

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Turning Over a New Leaf: A Subnational Analysis of ‘Coca Yes, Cocaine No’ in Bolivia

Susan Brewer-Osorio\*

Assistant Professor, Latin American Studies, University of Arizona

\*Corresponding author. Email: [susanosorio@email.arizona.edu](mailto:susanosorio@email.arizona.edu)

(Received 9 October 2019; revised 14 April 2021; accepted 19 April 2021;  
first published online 16 June 2021)

## Abstract

International pressure to suppress cocaine trafficking sustained decades of harsh drug laws in Bolivia against *cocaleros* (coca producers), thus affecting coca production for traditional consumption and for manufacturing illicit cocaine. These harsh drug laws caused social unrest in *cocalero* communities outside traditional coca zones. President Evo Morales, leader of the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement toward Socialism, MAS) party, implemented ‘Coca Yes, Cocaine No’ (CYCN), a harm-reduction strategy that authorised ‘non-traditional’ farmers to cultivate legal coca and self-police production. This article compares CYCN outcomes in Bolivia’s traditional and non-traditional coca regions and finds that strong *cocalero* organisations were vital to CYCN success in non-traditional areas. In contrast, organised resistance in traditional zones restricted CYCN success and added to regime instability in the lead-up to Morales’ forced resignation in 2019. Hence, while Morales harnessed state power to change drug policy, he was constrained by the rural grassroots organisations that brought him to power.

**Keywords:** Bolivia; drug policy; coca; *cocalero*; eradication

## Introduction

On 10 November 2019, Bolivian President Evo Morales was forced out of office following weeks of protest over a disputed election. While criticised for flouting constitutional limits, Morales and his Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement toward Socialism, MAS) party introduced sweeping reforms that benefited marginalised groups, including Bolivia’s community of coca farmers.<sup>1</sup> Bolivia is one of the top world producers of coca leaf, a mild herbal stimulant that also serves as primary material for making cocaine.<sup>2</sup> Given its traditional roots, much Bolivian coca is

<sup>1</sup>Santiago Anria and Jennifer Cyr, ‘Is Bolivia’s Democracy in Danger? Here’s What’s Behind the Disputed Presidential Election’, *Washington Post*, 30 Oct. 2019, available at [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/10/30/is-bolivia-democracy-danger-heres-whats-behind-disputed-presidential-election/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/10/30/is-bolivia-democracy-danger-heres-whats-behind-disputed-presidential-election/), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>2</sup>In 2018, Bolivia showed 23,100 hectares of planted coca, compared to 169,000 in Colombia, and 49,900 hectares in Peru in 2017; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (hereafter UNODC), ‘Coca

© The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

produced legally and sold to domestic raw-coca consumers, but there is concern over excess production being diverted to illegal cocaine markets.<sup>3</sup> Like many other countries, Bolivia faces the challenge of complying with the punitive global anti-drug paradigm while considering domestic pressures pushing for less harmful drug policies.<sup>4</sup>

This article analyses the efforts of President Morales (2006–19) in implementing the world's first supply-side harm-reduction drug policy focused on supporting legal coca farmers while sanctioning illicit coca cultivation. Morales' efforts were constrained by previous US-supported policy that divided Bolivian coca farmers, creating divergent interests with respect to reform. In line with US pressures, in 1988 Bolivia adopted the Law of Coca and Controlled Substances (Law 1008), which closely mirrored a similar US-promoted law in Peru.<sup>5</sup> Law 1008 distinguished traditional coca cultivation zones from non-traditional zones; targeting the latter with militarised eradication that caused violence and social unrest.<sup>6</sup> Responding to this social discontent, President Morales, a coca farmer, adopted the 'Coca Yes, Cocaine No' (CYCN) drug programme, an innovative harm-reduction approach that distinguished coca from cocaine and expanded legal production and community control. However, the new CYCN programme coexisted with Law 1008 for over a decade.

Given the legal distinction created by Law 1008, this article asks, what was the impact of CYCN in areas of traditional and non-traditional coca production? To answer this question, the analysis takes a subnational approach distinct from earlier US-centred and cross-national approaches to Latin American drug policy. The main argument finds that CYCN was more successful in non-traditional coca areas because it was supported by strong coca growers' organisations that united behind CYCN to successfully control coca production, while reducing violence and social unrest. Conversely, in traditional areas *cocalero* (coca producer) organisations evoked Law 1008 to resist CYCN reforms that expanded government control and gave non-traditional *cocaleros* access to legal coca production. Ultimately, the repeal of Law 1008 in 2017 ended legal protections for traditional *cocaleros*, thus igniting an organised resistance led by traditional *cocalero* organisations in the months before the disputed 2019 election that resulted in Morales' forced resignation.<sup>7</sup>

These findings support earlier studies on CYCN that point to improved living standards for non-traditional coca zones,<sup>8</sup> but also break with existing work by

---

Cultivation Survey' for Bolivia (2018), Colombia (2018) and Peru (2017), available at [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crop-monitoring/index.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crop-monitoring/index.html), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>3</sup>Broad sectors of Bolivian society consume coca; see Madeline Barbara Léons and Harry Sanabria (eds.), *Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 1–46.

<sup>4</sup>Philip Keefer and Norman Loayza, *Innocent Bystanders: Developing Countries and the War on Drugs* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>5</sup>Aldo F. Ponce, 'From Freedom to Repression and Violence: The Evolution of Drug Policy in Peru', in Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Clancy Cavnar and Thiago Rodrigues (eds.), *Drug Policies and the Politics of Drugs in the Americas* (New York: Springer, 2016), pp. 123–48, 131–2.

<sup>6</sup>Linda Farthing, 'Social Impacts Associated with Antidrug Law 1008', in Léons and Sanabria (eds.), *Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality*, pp. 253–70.

