

## **The Indigenous Movement and Identification in Bolivia, 2000–2010**

Over the past decade, Bolivia has experienced upheavals in the social as well as political sphere, accompanied – or even caused by – an increasing salience of indigeneity in political discourses. The decade saw the election of Evo Morales, the country's first president of indigenous origin, the adoption of a new, plurinational constitution, as well as efforts towards its implementation through, for example, the installation of indigenous autonomies, electoral quota, or an anti-discrimination law. While the increasing inclusion of indigenous peoples is applauded by observers in policy and academia alike, some are concerned that the mobilization and politicization of indigeneity might have heightened ethnic tensions and thus undermined national unity – a process repeatedly observed in other countries around the world. Fears of ethnic conflict are fomented as the opposition to Morales' politics, mainly voiced by Bolivia's regional, neoliberal elite, draws upon the construction of regional identities that are increasingly contrasted with Andean indigenous identity and implicitly, or even explicitly, racist.

This paper presents an analysis of the development of ethnic identifications in Bolivia over the past decade, answering key questions relating to the extent to which identifications have been affected by ethnic politics. To this aim, it first shortly summarizes the development of political identity discourses and identifies three strands: i) a rising salience of indigeneity and its inclusion into the notion of 'Bolivianhood', particularly during the so-called protest cycle from 2000 to 2005; ii) a rising assertiveness of indigeneity, specifically surrounding the election and inauguration of Morales in 2005 and 2006; and iii) rising tensions between different interpretations of indigeneity during the constitutional assembly, recently played out in the TIPNIS conflict.

Second, the paper goes on to quantitatively examine indigenous identification in Bolivia, using survey data collected by the Latin American Public Opinion Project over the past decade. The analyses show that there has been indeed an increase in the number of people who identify as indigenous but that this increase may be due to the inclusive discourse during the protest cycle, rather than due to the rising assertiveness during Morales' first years in presidency. Instead, the latter has given rise to more confident indigenous identification as well as an increased sense of cohesion among members of the diverse indigenous peoples as one community. Quarrels during the writing and implementation of the new constitution reversed this process, however, if they did not even further lessen this sense of community. Finally, the paper finds that, contrary to often-voiced fears, the salience of indigenous identification has not led to a decrease in national affiliation but to an increase. Besides shedding light on the situation in Bolivia, this analysis thus also contributes to the debate on the compatibility of sub-national and national identifications.