Indigenous Land Rights and Development in the Peruvian Amazon: Communalism versus Capitalism

By Timothy Marti

Peruvian jungle regions have remained relatively untouched by development projects, but recent sell-offs of more than 70% by President Alan García’s government have caused controversy and violent protests that threaten to divide the developing nation. A look at Inca and colonial land rights can help us understand the communal land rights model that is currently preventing development projects. There are many obvious upsides to opening the native-owned lands to development like growth of the Peruvian economy and employment opportunities; however, the indigenous culture would also be under threat by national and multinational companies that have little regard for any native culture that stands in the way of profit. Some argue that improving indigenous land rights are the key to getting the communities organized and able to benefit from the imminent development. Others believe that these type of land rights will lead to “divide and conquer” tactics historically employed by big business. This paper seeks to understand the context of the controversy in order to determine a middle ground solution between both arguments that can deliver economic growth to Peru while simultaneously preserving indigenous culture, respecting human rights, and conserving the environment.

On June 5, 2009, in Bagua, Peru, 23 members of the Peruvian National Police and 10 indigenous protestors were confirmed dead, but purportedly more than 40 indigenous protesters killed in some of the worst violence in Peru’s recent history (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2009). The conflict erupted following Peruvian president Alan García’s attempt to sell tribal lands to oil, gas, mining, and forestry interests in an effort to expand the Peruvian economy and open resource-rich lands to private development by national and multinational firms. The backlash that the García administration has faced underscores the tension that has been created by the alleged unauthorized appropriation of tribal lands by the Peruvian government without regards for the rights, culture, and environment of the indigenous people who have inhabited these lands for centuries.

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Along with these achievements, they followed an advanced system of property ownership derived from pre-Inca civilizations called ayllus, a Quechua word that literally translates to “extended family.” By using this system, the central Inca empire was able to provide land ownership to its subjects and allow them to solve sustenance issues on their own without reliance on the central Inca government. In essence, this system gave citizens legal entitlement to their lands and the ability to pass their lands on to future generations. This system lasted until the Spanish made their notorious appearance in the 16th Century.

With the defeat of the Incan Empire at the hands of Francisco Pizarro, the Spanish conquistador, a major change was in store for the indigenous peoples of Peru and those who inhabited other lands appropriated by the Spanish crown. In place of the ayllu system, which favored a high degree of autonomy, the Spanish installed a peonage system that lasted from the 1500s into the 20th Century. Spanish landlords commanded under a hacienda structure, in which campesinos essentially worked as slaves of their landlord with little or no pay, were not allowed to organize community activities, nor permitted to travel outside
of their designated land except with explicit permission. With greater access to information and better organization by the campesinos in the 20th Century, the pressure was beginning to mount on the Peruvian government to do something about this unfair and oppressive system.

In the 20th Century, Peru was able to return to a somewhat normalized land-ownership system although ingrained racism kept Spaniards and Mestizos (those of mixed-race descent) in control of most of the wealth. However, the system in which a cacique, a chief or nobleman among the Indians who collected taxes for the crown and later on for the Independent Peruvian government, was fundamentally altered. Later in the 20th century, populist land reform led to a return to the principles of the ayllu organizational system, although it is argued that colonialism, republicanism, and modernization had compromised the ayllu’s integrity because of its archaic characteristics and inoperative social organization in the modern economic setting (Bastien, 1979).

MODERN PERUVIAN LAND RIGHTS

In the 1970s, left-leaning Peruvian President Juan Velasco Alvarado led a series of land reforms that allowed Peruvian nationals to expropriate the land where they worked under the hacienda system. Although this outraged the previous owners who were akin to feudal lords, it opened the doors to private ownership by poor natives and led to the modern model of land ownership employed by Peru today. Among his creeds was the famous, “Peasant, the landlord will no longer eat from your poverty” (Albertus, 2010, p. 2). His policies also included the nationalization of foreign-owned oil operations—an interesting juxtaposition to the other military dictatorships in Latin America during this era that were generally pro-market (Brazil, Argentina, Chile). His reforms, which he considered to be a third path between socialism and capitalism, were credited with increasing food production and improving the campesinos’ wages and overall quality of life (Hamill, 1992). However, the most significant impact with regards to rural workers was the reversion to the communal ownership of land by families and tribes, which is the model that is still prevalent today in the Peruvian Amazon.