<sup>7</sup>Cat Rainsford, 'Bolivia Coca Growers Fight for Control of Legal Production', *InSight Crime*, 13 Aug. 2019, available at [www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/bolivia-coca-growers-fight-for-control-of-legal-production/](http://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/bolivia-coca-growers-fight-for-control-of-legal-production/), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas Grisaffi, Linda Farthing and Kathryn Ledebur, 'Integrated Development with Coca in the Plurinational State of Bolivia: Shifting the Focus from Eradication to Poverty Alleviation', *Bulletin on*

comparing these areas to traditional zones where CYCN was more contentious. In addition, while this article is a subnational analysis of drug-policy reform, the focus on the role of *cocalero* organisations in national drug policy informs broader debates about MAS as a ruling party. While MAS formed from a coalition of grassroots social movements that originated with the coca farmers' unions,<sup>9</sup> some argue that social organisations lost influence when MAS ascended to power.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to such an approach and in line with recent findings,<sup>11</sup> this article finds that, at least with respect to *cocalero* unions at the centre of the MAS coalition, grassroots organisations maintained a powerful influence over policy outcomes. Indeed, the Bolivian case shows that supply-side harm reduction can reduce illicit crops without repression, but its success largely depends on the support and organisational strength of communities where illicit crops are produced.

The article begins by reviewing the literature on Latin American drug policies and emphasising this manuscript's contribution. The second section describes the development of coca-grower organisations in the Bolivian departments of La Paz and Cochabamba, underscoring how earlier punitive policies shaped divergent political interests. The third section offers empirical support for the dual claim that the success of CYCN varied for non-traditional and traditional coca growers, and that the strength of the *cocalero* organisations contributed to different local outcomes. The qualitative analysis draws from published and primary sources, including first-hand interviews in Bolivia, and a newspaper archive housed at the Centro de Documentación e Información de Bolivia (Bolivian Documentation and Information Centre, CEDIB) in Cochabamba. The concluding section points to potential implications of the findings for scholarly debates about CYCN impacts and the role of social organisations in Bolivian drug policy, and also discusses practical lessons for future harm-reduction programmes.

### Prevailing Research Approaches to Drug Policy in Latin America

The subnational perspective guiding this research departs from conventional approaches in drug-policy research that view coca-growing regions as homogeneous at either the national or regional level. Such approaches primarily focus on US influence<sup>12</sup> and cross-national policy comparisons,<sup>13</sup> but pay less attention to local variation. Studies of the US influence on drug policies in Latin America tend to cluster in two groups. One group highlights how the US-led 'War on

---

*Narcotics*, 61: 1 (2017), pp. 131–57; Thomas Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No: How Bolivia's Coca Growers Reinvented Democracy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

<sup>9</sup>Santiago Anria, *When Movements Become Parties: The Bolivian MAS in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>10</sup>Angus McNelly, 'The Incorporation of Social Organizations under the MAS in Bolivia', *Latin American Perspectives*, 47: 4 (2020), pp. 76–95; Roberto Laserna, 'El caudillismo fragmentado', *Nueva Sociedad*, 209 (May–June 2007), pp. 100–17.

<sup>11</sup>Anria, *When Movements Become Parties*.

<sup>12</sup>Bruce Michael Bagley, 'The New Hundred Years War? US National Security and the War on Drugs in Latin America', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 30: 1 (1988), pp. 161–82; Coletta A. Youngers and Eileen Rosin (eds.), *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of US Policy* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

<sup>13</sup>Labate *et al.*, *Drug Policies*; Paul Gootenberg, 'Cocaine Histories and Diverging Drug War Politics in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru', *A Contracorriente*, 15: 1 (2017), pp. 1–35.

Drugs' harms development, while the other group uses cross-national research to underscore the novelty of Bolivia's rejection of US policies compared to Peru and Colombia, the other major coca/cocaine producers. This article draws on these perspectives to focus on how US influence shaped early drug policy in Bolivia, which later prompted distinct reactions from traditional and non-traditional *cocaleros* to CYCN reforms.

The US 'War on Drugs' spurred considerable academic interest in the impact of US policies on development in the Global South where most illicit drug crops are produced. There is consensus that the vast power asymmetry between the United States and Latin American countries led to region-wide conformity with US interests in punitive drug strategies despite high costs. For example, Beatriz Labate, Clancy Cavnar and Thiago Rodrigues find that punitive drug strategies in Latin America led to militarisation of domestic law enforcement, which weakened democratic norms and institutions and contributed to rising human-rights violations.<sup>14</sup> In addition, studies link US-supported forced eradication of drug crops to increased poverty, population displacement, deforestation and pollution in frontier regions with fragile ecosystems.<sup>15</sup>

In Bolivia, US support for militarised drug policy underwrote state violence and social unrest for nearly two decades.<sup>16</sup> Informed by previous findings, this study acknowledges the importance of US influence in the design of Bolivia's Law 1008 and the ensuing repression that shaped coca growers' organisations. However, this research shows that a narrow focus on US power is insufficient to explain Bolivia's rupture with US drug policies. In fact, recent research suggests that Bolivian political elites resisted US influence even before Morales was elected.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, CYCN defied both the United States and prevailing top-down academic theories of US–Latin American relations. Moreover, cross-national analyses highlight Bolivia as the only Latin American country to significantly depart from the punitive paradigm and thus exclude the United States from national drug-policy decisions.<sup>18</sup> In 2008, Morales expelled the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) from Bolivia and allowed all United States International Agency for Development (USAID) programmes to lapse from 2009 to 2013.<sup>19</sup> The United

<sup>14</sup>Youngers and Rosin, *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America*; William Avilés, *The Drug War in Latin America: Hegemony and Global Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>15</sup>Kenneth R. Young, 'Environmental and Social Consequences of Coca/Cocaine in Peru: Policy Alternatives and a Research Agenda', in Michael K. Steinberg, Joseph J. Hobbs and Kent Mathewson (eds.), *Dangerous Harvest: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 249–73; Alexander Rincón-Ruiz, Hyarold Leonardo Correa, Daniel Oswaldo León and Stewart Williams, 'Coca Cultivation and Crop Eradication in Colombia: The Challenges of Integrating Rural Reality into Effective Anti-Drug Policy', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 33 (July 2016), pp. 56–65.

