate groups into executive power or grant them regional autonomy. Importantly, these two mobilizational strategies seem to have worked both and independently from each other: Mobilization within civil society and electoral mobilization within conventional party politics have both a significant and positive effect on the dependent variable.

Apart from the ethnicization of politics, it seems that the mere presence of large subordinate groups has forced states to improve these groups’ political situation. Where the historically marginalized indigenous and Afro-Latino people form a large portion of the population, states and their elites cannot but begin to address some of the historical inequalities – in order not to lose basic legitimacy in an age in which ethnic pluralism is more and more protected and racist ideologies – at least in public – have lost every recourse. In contrast, where indigenous and Afro-Latino people constitute small minorities of the population – like in Argentina and Chile, for example –, it seems easier for states to ignore their demands and maintain the illusion of the homogenous “mestizo” society. It seems plausible to attribute the significant negative effect of the population variable to this same diagnosis. More populated states might be better able to draw the curtain over issues of ethnic minorities.

Interestingly, the general level of democracy of a country does not predict its likeliness to grant political concessions to mobilized ethnic groups. None of the democracy indicators in Models 8 and 9 is statistically significant. This is counterintuitive but not really surprising if we look at other world regions: Israel (Arabs) and Latvia (Rus-
sians) are just two examples of highly “democratic” states with large politically excluded ethnic minorities.

Again, the results remain almost identical in the two different time horizons. The ethnic civil society variable becomes even more significant if we consider the larger time horizon. The GDP variable exerts a strong and highly significant effect on the dependent variable in both models. Richer countries are thus more likely to address questions of ethnic inequality.

These results proved highly robust in various robustness tests not reported here. Following the argument made by King and Zeng (2001), the models were run with logistic regressions for rare events data. Moreover, a lagged version of the dependent variable was included to control for simple time dependency. Neither of these measures changed the results substantively.

One could also argue that sometimes ethnic mobilization occurs in anticipation of imminent institutional or constitutional changes. In these cases the effect would actually work in the opposite direction: Changes in the political landscape – possibly including an improvement of marginalized groups’ political position – fuel ethnic mobilization. Thus, I reran the models with larger lags for the two ethnicization variables. Up to a lag of five years, both of them remained statistically significant. This speaks clearly against a case of reverse causality as it seems unconvincing to assume ethnic mobilization being caused by a political change occurring five years later.

Lastly, I took the size of the subordinate population which experienced an improvement in its political position into account. Thus, in this last robustness test the dependent variable was the relative size of those historically subordinate ethnic groups which were either included into executive power or enjoyed regional autonomy.

Again, a lagged version of the dependent variable was added as a control. Only two important changes resulted from this: The population indicator turned insignificant while the level of democracy (both the Polity IV index and Freedom House’s Political Rights index) had a significant positive effect. Both ethnicization variables remained highly significant.

42 Cp., e.g., Van Cott (2005, 214; 2007, 131-2) regarding indigenous mobilization in the forefront of constitutional assemblies.

43 Furthermore, when introduced into the ethnic civil society models above, the political power dummy variable is not significant on the conventional statistical levels. And it even turns out to have a significant negative effect on electoral ethnicization.

44 For this test, the same logit transformation was employed as in the ethnicization models above.
Thus, ethnic mobilization seems to have clearly worked for Latin America’s historically marginalized peoples. But what are the consequences regarding the region’s stability? This will be the topic of the last part of this study’s empirical analysis.

Ethnicized Politics and Civil Conflict in Latin America

Civil conflicts have been rare in Latin America since 1960. The overall conflict probability in this larger sample is very low: only 2.6% of all country-years are affected. Moreover, since we are addressing the consequences of the ethnicization of politics it is more meaningful to look at those conflicts which were explicitly ethnic in nature. I define conflicts as ethnic if a) the recruitment of fighters occurred along ethnic lines, and b) explicit ethnic claims were made on the part of the insurgents. Such incidents of strictly ethnic conflict were even rarer: There are only 3 civil conflicts in Latin America that meet the definition: Guatemala 1963 (although the ethnic dimension only became salient in the 1970s), Nicaragua 1982 (the Miskito rebellion), and Mexico 1994 (the Zapatista insurgency). Table VI analyzes possible relations between the ethnicization of politics and conflict outbreak.