Under this system, a two-thirds majority in a community must agree to make decisions such as selling communal lands to outsiders. The year 1975 marked the deposition of Alvarado by military general Francisco Morales Bermúdez. Bermúdez promised a return to a more normalized democracy and as a result caused one of the most severe economic crises of Peru’s history. Many critics blame this crisis on poor planning by the administration combined with a slew of natural disasters that undermined his platform. Despite the obstacles towards economic success, Bermúdez continued the series of reforms started by Alvarado that granted greater autonomy to indigenous Peruvians mistreated under the colonial land systems that had previously repressed them. Successors Fernando Belaúnde Terry, Alberto Fujimori, Alan García, and Alejandro Toledo tried to undo many of the agrarian reforms enacted Alvarado and Bermúdez, but in the Amazon regions of Peru this system of land ownership remained the dominant model, most likely due to the remoteness of the area, lack of technology, and indigenous traditions (Flood, 1998). These areas were isolated from the pro-neo-liberal policies meant to improve the economic condition of the country and bring the general populace out of poverty. However, the community ownership or ayllu structure is what is keeping multinationals from buying out native lands because they can’t make the purchases without the approval of two-thirds majority. As Blanco puts it, “Among his creeds was the famous, ‘Peasant, the landlord will no longer eat from your poverty.’”

The communal, collective system of the ayllu (peasant commune) has, to be sure, deteriorated fundamentally in the face of advancing capitalism. Nevertheless, the ayllus maintain many communal features. Although the private ownership of plots is now generally established, the ayllu still makes efforts to prevent the sale of land to outsiders and to redistribute uncultivated land. (Blanco, 1972, p. 40)

Based on the history of neo-liberal Peruvian land policies over the past 30 years, it is not surprising that the Peruvian government is trying to force land reform on Amazon communities. This type of reform is no departure from the changes that have taken place in other Peru regions over this time period. More notable is the fact that this type of reform was not successfully enacted earlier in the Peruvian Amazon during previous administrations. However, the question remains: is this type of reform advantageous for the Amazonian people? Hernando De Soto, a famed Peruvian economist, has one answer. He claims that these informal and unrecognized communal land rights are keeping indigenous peoples below the poverty line. However, much of Peru’s indigenous population adamantly disagree. To understand their reasoning, it is necessary to examine the historical and current treatment of the indigenous peoples of Peru and modern Peruvians’ view of their more primitive countrymen.

TREATMENT OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF PERU

Part of the explanation for why Peruvians have drifted away from the populist economic model implemented by Alvarado is the rise of an anti-dictatorship mindset and a shift toward the right that has characterized the Peruvian mentality in recent history. The communal land model has strong roots in leftist policy. Yet while still prevalent in primitive indigenous regions of the country, mainly the central and southern highlands and the jungle areas, the model has been contested by the majority living in economic centers like Lima and Arequipa. It is no surprise that these economic powerhouses often hold more sway over the government and tend toward neo-liberal policies that are good for privatized businesses.

Much of the poor treatment of indigenous people in Peru is due to the historically ingrained notion that they are second-class citizens and an inferior race. This perception dates back to the appearance of the Spanish conquistadors who encouraged racism and aggressive discrimination toward the native population. In order to better understand the long-reaching effects of this legacy, we can examine specific events documented in 1983. These events shed light on how indigenous peoples were treated during lumber campaigns in Amazonian region and why they can now justifiably fear land grabs by big business looking to profit from the region’s abundant natural, and human, resources.