<sup>16</sup>United States–Office of National Drug Control Policy (US–ONDCP), 'National Drug Control Strategy' (1990), available online at [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ondcp/121637.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ondcp/121637.pdf), pp. 49–52, last access 10 May 2021; Michael T. Klare, 'Scenario for a Quagmire: Fighting Drugs with the Military', *The Nation*, 1 Jan. 1990.

<sup>17</sup>Allan Gillies, 'Contesting the "War on Drugs" in the Andes: US–Bolivian Relations of Power and Control (1989–93)', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 52: 1 (2019), pp. 1–30.

<sup>18</sup>Labate *et al.*, *Drug Policies*; Gootenberg, 'Cocaine Histories'.

<sup>19</sup>Linda Farthing and Benjamin H. Kohl, *Evo's Bolivia: Continuity and Change* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), p. 128.

States penalised Bolivia for these actions by decertifying it for over a decade, but this did not derail Bolivia's reform agenda.<sup>20</sup>

To account for CYCN as a major deviation from US interests and prevailing policy outcomes in Latin America, previous studies stress the political capacity of Bolivia's coca growers' movement.<sup>21</sup> In particular, the *cocalero* unions in the non-traditional coca region of Chapare played a pivotal role in propelling their leader, Morales, to national power.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, weaker *cocalero* organisations in Colombia and Peru are linked to persistent punitive policies and more violent repression.<sup>23</sup> These studies of *cocalero* organisations, combined with claims that grassroots organisations largely lost influence after MAS formed a government,<sup>24</sup> directly inform the questions and arguments that frame this study. Given the significance of the Chapare *cocalero* unions to Morales' electoral success, how did coca growers' unions shape the implementation of CYCN while Morales was in office? Moreover, how was the experience of CYCN different for Chapare unions, criminalised under previous law, compared to organisations representing traditional growers?

In addressing these questions, this article aims to expand on studies linking CYCN to better living standards in Chapare, a non-traditional zone that experienced less repression, more economic security and less illicit coca production, by adding comparisons to CYCN outcomes in traditional coca zones.<sup>25</sup> Since traditional and non-traditional coca farmers fared differently under previous coca law, it is reasonable to expect distinct reactions to and experiences of CYCN in different areas. Moreover, the comparative framework provides a broader account of how CYCN impacted longstanding conflicts over access to legal markets for coca that divide coca-growing communities. Finally, the article highlights the important role of coca growers' organisations in shaping CYCN outcomes, thereby corroborating other studies that suggest rural social organisations maintained significant influence within the MAS coalition.<sup>26</sup>

## The Coca Growers' Organisations

Starting in the 1980s, the United States tried to curb soaring domestic cocaine consumption by influencing policies in the Andean producer countries. In Bolivia, US pressure to eradicate coca undermined the already precarious conditions of

<sup>20</sup>The US certification process evaluates support for US drug policy; see Julie Ayling, 'Conscription in the War on Drugs: Recent Reforms to the US Drug Certification Process', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 16: 6 (2005), pp. 376–83.

<sup>21</sup>Ursula Durand Ochoa, *The Political Empowerment of the Cocaleros of Bolivia and Peru* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Leonidas Oikonomakis, *Political Strategies and Social Movements in Latin America: The Zapatistas and Bolivian Cocaleros* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>22</sup>Sven Harten, *The Rise of Evo Morales and the MAS* (London: Zed, 2011); Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar, *Rhythms of the Pachakuti: Indigenous Uprising and State Power in Bolivia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 73–96.

<sup>23</sup>María Clemencia Ramírez, *Between the Guerrillas and the State: The Cocalero Movement, Citizenship, and Identity in the Colombian Amazon* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Thomas Mortensen and Eric Gutierrez, 'Mitigating Crime and Violence in Coca-growing Areas', *Journal of Illicit Economies and Development*, 1: 1 (2019), pp. 63–71.

<sup>24</sup>McNelly, 'The Incorporation of Social Organizations'; Laserna, 'El caudillismo fragmentado'.

<sup>25</sup>Grisaffi *et al.*, 'Integrated Development with Coca'; Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*.

<sup>26</sup>Anria, *When Movements Become Parties*.

highland farmers. To balance contradictory demands between US anti-coca efforts and domestic coca-leaf consumption, the Bolivian government devised Law 1008 as a policy to reduce coca output while preserving the market for coca leaf. To do so, it distinguished between traditional and transitional/illegal coca cultivation. This strategy divided coca growers in traditional and non-traditional areas, thus creating conflicting political interests with respect to the coca policy and later causing distinct reactions to CYCN. While traditional *cocaleros* mostly supported Law 1008, coca growers' organisations in non-traditional Chapare mobilised against eradication campaigns under Law 1008 and formed the MAS as an electoral route to change drug policy by winning elections.

During the 1980s, US-led coca-eradication campaigns threatened the cultural identity and economic wellbeing of Andean peoples who have cultivated and consumed coca for centuries. In contemporary Bolivia, 30 per cent of people consume coca leaf, and nearly 80,000 farmers depend on the legal coca market for their livelihood.<sup>27</sup> Yet, as a signatory state of the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, Bolivia committed to categorise coca leaf as a Schedule 1 dangerous substance, and called for an end to traditional coca consumption within 25 years, or by 1986.<sup>28</sup> Increasing global cocaine demand boosted coca production in the Andes beyond traditional zones, motivating peasants and unemployed miners to migrate en masse to establish coca farms in remote areas.<sup>29</sup> The production of illicit coca and cocaine skyrocketed, and the United States responded with military interventions and aid programmes designed to strengthen government capacity to repress coca production and trafficking. In reaction, coca growers' organisations in Bolivia resisted US anti-coca pressures.