[Table VI]

No ethnic party had ever been active in any of these countries before the conflicts broke out. Moreover, Guatemala’s ethnicization of civil society was virtually nonexistent in the years preceding the civil war. Also Mexico and Nicaragua exhibit only moderate values of civil society ethnicization in the five years prior to their conflicts. Thus, the increasing ethnicization of politics has hardly been at the roots of the few ethnic conflicts registered in the region.

Another telling observation is that in none of these countries did the rebellious subordinate ethnic groups enjoy any political power or autonomy prior to the conflict. In contrast, where subordinate groups did enjoy a better political position – i.e. access to executive power or regional autonomy – not a single ethnic conflict broke out. Thus, if anything, there is evidence of an improved political situation of historically

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45 This definition is in line with the definitions put forward by Sambanis (2001, 2008), and Wimmer, Cederman, and Min (2009). See Appendix 2 for the classification of all Latin American conflicts.
47 And neither during the most violent civil war years of the 1970s, cp. Table I above.
subordinate ethnic groups – propelled in part by their mobilization – leading to a lower risk of ethnic conflict. Generally, no conflict – whether ethnic or not – occurred in any country-year in which ethnic parties held seats in the parliament. Or, in statistical terms: The ethnicization of electoral politics predicts the non-occurrence of conflicts perfectly. However, as some of the recent events in Ecuador and Bolivia show, ethnic mobilization might be connected to political instability in a more general sense, i.e. abrupt changes in a country’s political system. Fearon and Laitin (2003) operationalize political instability as a change on the Polity IV regime index of three points or more in a single year. I used this dummy as the dependent variable in a logit regression. The results are reported in Table V above (Model 10). The model is similar to Model 9 – covering all years from 1961 to 2009 – but includes the lagged political power dummy variable. Also the GDP and the democracy variables are lagged to avoid problems of reverse causality. While countries with larger shares of subordinate groups are apparently more likely to experience political instability, the actual mobilization of these groups is not related to it. Neither the ethnicization of electoral politics nor the ethnicization of civil society have a statistically significant effect on political instability. However, the political power dummy variable has a strong and significant negative effect: Countries which have included their historically marginalized ethnic groups into the government or granted them regional autonomy are significantly less affected by political instability.

Overall, with a high degree of certainty we can conclude that the emerging ethnicization of politics in Latin America does not increase the risk of violent conflict. If anything, this ethnicization and the resulting political improvements have lowered the risk of conflict and instability. Thus, ethnic mobilization seems to have paid for the mobilizing subordinate groups – without causing any “collateral damage”. This confirms both hypotheses H3.1 and H3.2.

8. Conclusions
The basic argument of this article has been that in analyzing the effect of ethnicized politics on democratic stability one has to distinguish between different types of ethnic cleavages, namely between ranked and unranked ethnic systems. It has also ar-

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48 There are only 54 incidents of political instability between 1961 and 2009. A logistic regression for rare events data did not change the results substantively.
gued that the emerging ethnicization of politics in Latin America needs to be interpreted in precisely this light: as the mobilization of historically subordinate ethnic groups in ranked systems.

Latin America is the prototype region of ranked ethnic systems. It is characterized by firm and enduring socio-economic and political hierarchies historically coupled to individuals’ ethnic identity. Ever since Hispanic conquest the subdued indigenous groups and the African-descendant people imported as slaves have found themselves as the subordinate groups in this hierarchy. Essentially, ranked ethnic systems are societies in which ethnic equality is missing.

The emerging ethnic mobilization in the region has been the subject of recent academic works which have identified two focal points: ethnic civil society organizations and ethnic parties. The consequence is the ethnicization of politics in a region long seen as an exception to the global pattern of growing ethnic conflicts. The results of this study suggest that these two mobilizational sites constitute two distinct political strategies with different roots and not directly related to each other.