In this well-documented incident, the Asháninka people from the town of Atalaya in the province of Ucayali became the subjects of “estate owners” from a logging company who were assigned areas of land and ordered to forcibly use the indigenous peoples as their labor force. These indigenous people worked impossibly long hours, were given insufficient nutrition, and kept in barracks under guard, where protesters would be physically abused and women raped. They earned miserable wages or were not paid at all. While they were locked up, the companies using them as their labor force systematically took over and exploited their lands (García Huero, 1998). In addition to this injustice, there are many such instances of native maltreatment reported throughout the Peruvian Amazon and essentially no documented instances of accords that treated indigenous people from the jungle regions as equal citizens and private landowners (see the Bagua Case, the Yurimaguas Case, and many more supporting instances). This lends to the idea that this misuse is the norm rather than the exception.

In the publication “Liberation Through Land Rights in the Peruvian Amazon,” the authors arrive at the conclusion that “There are no controls
or defences because in reality it seems that things must continue this way in order to make economic activity in the region possible" (García Hierro, 1998, p. 38). Although they later go on to argue that economic growth and fair treatment of indigenous peoples can coexist through education campaigns and proper land rights titling, the authors fail to elaborate how costly and logistically difficult these education and titling campaigns would be. It is plainly clear that there is justification for Peruvian natives to be distrustful and angry with the current administration. Most of the fear and aggression against these policies is being directed at Alan García because he is the main player behind the land sales that have left natives feeling abused and disenfranchised.

**ALAN GARCÍA: FROM LEFT TO RIGHT**

Current President Alan García's party, APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana), is considered center-left, meaning that a combination of private enterprise and publicly-owned industries is generally encouraged. It is important to note that García is serving as Peru's president for the second time. His first presidency, from 1985 to 1990, was considered a disaster due to hyperinflation that sunk the Peruvian economy and dramatically increased the number of Peruvians living in poverty. During his first tenure, García was highly regarded by the nation's poor and sought to nationalize many industries and establish a more socialized economic model for Peru. Yet throughout his term he was accused of human rights abuses, accepting bribes, failing to complete promised public works projects, and more. His presidency ended in disgrace and he was forced into exile when Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian regime came to power. Despite the evident failures of his government, García never strayed far from the roots of the APRA party; and although his first presidency is considered a failure he was not regarded as abandoning his dedication to balancing socialist programs with private enterprise, the centerpiece of the party. It is hard to believe that García achieved reelection, but in 2006 he was able to do so in what many believed was a choice of the "lesser of two evils" (Crabtree, 2008). The main reason for his victory was that his opponent, Ollanta Humala, was so far-left that he gained the support of radical leftist Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. Therefore, although García was considered center-left, he was able to muster the support of many neo-liberals as well as many on the left.

The stage became set for García's anti-communalist land reform, and it is evident that he believed that he could achieve strong economic development by opening tribal lands to foreign companies by giving Peruvian jungle regions the same type of system employed along the more modernized Peruvian Coast. The essence of the reform was to change the threshold to approve the sale of lands from a two-thirds majority of a community vote to "yes votes from no less than 50% of attendees at the planned meeting" (El Congreso de La República del Peru, 2008, p. 2). According to García, this change was enacted in order to allow the jungle regions to boost agricultural production and competitiveness thereby improving living standards. García stated with regards to the communal land rights model that "this situation must be corrected" and "nobody who claims to be a leftist should be surprised" (Andean Air Mail & Peruvian Times, 2008). According to García's opposition, this change in legislation is carried out with only one thing in mind: stripping indigenous peoples of their land and their rights in order to make way for development of the Amazon and exploitation by domestic and foreign companies. In the "Decreto Legislativo N° 1015" (Legislative Decree N°1015), García signed the change into law without even having to seek congressional approval. This, along with other presidential decrees, allow the president to legally circumvent Congress while the Peruvian Congress retains the power to review and correct the legislation. Supposedly, the new García decree was enacted with the aforementioned goal of boosting agricultural production and competitiveness, but many of García's opponents saw it differently—as a loophole for opening tribal lands to oil, lumber, and mining companies. This type of legislation effectively breaks up the communal land rights system. As opposed to gaining legitimate consent from a strong majority of community residents, small groups of residents who show up to the meeting can consent the sale of large areas of tribal lands. This shift in idealism creates a stark contrast between his modern governing platform and García's 80s persona, characterized by anti-imperialism and economic nationalism.

