# Latin American Social Movements and Progressive Governments

## Creative Tensions between Resistance and Convergence

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*Chapter 1*

# Popular Movements–Progressive Governments Dynamics

## Considerations for an Analysis of the Latin American Experience

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The relationship of popular movements with progressive governments has been contradictory in Latin America.[1] Although generally more supportive than right-wing governments, leftist or populist governments have not always promoted constructive relationships with popular movements. While popular movements achieved positions in government to promote their agendas in Argentina during Kirchnerism, Bolivia under the Movimiento al Socialismo, and Brazil under the Partido dos Trabalhadores, this was not the case under the socialists of the Concertación in Chile and is not the case under Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government in Mexico and even less in the case of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua. This means that there is not a unified form of interaction of popular movements with progressive governments in Latin America but that in some cases there was an increase in the number of institutional nexuses with the state, while in others there was no favoring of popular movements' agendas (Abers and Tatagiba, 2015; Hanson and Lapegna, 2018; Perelmiter, 2012; Rossi, 2017). This is a result of a dynamic that crosses the ideological distinction of governments into a different analytical category to sort out the so-called left turn or Pink Tide in Latin America. This dynamic is the long-term and cyclical expansion and contraction of the sociopolitical arena produced by the (re)incorporation and disincorporation of the organized popular sectors in Latin America from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

I will not analyze this dynamic in detail, since the first wave of incorporation has been masterfully examined by Collier and Collier (1991) and I have extensively studied the second wave of incorporation (Rossi, 2015; 2017; 2018; 2020; Rossi and Silva, 2018). I will refer to these works to help contextualize my argument that the experiences of progressive governments are not uniform and that the most relevant explanatory factor for the type of relationship developed between popular movements and left-wing or populist governments is whether and how the sociopolitical arena was expanded. I believe that my approach can best explain why some progressive governments in the early twenty-first century were favorable to incorporating popular movements into government and others not, as well as the diversity of relationships developed during the second incorporation.

## THE TWO WAVES OF INCORPORATION

The history of Latin America is characterized by two waves of incorporation (Rossi, 2017: xi):

> The waves of incorporation signal the recognition and inclusion of poor people's organized interests in the socio-political arena. The concept of popular incorporation refers to the recognition of the claims of politically active poor people's movements as well as the creation or reformulation of formal and informal rules and regulations that govern their participation in politics and their connection to the policy process.

The first wave, between the 1930s and 1950s, as described by Collier and Collier (1991: 783), was "the first sustained and at least partially successful attempt by the state to legitimate and shape an institutionalized labor movement" that "occurs in relatively well-defined policy periods, which we frequently refer to as the 'incorporation period.' These periods emerge as part of a larger program of political and economic reform." The end of the first incorporation was marked by coups and a restriction of political and social rights. As I have argued, "The aftermath of first incorporation was one of exclusion or disincorporation, as a result of the application of economic and political reforms that reduced the political power of the popular sectors and marginalized them from the sociopolitical arena" (Rossi, 2017: xxi). Since the 2000s, after decades of struggle, there was in some countries a "second major redefinition of the sociopolitical arena . . . caused by the broad and selective inclusion of the popular sectors in the polity after being excluded or disincorporated by military authoritarian regimes and democratic neoliberal reforms" (Rossi 2015: 2). This second wave was the result of the accumulation of

changes in response to the struggle for reincorporation of popular sectors organized into territorialized social movements. The emergence of left-wing or populist parties in government was one of the by-products of two decades of struggle against disincorporation.

These waves of incorporation are political dynamics with strategic actors disputing models of society, and the historical period covered by the second wave includes but extends beyond the Pink Tide or left turn. My approach analyzes a long-term sociopolitical dynamic, showing how the struggles of the popular sectors are interconnected across waves and beyond governments.