To the author’s knowledge, this is the first quantitative study to systematically analyze this development across the whole region. Based on new data on ethnic party strength and, particularly, on ethnic civil society mobilization in Latin America, the analysis has shown that two institutional factors were decisive for the ethnicization of electoral politics: the change from PR to mixed electoral systems – as, for example, in Bolivia –, and the introduction of legislative quotas for specific ethnic groups – like in Colombia and Venezuela. PR systems clearly seem to stall ethnic party emergence and growth.

While political exclusion along ethnic lines has also contributed to the electoral mobilization of ethnic groups, it cannot be shown to have influenced ethnic mobilization within civil society. Generally, less developed countries and those with larger shares of historically subordinate ethnic groups have experienced more ethnicization while democracy and civil liberties have not had any independent effect on this development.

Thus, ethnic mobilization within civil society and within conventional party politics has been used by historically marginalized ethnic groups in the region as two different strategic tools to improve their political situation – and they have worked. The results of this study show clearly that both the ethnicization of civil society and of electoral politics have contributed decisively to improve the political position of these groups.
In short, they have contributed to more ethnic equality in the region – without spurring any greater risk of civil violence. In fact, improving ethnic equality seems to lower the risk of conflict and instability. Of course, these results cannot conceal that much remains to be done in Latin America with regard to ethnic equality and that the region remains the prototype of ranked ethnic systems.

But overall, the results of this study remind us that no ranked ethnic system is definitely and forever set in stone. The civil rights movement in the United States helped to bring the segregation in the south to an end. Civic mobilization by the ANC and other forces changed the Apartheid state of South Africa. It seems very possible that this ethnicization of Latin American politics initiated in the 1970s and capturing electoral politics in the last decade will also significantly improve the political situation of ethnic “minorities” in Latin America and promote ethnic equality in this region.

Theoretically, the results of this paper point at the different effects that different types of ethnic cleavages have on democratic politics. Clearly, more research will be needed to more elaborately analyze these differences.
References


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Robust standard errors, with clustering on countries, in parentheses.

* p ≤ .05, ** p ≤ .01, *** p ≤ .001. + p ≤ .1
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Robust standard errors, with clustering on countries, in parentheses.
* \( p \leq .05 \), ** \( p \leq .01 \), *** \( p \leq .001 \). ~ \( p \leq 0.1 \)
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Log likelihood: -87.390684***, -91.567684***, -182.26773***

Robust standard errors, with clustering on countries, in parentheses.
* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$. + $p \leq 0.1$
### Table VI: Ethnicization and Ethnic Conflicts, 1960-2009

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<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Status of Involved Ethnic Group(s)a)</th>
<th>Electorally Active Ethnic Partiesb)</th>
<th>ECS Value(^c)</th>
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a) In year before conflict outbreak.  
b) In all foregoing years since 1946.  
c) Average value of the five years before the conflict outbreak.
Figure 1: Ethnic Party Strength in Latin America, 1960-2009
Figure 2: ECS in Latin America, 1960-2009
Appendix 1: ECS Dataset – Restriction Clauses

The following restrictions decided whether or not an ethnic organization was included into the dataset:

I) No exclusively cultural organizations (like, e.g., associations of artisans promoting their group’s traditional craftworks, or museum associations). Organizations need to at least in part advocate the political interests/rights of ethnic groups.

II) No “virtual” organizations, such as on-line information portals which cannot be shown to deploy any concrete activities in the “real world”.

III) No state institutes for indigenous affairs (even if more or less independent from the government) – because their emergence does not reflect the autonomous mobilization of ethnic groups.

IV) No general human rights organizations. In practice they might also be concerned with ethnic minority rights but their organizational purpose is not connected to specific ethnic groups.

V) No transnational organizations which happen to have their domicile in a given country – because they do not necessarily reflect ethnic mobilization in that country.

VI) No armed rebel organizations. However, if an organization started as a civic ethnic organization and later took up arms, it was counted.
Appendix 2: Civil Conflicts in Latin America, 1960-2009

<table>
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<th>Classification(^b)</th>
<th>Ethnic Group(s) Involved</th>
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\(^a\) According to the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002).
\(^b\) Conflicts are defined as ethnic if a) the recruitment of fighters occurred along ethnic lines, and b) explicit ethnic claims were made on the part of the insurgents.