Indeed, nobody should be surprised that the young and idealistic Alan García of the 80s is gone. Having suffered the humiliation of his disastrous first presidency, he now has formed a different political agenda. The main controversy is that many people believe that García came to power for the second time by reverberating previous promises and leftist-idealism that got him elected in the 1980s. The basis of his party's political ideology is establishing "a more equitable and fair society," and the popular viewpoint four years into his new term is that he has failed to do so (Crabtree, 2006).

One fundamental question to ask is whether García's efforts to open the Peruvian Amazon to oil, gas, and mining interests are legal. It is essential to understand whether or not the government is breaking the law by doing this or if they are only modifying rules under the law to suit their needs. Because the indigenous tribes lack formal land rights, García was able to legally open their lands up to development with a series of presidential decrees that allowed for the sales. Having gained congressional approval near the start of his term to make these presidential decrees, this type of legislation is fully legal under the Peruvian Constitution. Although the legality of the sales is unquestionable, García suffers from allegations that the sales are fueled by corruption and the desire to strip the natives of their ancestral lands. Understandably, many natives think that large corporations will move in, take their lands and perpetrate new human rights abuses akin to Atalaya in the name of "development" (Pipoli, 2009). The controversy surrounding this issue has undeniably caused his approval rating to suffer with the Peruvian people. García, who lacks support in rural areas, has seen his national approval rating fall below 30% at times over fears that he is marginalizing indigenous culture, not living up to campaign promises to lower the poverty rate, and not acting with prudence when it comes to protecting environmentally sensitive lands (Civil Society Watch, 2009).

**UPSIDES OF OPENING TRIBAL LANDS TO DEVELOPMENT: THE GARCÍA-DESO TOR THESIS**

There are thought to be significant oil and mineral reserves along with the lumber and agricultural resources of the Peruvian Amazon. There are obvious benefits to opening the Peruvian Amazon to foreign and national investment for exploration and principal among these are increases in GDP and job creation. Doing so will drastically increase exports and tax revenues for the Peruvian government. Increases in employment will help Alan García deliver on his promise of more jobs for the Peruvian people, and more money in the social services budget might be used to bolster programs that benefit the natives whose land is being appropriated for economic
growth. Garcia, indeed, may come out a winner for there is no doubt that Peru has a market for these raw materials.

Despite heavy domestic opposition, Peru signed a free trade agreement with the United States in 2006 that took effect in February 2009. Among the effects of this agreement was the eradication of import tariffs on many Peruvian goods with the goals of generating employment, increasing income, curbing poverty, increasing exports, allowing for more foreign investment, and improving overall Peruvian competitiveness within the Andean region. Therefore, the United States and Peru both stand to gain a lot by opening these lands to mining, oil, and gas exploration. Peru, who has what most would consider a good relationship with the United States, will have a willing purchaser of the materials to be extracted from its land, and the United States will have a partner eager to sell it materials at a good price. In addition, Peru has also recently signed free trade agreements with China, Canada, and Thailand and has had one in place with most of South America for years. Essentially, Peru will not lack customers for the abundance of raw material it will be extracting.

The man that has proven to be the best advocate for Alan Garcia’s policies, and the opening of the Amazon, is Peruvian Economist Hernando de Soto. He claims that “the market economy is essential to democracy and the fight against poverty” (Center for International Private Enterprise, 2008, p. 2). He argues that the deprivation of three legal institutions is what is marginalizing indigenous collective property owners:

1. Fungible property rights to maximize the economic use of assets.
2. Organizational forms to increase the productivity of enterprises.
3. Identity devices to allow entrepreneurs to operate in expanded markets.

According to de Soto, if indigenous Peruvians living in the Amazon existed within this framework they would progress towards first-world prosperity as opposed to prolonging extreme poverty. In his documentary, The Mystery of Capital among the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon, de Soto states that “they don’t have the standard mechanisms that connect them with the reality that can produce economic growth” (Institute for Liberty and Democracy, 2009). He argues that if natives had the legal and formal property rights enjoyed by the rest of Peruvians, they would have the ability to adjudicate, lease, transfer, exploit for profit and personal use, get access to credit, and buy and sell their land, which in turn will add more value to their economic activity. Additionally, he asserts that “indigenous life is in no way incompatible with modernity” (Institute for Liberty and Democracy, 2009).