Figure 1 shows the three main coca-producing areas of Bolivia: the Yungas and Apolo in the department of La Paz, and Chapare in the department of Cochabamba. In the Yungas of La Paz, the first area of interest, powerful peasant unions representing traditional *cocaleros* resisted the implementation of CYCN reforms after 2006. The coca cultivation in the Yungas pre-dates Bolivia's 1952 Revolution and subsequent agrarian reform. From the colonial period until 1952, the Yungas coca trade was dominated by politically powerful *hacendados* (hacienda owners) that successfully lobbied against early international efforts to limit coca production.<sup>30</sup> Currently, the nearly 28,000 authorised coca farmers in the Yungas include established families that have cultivated coca for generations in 'traditional' areas formerly occupied by the haciendas, and new settlements that are considered non-traditional coca areas.<sup>31</sup> After 1988, Law 1008

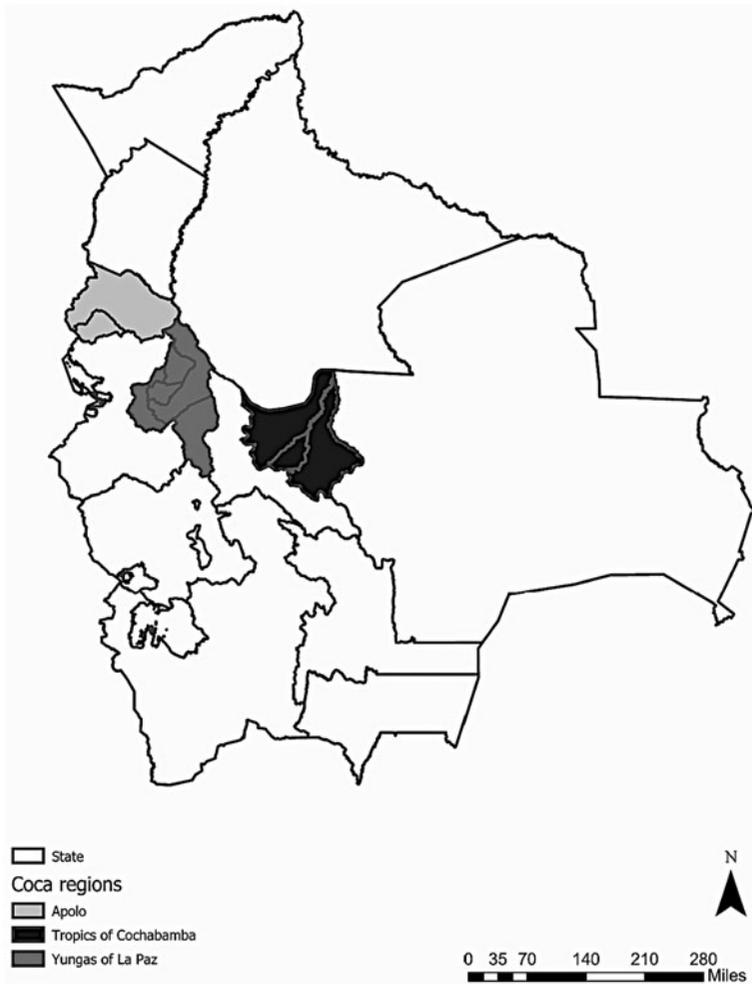
<sup>27</sup>Linda Farthing and Kathryn Ledebur, 'Habeas Coca: Bolivia's Community Coca Control', Global Drug Policy Program, Open Society Foundations, 2015, available online at [www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/dd3082d5-1bab-4fa0-9cb5-273a921ea32b/habeas-coca-bolivias-community-coca-control-20150706.pdf](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/dd3082d5-1bab-4fa0-9cb5-273a921ea32b/habeas-coca-bolivias-community-coca-control-20150706.pdf), last access 10 May 2021, p. 37; Franklin Alcaez, 'Coca y cocaleros', *La Prensa*, 20 Aug. 2015.

<sup>28</sup>Ted Galen Carpenter, 'Competing Models, International Initiatives and the War on Drugs', in Roberto Zepeda and Jonathan D. Rosen (eds.), *Cooperation and Drug Policies in the Americas: Trends in the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015), pp. 1–18, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup>José Jairo González Arias, *Amazonia colombiana: Espacio y sociedad* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1998).

<sup>30</sup>Ana María Lema, 'The Coca Debate and Yungas Landowners during the First Half of the 20th Century', in Léons and Sanabria (eds.), *Coca, Cocaine and the Bolivian Reality*, pp. 99–116.

<sup>31</sup>Farthing and Ledebur, 'Habeas Coca', p. 15; 'Cocaleros de Chapare y Yungas discrepan sobre aumento de coca', *La Razón*, 26 Dec. 2011.



**Figure 1.** Main Bolivian Coca Regions

Source: Author's elaboration based on data from UNODC, 'Bolivia Coca Cultivation Survey' (2016).

created a legal distinction between the traditional and non-traditional areas in the Yungas, shielding coca cultivation in the former while leaving the latter vulnerable to eradication. In this way, Law 1008 divided the Yungas community over coca production, and tied the interests of traditional Yungas *cocaleros* to the conservation of Law 1008.

*Cocalero* organisations formed in the Yungas of La Paz in the aftermath of the 1952 Revolution that brought to power the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, MNR), a political party led by middle-class professionals and supported by organised labour that overthrew Bolivia's governing oligarchy.<sup>32</sup> In 1953, the MNR implemented agrarian reform to dismantle large

<sup>32</sup>Dwight Heath, 'New Patrons for Old: Changing Patron-Client Relationships in the Bolivian Yungas', *Ethnology*, 12: 1 (1973), pp. 75–98.

landholdings and incorporate the peasantry into the revolutionary project.<sup>33</sup> In the Yungas, MNR promoted agrarian unions at each hacienda to decide the allocation of plots and petition for titles. With the undoing of the agrarian elite, peasant unions quickly usurped political authority from *hacendados* and their role as defenders of coca leaf against government efforts to limit production.<sup>34</sup>

During the Morales presidency, the Yungas unions coordinated at the regional and provincial level to negotiate with the national government over CYCN implementation. In the 1950s, clusters of unions in the Yungas formed regional *centrales* (congresses of unions) which united into provincial federations.<sup>35</sup> By 1960, there were six independent federations in the Yungas incorporated under the departmental peasant federation and the national peasant confederation.<sup>36</sup> The local unions provided dispute resolution and managed communal infrastructure but did not intervene in productive activity.<sup>37</sup> However, unions expanded their role during the 1980s in response to government threats to restrict coca production, as well as a desire to protect producers against powerful market intermediaries.