## INCLUSION AND INCORPORATION

Inclusion and incorporation are different processes. While the former can sometimes be pursued by individualizing means, the latter is a collective process of expansion of the polity. In this regard, "It is also important to bear in mind that waves of incorporation should be equated *not* with the constitution of a more equal society or the creation of a welfare state but rather with the reshaping of the sociopolitical arena by redefining and expanding the number of legitimate political actors" (Rossi, 2017: 12). In other words, incorporation means that the mobilized actors seeking to be recognized as the legitimate articulators of the "social question" associated with the victims of the model of development become part of the actors defining a central policy domain aimed at resolving this "social question." However, as a recursive dynamic of Latin America's capitalism, the second incorporation involved similarities and differences among countries just as had the first. The emergence of recommodification and marginalization (unemployment, impoverishment, exclusion, etc.) as a new "social question," the modification of policing techniques, and the creation of massive social programs can be seen as equivalent to the preincorporation dynamic. Although the emergence of a "social question" is a necessary condition for identifying an incorporation wave, some national processes were instances of incorporation with inclusion, while in others inclusion and incorporation were disconnected dynamics. Moreover, in the second incorporation as in the first the expansion of the sociopolitical arena started before leftists or populists achieved government power. The expansion and consolidation of ongoing dynamics and policies were a result of the sedimentation of institutions and practices produced by the elites' response to the struggles of popular movements for bridging their lives with the state. In this sense, in both waves of incorporation we can see cases of promotion of mobilization and others of demobilization (for comparative analyses of the cross-national differences, see Collier and Collier, 1991, for the first and Rossi, 2017: 251–274, and Silva and Rossi, 2018, for the second).

Discussing these topics, Kapiszewski, Levitsky, and Yashar (2021: 10–11, 17) appear to confuse different social dynamics in arguing that instead of a second incorporation there has been an "inclusionary turn" in Latin America, conflating as equivalent inclusion and incorporation. They consider inclusion just the formal attribution of individual citizenship rights, empirically sustaining their argument on counting formal reforms across Latin America without considering the sociopolitical dynamics of struggle, the change in practices, the sedimentation of transformations, and the institutionalization of norms for regulating and articulating the actors and claims attached to the struggles. They fail to distinguish the moment of the legal formulation of a new regulation or right from the antecedent conditions of ongoing social struggle that led to it (see Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Collier and Collier, 1991: Chap. 1, for detailed discussions in theoretical and methodological terms). As a result, they conflate the transformations of the state in Latin America since the 1980s, offering no substantive criteria for distinguishing which of them can be associated with democratization and which with the neopluralization of society, the disincorporation of the popular sectors, the neoliberalization of the economy, the resistance to any of these transformations, and/or any other dynamics that may have (partially) overlapped with them during that period. In the process they neglect to perform the analysis of the mutually reinforcing influences of these processes or lack of thereof that is analytically essential for identifying the connection of each formal right with a specific sociopolitical dynamic. Thus the inclusionary turn thesis confuses the expansion of neopluralism (see Oxhorn, 1998, for an exemplary analysis) with other sociopolitical dynamics, overlooking the crucial difference between the achievement of formal legal recognition (Kapiszewski, Levitsky, and Yashar, 2021: 14–15) and the sociopolitical restructuring that (re)incorporation means for a polity (for the characteristics of struggles for recognition, see Auyero, 2003, and Lucero, 2008; for (re)incorporation, see Pérez, 2022, and Rossi, 2017: 18–19). As a result, this view disregards both the recursive dynamics of struggles for (re)incorporation that characterize the history of Latin America since the late nineteenth century and a particularity of the second incorporation that is not present in the first, its having been carried out by democratically elected progressive governments. This mixing of processes even leads them to argue that "Latin America's most recent inclusionary turn began slowly around 1989–1990" (Kapiszewski, Levitsky, and Yashar 2021: 10), a period characterized by the consequences of the debt crisis—the continentwide adoption of neoliberalism and its massive exclusionary consequences. This historically erroneous argument is a result of doing only a formal analysis of the expansion of neopluralist rights. The apparent confusion of dynamics causes them to argue that the center-right governments of Mauricio Macri in Argentina, Sebastián Piñera in Chile, and Iván Duque in

Colombia did not reduce inclusion because they did not revoke formal rights (Kapiszewski, Levitsky, and Yashar, 2021: 11). The 2019–2020 Chilean and Colombian popular revolts against disincorporation clearly disprove this thesis. Instead, the present volume offers an in-depth analysis of the role played by the progressive governments, opening up a crucial debate in the literature.

## VARIETY OF MOVEMENT-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS OF THE SECOND WAVE OF INCORPORATION

Where incorporation took place, the governments were not necessarily ideologically more radical than governments not involved in these dynamics. However, what incorporation produced was the creation of institutional channels and the expansion of the repertoire of strategies performed by movements due to the bridging-with-the-state that incorporation waves build (Rossi, 2017: 32–65). This implied innovation and recursiveness in strategizing by social movement actors in response to the opportunity for transforming long-standing claims into public policy and legislation (Etchemendy, 2019; Perelmiter, 2012; Rossi, 2017). This opportunity was not always seen as such and was sometimes a demobilizing factor because of the divisions it produced among movements between groups entering a governing coalition and others that rejected that option (Hanson and Lapegna, 2018; Silva, 2018).