As always, opening up large tracts of land to development has the potential for huge returns. In its recent past, Peru has seen an improvement in economic output that has enlarged the Peruvian economy but has had little effect on citizens living below the poverty level. De Soto argues that in the 21st century, indigenous people living in the Amazon will have the chance to partake in the economic growth that this development implies so long as they are granted the rights needed to capitalize on the growth—concessions that he believes the indigenous community are ready to embrace and deserve to obtain. He believes that in this modern era, the ILO’s creed is an achievable goal in the Peruvian Amazon:

We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies. (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2008, p. 2)

**DOWNSIDES OF OPENING TRIBAL LANDS TO DEVELOPMENT**

The outrage and drop in approval ratings that have been incited by Garcia’s sell-off of the Peruvian Amazon demonstrate fierce opposition to the opening of the region to oil, gas, and mineral exploration not only by indigenous peoples but by Peru as a whole. Opponents of these actions cite a variety of negative impacts that this policy will have, namely environmental, human rights, and cultural damage concerns. Opposition comes from a variety of prominent leaders and NGOs with specific foci in these three areas. The most recognized of the opponents is AIDESEP (the Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest) and its leader Alberto Pizango. He is the author of a letter in opposition to the Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the backer of indigenous protesters who seized control of gas fields belonging to a foreign company. With a warrant out for his arrest for his connection to the illegal seizure of the gas field and a kidnapping accusation, he is currently in asylum at the Nicaraguan embassy in Lima. Chief among his arguments are the negative human rights and cultural impacts that selling Peruvian lands to foreign multinationals could imply. He believes that the harm that will be done will have dire consequences for the natives, thereby justifying radical intervention.

His letter written to the United States Congress on October 30, 2007, exemplifies AIDESEP’s fears for what a free-trade agreement would do for the indigenous peoples in the Amazon Region. In the letter, Pizango writes that “the FTA explicitly gives oil, gas, and mining companies the right to skirt Peruvians laws and courts,” questioning the legality of the Garcia administration’s reforms. Citing environmental issues, Pizango contends, “possible overexploitation of Peru’s natural resources that could come as consequence of the FTA would send incredible amounts of carbon into the atmosphere.” Noting the brutal inequality of Peruvian history, he states, “Our democracy is still weak, due in part to the ongoing history of colonialism and racism that excludes meaningful input from affected indigenous communities who fight against exploitation and marginalization” (Pizango, 2007, p. 2). This letter underscores the sentiments of the many organizations and individuals who are against the encroachment of foreign interests on native soils.

The fact that Pizango would resort to extremism demonstrates the zeal with which opponents will fight in order to preserve their ancestral lands. The violence in Bagua is not an isolated incident. Protests have sprung up all over the country to the extent that Pizango was successful in persuading the Peruvian Congress to block two of the most controversial presidential decrees (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2010).

Chief among opponents’ complaints is that the government is modifying the law to suit its needs and that development of this sort will lead to the sort of human rights abuses that occurred when the timber companies moved in during the 1980s. By pushing for the privatization of native collective lands, opponents believe that private institutions will be able to split communities apart with the lure of money and systematically commit human rights abuses when necessary to increase profitability. These concerns are logical due to historical grievances. One such example is an international human rights decree that Peru approved in 1993 but has never implemented. This legislation issued by the International Labour Organization (ILO) states that indigenous people, under the threat of cultural erosion due to the lack of human rights, will have the ability to participate in the politics of their country as equal members, have equal land rights,
equal employment opportunities, access to decent education, access to social security and health benefits, the right to self-govern and access to press and communication (International Labour Organization, 1989). If these conditions were to be implemented, it would undoubtedly empower the natives to take control of the situation. Accordingly, the Peruvian government has not followed the provisions of the accord, committing such abuses as opening tribal lands to PeruPetro without consultation and weakening the decree by taking away tribal members’ participatory instruments with regards to mining and environmental protection. It is little surprise that the government is being accused of a lack of seriousness of its obligations towards its indigenous communities (The Working Group on Indigenous Peoples of the Peruvian Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, 2007).