In 1985, Yungas peasants created the Asociación Departamental de Productores de Coca (Departmental Association of Coca Producers, ADEPCOCA) as the economic wing of the agrarian unions. In addition to organising protests against coca production limits, ADEPCOCA issued producer licences allowing holders to cultivate and trade coca directly in La Paz without securing the expensive commercial licence required for coca traders, thus undercutting market intermediaries.<sup>38</sup> As Alison L. Spedding explains, '[by] showing this card, it is possible to take coca to the city and sell it without paying duty or risking arrest'.<sup>39</sup> To join ADEPCOCA, producers must have the endorsement of their local union, pay a membership fee and register the quantity of land used to cultivate coca.<sup>40</sup>

The second area of interest, Apolo, is a much smaller area of traditional coca cultivation found in northern La Paz, far enough away from the Yungas to constitute a separate region, but close enough to coordinate with Yungas *cocalero* organisations to shape CYCN outcomes. In 2004, the United Nations recorded a mere 289 hectares of visible, traditional coca in Apolo, concentrated in the southern province of Bautista Saavedra where coca cultivation pre-dates the 1953 Agrarian Reform.<sup>41</sup> In this area, ADEPCOCA works with five *centrales* comprising local agrarian unions. While historically small, the number of coca farmers in Apolo

<sup>33</sup>Irene Hernáiz Salinas and Diego Pacheco, *La Ley INRA en el espejo de la historia: Dos siglos de reformas agrarias en Bolivia* (La Paz: Fundación TIERRA, 2000).

<sup>34</sup>Heath, 'New Patrons for Old'.

<sup>35</sup>Alison L. Spedding, 'Cocataki, Taki-Coca: Trade, Traffic and Organized Peasant Resistance in the Yungas of La Paz', in Léons and Sanabria (eds.), *Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality*, p. 118.

<sup>36</sup>Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*, p. 17; Farthing and Ledebur, 'Habeas Coca', p. 14; Alison L. Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca: Economía campesina cocalera en los Yungas y el Chapare* (La Paz: PIEB, 2004), pp. 275–7.

<sup>37</sup>Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl, 'Supply-Side Harm Reduction Strategies: Bolivia's Experiment with Social Control', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 23: 6 (2012), p. 490.

<sup>38</sup>Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca*, pp. 279, 284–5; 'Cocataki, Taki-Coca', pp. 117, 125–7.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>40</sup>The information was considered unreliable, and ADEPCOCA did not share information with the government; see Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca*, pp. 281–3.

<sup>41</sup>UNODC and Government of Bolivia, 'Bolivia Coca Cultivation Survey' (2005), available at [www.unodc.org/pdf/andean/Part2\\_Bolivia.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/andean/Part2_Bolivia.pdf), last access 10 May 2021, p. 25.

expanded rapidly during Morales' presidency from 2,500 in 2008 to more than 7,000 by 2015, causing increased cultivation outside the traditional zone.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, in Chapare, an area of mostly non-traditional coca cultivation and the third area of interest, peasant unions played a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of CYCN reforms. These powerful agrarian unions formed after the 1953 Agrarian Reform in response to frontier colonisation. Following the Agrarian Reform, land plots became smaller in the highlands and the MNR government encouraged peasants to colonise Chapare, a semi-tropical lowland area east and north-east of the city of Cochabamba, and other frontier regions. As *colonos* (settlers) arrived in the 1960s, agrarian unions, fashioned from both highland Indigenous and peasant organisational structures, emerged as the governing authority in the absence of state presence. *Colonos* registered with their neighbourhood union and received a parcel of land in exchange for monthly dues and communal labour.<sup>43</sup>

Early Chapare settlers cultivated other crops alongside coca, which took off with the booming US demand for cocaine in the 1980s.<sup>44</sup> By the mid-1990s, there were nearly 700 *cocalero* unions in Chapare.<sup>45</sup> As occurred in La Paz, the male-dominated Chapare unions organised hierarchically so that several unions formed a *central*, and several *centrales* united into a federation. Eventually, the regional federations of Chapare formed the Seis Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba (Six Federations of the Tropics of Cochabamba, hereafter Six Federations) representing over 900 unions with 46,240 registered growers by 2015.<sup>46</sup> After 2006, the Six Federations worked closely with the Morales government to ensure the effective implementation of CYCN. However, initially, with no government presence, the Six Federations functioned like the coca growers' federations in La Paz, supporting communal infrastructure and settling disputes but not managing production. A key difference between the two regions, however, is that in Chapare there is no organisation like ADEPCOCA, thus leaving the commercialisation of coca in the hands of intermediaries who purchase coca from producers in Chapare without opposition from the unions.<sup>47</sup>

Despite some important differences, coca growers' unions in La Paz and Cochabamba were powerful organisations with similar structures and functions prior to the government crackdown on coca in the 1980s. In response to US pressure, Bolivia passed Law 1008 in 1988, which created three types of coca cultivation zones: traditional, transitional and illegal, and considered varying levels of protection and repression. Traditional areas were zones in which coca cultivation pre-dates the 1952 Revolution, including most of the Yungas of La Paz, and much smaller areas in Apolo and the Yungas of Vandiola, south of Chapare, in

<sup>42</sup>Alcarez, 'Coca y cocaleros'.

<sup>43</sup>Sandra Rosemary Ramos Salazar, *Las federaciones del trópico de Cochabamba en el proceso de construcción de un instrumento político (1992–1997)* (La Paz: Instituto de Investigaciones Sociológicas 'Mauricio Lefebvre', 2012), p. 19.

<sup>44</sup>Some Andean farmers produce coca paste, the first step in transforming leaf into cocaine. However, peasant farmers generally do not produce cocaine.

<sup>45</sup>Farthing and Kohl, *Evo's Bolivia*, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup>Ramos Salazar, *Las federaciones del trópico*, p. 70; Alcarez, 'Coca y cocaleros'.

<sup>47</sup>Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca*, p. 281.