The relationship of movements with progressive governments has been contradictory. Briefly, seven types of roles were played by popular movements with regard to leftists or populists in government that were part of the second wave of incorporation (Anria, 2018; Conaghan, 2018; Etchemendy, 2019; García-Guadilla, 2018; Hanson and Lapegna, 2018; McNelly, 2020; Padoan, 2020; Rossi, 2017; 2018; Silva, 2018). The first is popular movements as the mobilized actor that produced the conditions for the emergence of left-wing or populist governments. This was the case of Argentina, Bolivia, and partially Brazil. The second is popular movements as the territorial (re) connection of left-wing or populist governments with the popular sectors and grassroots claims. This was the case of Argentina, Brazil, and to some extent Venezuela. The third is popular movements as the constituency core of left-wing or populist movement parties in government. This was the case of Bolivia. The fourth is popular movements as the instrument for contending elite-based resistance to reforms by left-wing or populist governments. This was the case of Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela. The fifth is popular movements as (generally weak) coalition members of left-wing or populist governments. This was the case of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Venezuela. The sixth is popular movements as (generally critical) external allies of left-wing or populist governments. This was the case of Argentina, Venezuela

and to some extent Bolivia. The last is popular movements as the (generally not crucial) opposition to left-wing or populist governments. This was the case of Ecuador and to some extent Venezuela. The elements that define these types of relations are a result of multiple dynamics but are intrinsic to the type of reincorporation, its antecedent conditions, and its aftermath. It is important to emphasize that these are *not* types of reincorporation but types of movement-government relations *within* the second wave of incorporation. In this sense, it is crucial to determine whether reincorporation was mainly from above or below, whether it was mainly political or technocratic, and whether the mobilized popular sectors were considered relevant by the elites in the construction of governability for these governments (Rossi and Silva, 2018).

The governability dilemma for any party with executive power transcends ideologies and (incorporation) paths, leading to the perceived gap between the promises and expectations deposited in left-wing or populist party, leader, or coalition and the actual results. In some countries, the results in terms of social policies, recognition of intersectional claims, and relative inclusion were impressive. In others, however, the redistributive dimension of these policies was short-lived, and this divided movements between those calling for inclusion and those demanding recognition. Sometimes progressive governments just gave lip service to popular movements' agendas while perpetuating old practices. In those cases, state repression was sustained and sometimes directed at new political targets (Hanson and Lapegna, 2018; McNelly, 2020; Padoan, 2020).

To understand cross-national incorporation paths, we need to observe how actors, dynamics, and processes interact: first, how the party system was reformulated (or not) during the resistance to disincorporation and the subsequent reincorporation phase and the role played by the governing party (whether a movement party, a party family, inchoated party, cartel party, personalistic party, etc.) during these periods (Anria, 2018; Roberts, 2018; 2022); second, the role of unions in relation to neoliberalism (privileged actors of the previous model of development or victims of disincorporation), and the degree of neocorporatism since first incorporation and its weakening or dissolution since then (Oxhorn, 1998; Collier, 2018; Ellner, 2018; Gindin and Cardoso, 2018; Rossi, 2020); third, the degree of organicity of social actors and vertical and spatial coordination of protest into social movements with the capacity for producing a new "social question" and creating a legitimate actor mobilizing around it that can produce and sustain a policy domain (Rossi, 2017); fourth, the degree of intersectional coordination and divisions on the left (and whether it is divided between class-based and national-populist sectors) and the elites' capacity to counterreact and coordinate the resistance to reincorporation (Ferrero, Natalucci, and Tatagiba, 2019; Gold and Peña, 2019); and, finally, the type of model of development precedent to neoliberal reforms (for

example, rentier, light industrialization, import-substitution industrialization, etc.) and its economic legacies combined with the degree of territorialization of interest intermediation mechanisms (Silva, 2018; Rossi, 2019; 2022).

## CONCLUSION

The second wave of incorporation and the reshaping of the sociopolitical arena that allowed for different types of incorporation is a result of the struggles of popular movements to reconnect the popular sectors with the state. Combinations of the transformations just enumerated explain and contextualize the different types of relationships of popular movements with progressive governments in a reincorporation process. Thus, the type of incorporation developed is a relevant variation among the ideologically not-so-distant governments that constituted the second wave of incorporation. This crucial difference also explains why, even though governed by leftists or populists, some countries cannot be considered part of the second wave of incorporation, with its fundamental implications for movement-government relationships.

## NOTE

1. I thank Steve Ellner and Ronaldo Munck for the insightful comments that encouraged me to improve this text.

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