Another argument against the opening of the Peruvian Amazon is the detrimental environmental effects it will have not just for Peru, but also for the entire world. The oil and gas extraction process cause irreversible damages such as deforestation, leakage, degradation, and ground contamination to name a few. Mining activities have similar consequences. Although it has been demonstrated that oil can be extracted in a low-impact, environmentally-friendly way, governments and companies rarely choose this method, instead opting for expediency that leads to increased profits and greater harm to the environment (Butler, 2006). These types of operations have a negative effect on nearby indigenous tribes if they take away the flora and fauna that make up these tribes’ livelihoods. This consideration strengthens the argument against De Soto’s case that private land rights should be given to each person because one person selling their land can inadvertently negatively affect their neighbors.

THE MIDDLE GROUND

It is evident that the two different paths—the one that the Garcia Administration wants to take with the support of Hernando de Soto and his Institute for Liberty and Democracy (ILD) and the one that Alberto Pizango and AIDESEP want to take—are incompatible and will lead to further strife in the Peruvian Amazon. Accordingly, a middle ground option becomes necessary in order to appease both sides of the argument and to come to a common accord. It is evident that the development of the Amazon is inevitable due to the Peruvian people’s eagerness to capitalize on their abundant natural resources and the indigenous people’s desire to emerge from poverty and participate in the modern economy. But how do you merge the two different ideologies into a reasonable and agreeable system that would be supported by both sides, is not too ideological in nature, and is able to be overseen with input from each involved party? It is a difficult proposition, but theoretically possible when complaints from both the ILD and AIDESEP are understood and addressed.

Critics of Hernando de Soto’s solution state that by giving each member of a community in the Amazon individual land rights, you give them the chance to split up their community. In theory, a community of 1,000 individuals could be greatly disrupted by one or two of the members selling their land to oil, gas, or mining interests. In essence, this would give rise to “divide-and-conquer” tactics, which would be in the best interest of big business (Way, 2009). Another criticism is that although Peru will assuredly expand its economy by opening up the Amazon, little of the benefits will trickle down to the impoverished people in rural areas. Institutional weaknesses are cited as the preventative factor for allowing these funds to be channeled into local development (OXFAM America, 2009).

On the other end of the spectrum are the pro-Garcia, pro-de-Soto, pro-economic development Peruvians that argue that greedy natives are blocking Peru’s road to economic success in the 21st Century. García himself called natives the “dog in the manger,” implying that they are greedy and hoarding the wealth of Peru at the expense of the rest of the country (Garcia, 2007). He argues that these lands are for all of Peru, and that just because the natives, live there it does not entitle them to prohibit possible economic activities. He defends his position by claiming that Peru could be one of the richest countries in the world, put millions to work, provide better benefits, and simultaneously protect the environment throughout the entire process. De Soto’s and his supporters argue that in fact, these natives when given the chance to participate in the economic gain of the activities, are eager to see development programs that benefit their communities as long as measures of prudence are taken to assure that the development is transparent and fair to the natives (De Soto, 2009).

Therefore, a solution is needed that balances the mutual desire of economic development with the indigenous people’s desire to profit from the development, conserve their culture, avoid human rights abuses, and provide their children with a brighter future. These desires stand in the way of quick profitability by big business, but in the 21st century world where communication barriers have been greatly overcome, big business should take heed that the native’s voice will be, and already has been, heard by the world at large. Although such a solution will be highly idealistic in nature and is likely to encounter many obstacles along its path to instigation, it is not impossible. As de Soto argues, tribes in Alaska and other parts of America have achieved success and maintained elements of their culture that did not impede their connections “with the reality that can produce economic growth.”