Cochabamba.<sup>48</sup> Traditional areas were limited to 12,000 hectares of planted coca that could be sold through legal markets in La Paz and in Cochabamba. Transitional zones, including most of Chapare, faced mandatory eradication with the potential for alternative development or compensation from the government. Coca in illegal areas, or most new settlements, could be eradicated without compensation. The government carried out eradication campaigns using a new US-financed militarised police force called the Unidad Móvil Policial para Áreas Rurales (Mobile Police Unit for Rural Areas, UMOPAR).<sup>49</sup>

Law 1008 fundamentally reshaped the political interests and organisational capacities of the coca growers' unions in La Paz and Chapare with consequences for CYCN implementation later on. The law protected traditional Yungas growers from eradication,<sup>50</sup> but also expanded state control of legal markets and increased pressures on traditional growers to participate in paid voluntary eradication.<sup>51</sup> Most importantly, Law 1008's limit on legal production exacerbated a growing divide between the traditional growers and non-traditional coca farmers that colonised the outskirts of the Yungas. Traditional growers sought to exclude new settlements from cultivating within the 12,000-hectare limit established under Law 1008 to protect their legal production monopoly.<sup>52</sup>

During the 1990s, conflicts between traditional and non-traditional coca growers in the Yungas of La Paz formed the basis of a conflict between ADEPCOCA, representing traditional zones, and the Consejo de Federaciones Campesinas de los Yungas de La Paz (Council of Rural Farmers' Federations of the Yungas of La Paz, COFECAY), an umbrella organisation created in 1994 incorporating all Yungas federations and serving as their representative in negotiations with the government. However, COFECAY had limited authority and regional federations with dissimilar interests continued to negotiate independently with the government on voluntary reduction agreements.<sup>53</sup> While COFECAY struggled to represent all Yungas growers, ADEPCOCA emerged as the more powerful organisation. In defence of the economic interests of *cocaleros* in traditional areas, ADEPCOCA denied licences to many *colonos* and later welcomed government efforts to demarcate the fuzzy boundaries of the traditional regions so that they could exclude new coca settlements.<sup>54</sup> Finally, from the 1980s, ADEPCOCA obstructed government plans to control coca production and commercialisation, sanctioning affiliates who voluntarily eradicated their plots or received alternative development aid.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Alessandra Pellegrini Calderón, *Beyond Indigeneity: Coca Growing and the Emergence of a New Middle Class in Bolivia* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2016), p. 116.

<sup>49</sup>Farthing, 'Social Impacts'.

<sup>50</sup>There was only one significant forced eradication event in the Yungas before 2004; see Caroline S. Conzelman, 'Yungas Coca Growers Seek Industrialization but Split on Legalization', North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), 4 Sept. 2007, available at <https://nacla.org/news/yungas-coca-growers-seek-industrialization-split-legalization>, last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>51</sup>Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca*, pp. 278, 288.

<sup>52</sup>Farthing and Ledebur, 'Habeas Coca', p. 15; Farthing and Kohl, 'Supply-Side Harm Reduction Strategies', p. 490.

<sup>53</sup>Durand Ochoa, *The Political Empowerment of the Cocaleros*, p. 102.

<sup>54</sup>Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca*, p. 279; 'Cocaleros de Chapare', *La Razón*, 26 Dec. 2011; Alcaez, 'Coca y cocaleros'.

<sup>55</sup>Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca*, pp. 278–9.

In contrast to the Yungas of La Paz, most coca grown in the Chapare region of Cochabamba was dubbed transitional and subject to mandatory eradication.<sup>56</sup> The only exception was the traditional Yungas of Vandiola, with just 736 registered coca growers in 2015.<sup>57</sup> Chapare included primarily Quechua-speaking peasants from distinct regions and some ex-miners.<sup>58</sup> In 1978, a young Morales and his family moved from the Oruro department to Chapare and eventually joined the *cocaleros*. At that time, there was no government regulation of the number of producers or the size of coca plots. However, Law 1008 initiated a period of government repression in Chapare using sustained military presence and forced eradication, which faced fierce resistance under the command of Morales, who emerged as the principal leader.

In the absence of democracy, state repression is associated with weak social movements.<sup>59</sup> However, state repression during political liberalisation can ignite and strengthen sustained protest.<sup>60</sup> In Bolivia, Law 1008 came into effect after Bolivia's 1982 transition to democracy and numerous studies document how government repression derived from Law 1008 forged the politicisation and mobilisation of Chapare unions.<sup>61</sup> A key catalyser of these developments was the influx of tin miners in Chapare who brought their experience in political militancy. However, punitive drug policies provided the main incentive for unifying the Six Federations.<sup>62</sup> In 1992, in response to state repression, the Six Federations united under one structure, the Coordinadora de las Seis Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba (Coordinator of the Six Federations of the Tropics of Cochabamba, hereafter the Coordinadora), affiliated with the national peasant organisation Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (Single Trade Union Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia, CSUTCB). The Coordinadora provided outward unity and internal discipline to mobilise the base in resistance efforts, including marches, protests and hunger strikes.<sup>63</sup>

Existing research finds that electorally secure governments in new democracies are more likely to escalate repression in response to social resistance.<sup>64</sup> Following

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>57</sup>Alvarez, 'Coca y cocaleros'. Pre-revolutionary Vandiola haciendas supplied coca to tin mines; see Fanor Meruvia Balderrama, *Historia de la coca: Los Yungas de Pocona y Titora (1550–1900)* (La Paz: Plural Editores, CERES, 2000).

<sup>58</sup>The de-nationalisation of state mines in 1985 left 22,000 miners unemployed. Author interview with *cocalero* leader from the Federación Única Centrales Unidas del Trópico de Cochabamba (United Central Federation of the Tropics of Cochabamba), 23 July 2016.

<sup>59</sup>Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 49–74.

<sup>60</sup>Paul D. Almeida, *Waves of Protest: Popular Struggle in El Salvador, 1925–2005* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

<sup>61</sup>Kevin Healy, 'Political Ascent of Bolivia's Peasant Coca Leaf Producers', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 33: 1 (1991), pp. 87–121; Durand Ochoa, *The Political Empowerment of the Cocaleros*.

<sup>62</sup>Healy, 'Political Ascent', p. 162; Durand Ochoa, *The Political Empowerment of the Cocaleros*.

<sup>63</sup>Initially, three federations affiliated with the Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia (Union Confederation of Bolivian Colonisers, CSCB) that represents lowland peasant settlers from the highlands while the other three federations belonged to the CSUTCB; Durand Ochoa, *The Political Empowerment of the Cocaleros*, pp. 101–4.

<sup>64</sup>S. Erdem Aytaç, Luis Schiumerini and Susan Stokes, 'Protests and Repression in New Democracies', *Perspectives on Politics*, 15: 1 (2017), pp. 62–82.

the crisis-plagued presidency of leftist Hernán Siles Zuazo (1982–5), the Bolivian Left was in electoral decline, leaving the Right to dominate national politics throughout the 1990s and escalate repression against Chapare growers.<sup>65</sup> The Chapare coca struggles peaked in 1998 with the initiation of Plan Dignidad (Dignity Plan), a militarised eradication campaign that reduced Chapare coca from 31,500 to 6,000 hectares, and caused the death of 25 *cocaleros* and left hundreds more injured or detained.<sup>66</sup> During this period, Morales, president of the Six Federations, led a successful grassroots resistance against repressive drug policies. In 1994, the Six Federations allied with other sectors that led to the creation of the MAS in 1998 as a mass movement and party.<sup>67</sup>

After a decade of confrontation, the Chapare *cocaleros* won a major victory with the 2004 Cato Accord during the Carlos Mesa presidency (2003–5). The accord provisionally permitted Six Federations affiliates to cultivate a *cato* of coca (1,600 square metres), immediately adding 3,200 hectares of coca for Chapare on top of the 200 hectares already permitted to traditional growers in Vandíola.<sup>68</sup> President Mesa backed the accord under pressure of extreme political instability and public outcry over violence against coca farmers.<sup>69</sup> In exchange for *cato* rights, or the legal right to cultivate up to a *cato* of coca, the government required Six Federations affiliates to register and measure their coca fields to monitor production in Chapare, something not required of traditional producers.<sup>70</sup> In addition, *cato* rights were exclusive to union members, a provision that empowered the Six Federations to extend or revoke affiliates' *cato* rights, within the regional production limit set by the national government.

In Bolivia, resistance to punitive drug policies between 1988 and 2004 coincided with broader struggles against neoliberal reforms that forced the resignation of two presidents and led to the election of Morales in December 2005.<sup>71</sup> When Morales took office, he upheld the Cato Accord and initiated CYCN, a four-pronged coca-control strategy making a sharp distinction between coca and cocaine, expanding legal coca production, enabling community-based policing of the *cato* limit, and promoting exports of industrial coca products.<sup>72</sup> The data presented in [Figure 2](#)

<sup>65</sup>Between 1985 and 2005, traditional left parties like the Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR) were in decline. The Left held power briefly when MIR President Jaime Paz Zamora (1989–1993) was elected on a coalition ticket with the rightist party Acción Democrática Nacionalista (National Democratic Action, ADN); see Enrique Ibáñez Rojo, 'The UDP Government and the Crisis of the Bolivian Left (1982–1985)', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 32: 1 (2000), pp. 175–205.

<sup>66</sup>Carlos D. Mesa Gisbert, 'Coca: Dudas, preguntas, ideas', *Los Tiempos*, 10 April 2016.

<sup>67</sup>Anria, *When Movements Become Parties*, pp. 62–9.

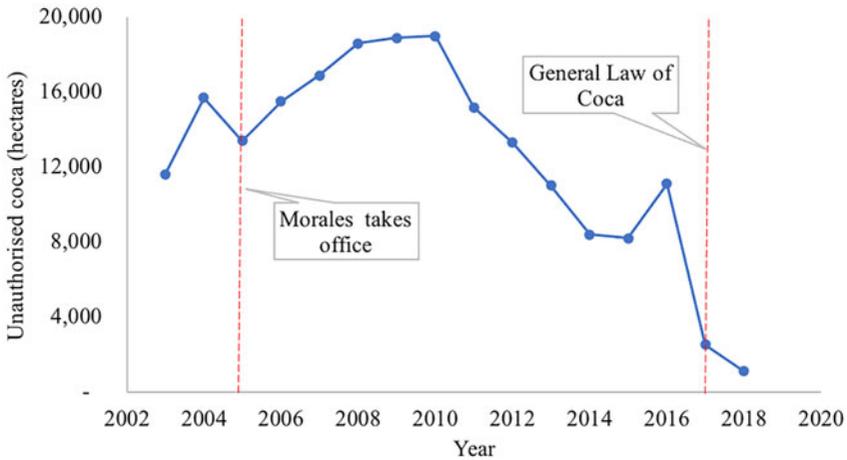
<sup>68</sup>President Morales extended the limit in Chapare to 7,000 hectares; Thomas Grisaffi, 'The Cato Accord: Bolivia's Humane and Effective Approach to Controlling Coca Cultivation', *Andean Information Network*, 8 Jan. 2016, available at <http://ain-bolivia.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Cato-Accord-Bolivia-Humane-and-Effective-Approach-to-Controlling-Coca-Cultivation.pdf>, last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>69</sup>Mesa took office after President Sánchez de Lozada (2002–3) was forced to resign; see Gutiérrez Aguilar, *Rhythms of the Pachakuti*, pp. 129–31.

<sup>70</sup>Farthing and Kohl, *Evo's Bolivia*, p. 133.

<sup>71</sup>Gutiérrez Aguilar, *Rhythms of the Pachakuti*.

<sup>72</sup>Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*; Farthing and Kohl, *Evo's Bolivia*, pp. 128–43.



**Figure 2.** Unauthorised Coca Cultivation in Bolivia (in Hectares), 2003–18

Source: UNODC, 'Bolivia Coca Cultivation Survey' (all years 2004–19); unauthorised cultivation calculated by subtracting authorised hectares from total hectares produced per year. For 2004–16, Law 1008 authorised 12,000 hectares; for 2017 and 2018, the General Law of Coca authorised 22,000 hectares.

suggests that these policies reduced unauthorised coca cultivation in Bolivia.<sup>73</sup> However, for most of his presidency, Morales worked within the parameters of Law 1008, which contradicted basic tenets of CYCN, thus creating ambiguities and deepening conflicts amongst coca growers, and in some cases between *cocalero* organisations and the MAS government.