Crucial to this solution is including the indigenous leaders and communities in the dialogue; this is no easy measure considering the cultural bias ingrained in many upper-class and policy-setting Peruvians that dictates that natives are not educated nor intelligent enough to be integrated into the decision-making process. Although a free-market convert, Garcia admits that “we do not believe that the free market alone can bring order to the human species,” implying the need for the government to oversee the development of the Amazon and the implementation of social programs which benefit its inhabitants (Garcia, 2008). However, as opponents have vociferously proclaimed, these programs cannot just be overseen by a central government that has a history of misallocating promised resources to rural communities. The UNCDF (United Nations Capital Development Fund) acknowledges the multi-dimensionality of poverty as “a lack of power… inadequate access to social services… vulnerability to environmental risks, and poor access to infrastructure” (Bonfiglioli, 2003, p. 65). In order to significantly reduce poverty, the government must decentralize and allow decision making to be done outside of Lima. Indeed, indigenous political organizations, like AIDESEP and the many NGOs operating in the region, must be allowed along with the regional governments to take part in the shaping and oversight that will go in to the development of the region.

Can multinational corporations be included in the development of the rainforest without abuse of, and objection from, the local populace? This remains to be seen, but AIDESEP’s main goals are carrying out development projects in health care, sanitation, and education of indigenous peoples, along with promotion of indigenous and women’s rights (Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, 2007). Therefore, if a multinational company made efforts to help these communities develop for the 21st century and invested in environmentally-safe extraction practices, they could theoretically become the allies of the Amazonian people and Peru’s
answer to economic development. Overseen by the indigenous tribes and along with the Peruvian government, multinationals should be held to a standard that allows them to be profitable while simultaneously helping the indigenous people adapt to the modern economic era. In essence, if strict oversight is maintained with the help of the international press, developments by private enterprise in the Amazon could be the springboard to alleviating poverty in the area while protecting indigenous rights that entitle them to their lands and their culture.

CONCLUSION

The intense protests, violence, and murders currently taking place in the Peruvian Amazon are symptoms of the radical social and environmental change brought about by the sell-off of the jungle. The communal land rights system in Peru has persisted due to the region’s isolation, lack of communication, and ingrained culture. Yet its viability in the modern economy is questioned by many. After the colonial era, land was returned to natives in the ayllu system, but the ayllu didn’t persist in the modernized areas of Peru. The ayllu’s communal land rights structure is what is keeping the multinational out; however, no one should be surprised that the government is attempting to open up these lands. The indigenous Peruvians living in the Amazon are treated as second-class citizens and historical examples explain why they fear that the land takeovers will only do them harm. Alan García changed how he runs government in his second presidency and his new free-market model threatens the indigenous way of life. He has not been true to his party's original vision and his approval rating has been hurt by all the controversy and the manner in which he has confronted the dilemma. His “dog in the manger” remark further angered the indigenous although his argument does yield some valid points.

The upsides of the exploitation of the Amazon are economic development, chances to give natives equal land rights, a chance to bring them out of poverty, more jobs, and more respect for Peru on an international scale. The accompanying downsides are possible human rights abuses, loss of communication, and ingrained culture. Yet its viability in the modern economy is questioned by many. After the colonial era, land was returned to natives in the ayllu system, but the ayllu didn’t persist in the modernized areas of Peru. The ayllu’s communal land rights structure is what is keeping the multinational out; however, no one should be surprised that the government is attempting to open up these lands. The indigenous Peruvians living in the Amazon are treated as second-class citizens and historical examples explain why they fear that the land takeovers will only do them harm. Alan García changed how he runs government in his second presidency and his new free-market model threatens the indigenous way of life. He has not been true to his party's original vision and his approval rating has been hurt by all the controversy and the manner in which he has confronted the dilemma. His “dog in the manger” remark further angered the indigenous although his argument does yield some valid points.

The upsides of the exploitation of the Amazon are economic development, chances to give natives equal land rights, a chance to bring them out of poverty, more jobs, and more respect for Peru on an international scale. The accompanying downsides are possible human rights abuses, loss of indigenous culture, environmental degradation, and further failure of the government to allocate economic gains to people living in poverty where the natural resources are found. A possible middle ground argument is to continue with development but allow oversight from indigenous rights groups, NGO’s, and the international press to make sure the indigenous population receives what they deserve in exchange for their willingness to permit development. Perhaps significant elements of indigenous ways of life can be maintained through some tools offered by the same modern world that threatens them.

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