### CYCN in the Regions

This section analyses the CYCN implementation from three angles. The first two subsections describe CYCN implementation in Cochabamba and in La Paz, respectively. The third subsection describes the replacement of Law 1008 with the General Law of Coca (Law 906) in 2017 as a contentious process that ignited an organised opposition against MAS in the Yungas of La Paz. The analysis supports two main analytical points that frame this article. First, CYCN was more successful in Chapare than in La Paz. Second, these different CYCN outcomes are linked to strong *cocalero* organisation that emerged from agrarian reform in La Paz, and from frontier colonisation in Chapare. Organisations representing traditional *cocaleros*, predominantly in La Paz, resisted CYCN because the reforms threatened the special status of traditional coca zones under Law 1008 by expanding access to legal coca markets. Conversely, 'non-traditional' *cocalero* organisations, predominantly in Chapare, embraced CYCN because it legalised coca cultivation for their sector. The success of CYCN in Chapare indicates that harm reduction

<sup>73</sup>Coletta A. Youngers and Kathryn Ledebur, 'Building on Progress: Bolivia Consolidates Achievements in Reducing Coca and Looks to Reform Decades-Old Drug Law', Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), Aug. 2015, available at [www.wola.org/sites/default/files/Drug%20Policy/WOLA-AIN%20Bolivia.FINAL.pdf](http://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/Drug%20Policy/WOLA-AIN%20Bolivia.FINAL.pdf), last access 10 May 2021; Thomas Grisaffi, 'The Cato Accord'.

works to control illicit cultivation, but effectiveness may be contingent on strong local organisations.

### **Coca Control in Cochabamba**

The success of CYCN in Chapare is linked to strong *cocalero* organisations that enforced compliance among affiliates and secured government support for alternative development. As the previous section discusses, the Six Federations derived legitimate authority from the unions' historic role as a source of local governance in frontier regions. Moreover, union authority and organisational capacity expanded during decades of resisting forced eradication under Law 1008. The Six Federations were at the centre of the social coalition that elected Morales, and primarily demanded ending forced coca eradication. As such, federation leaders supported and successfully implemented CYCN reforms, overcoming some reluctance from local farmers as well as a more organised resistance from traditional *cocaleros* in the Yungas of Vandíola.

The Six Federations' support for CYCN and local enforcement capacity was vital to the success of CYCN precisely because farmers in transitional zones faced strong incentives to defy the *cato* limit. Indeed, the Cato Accord ended the wholesale criminalisation of the area's coca farmers but a *cato* alone did not yield sufficient income for many households.<sup>74</sup> While recognising coca control as a public good that benefited the community, individual coca farmers preferred for others to bear the economic risk of reduced production.<sup>75</sup> Hence, between 2006 and 2009, widespread violations of the *cato* limit threatened to delegitimise CYCN as a coca-control strategy, and Morales' early efforts to eradicate excess coca in Chapare spurred resistance.<sup>76</sup> For Morales, the dilemma in Chapare was compelling compliance without repression, thereby appeasing both the international community and his core constituency. To accomplish this, Morales harnessed the Chapare unions' authority and political unity behind the MAS to implement a policy of 'social control', a community-based plan for enforcing the limit in the Cato Accord with minimal repression, in exchange for government-supported development projects.

The social control element of CYCN provided an innovative system of social and economic incentives for coca growers to self-regulate and self-govern, achieving coca control as a collectively beneficial outcome in the absence of force.<sup>77</sup> The federations and local unions worked with the Unidad de Desarrollo Económico y Social del Trópico de Cochabamba (Economic and Social Development Unit of the Tropics of Cochabamba, UDESTRO), a state agency managed by coca growers. Each federation and union had a social control representative, who was also the local affiliate in charge of enforcing compliance with the *cato* limit.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> 'Otra vez a lo mismo?', *El Deber*, 4 Feb. 2006.

<sup>75</sup> For more on the theory of public goods and free-riding behavior, see Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990).

<sup>76</sup> 'Cocaleros dicen que subió la droga y cultivos de coca', *La Razón*, 24 May 2008; 'Cocaleros hieren a soldados de la FTC', *Cambio*, 4 April 2008.

<sup>77</sup> See Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*.

<sup>78</sup> Author interview with *cocalero* union leader and Bolivian politician, 9 Aug. 2016.

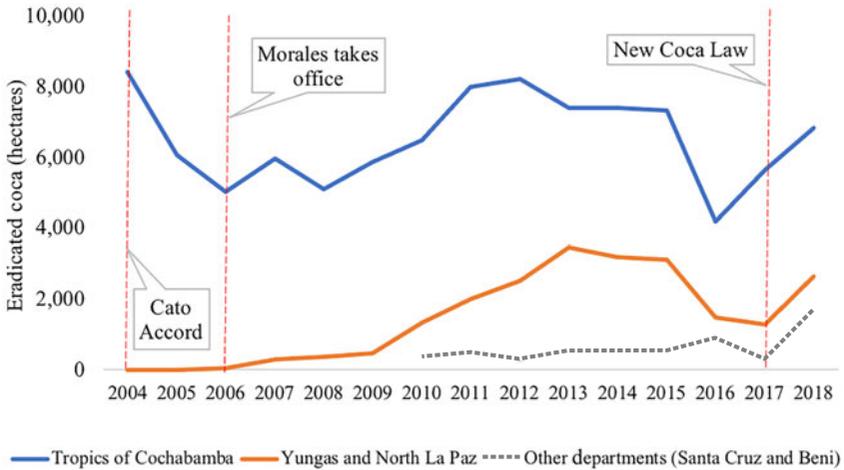


Figure 3. Coca Eradication in Bolivia by Region, 2004–18

Source: UNODC, 'Bolivia Coca Cultivation Survey' (all years 2005–19).

Periodically, union representatives visited farms and marked excess coca for eradication.

Typically, union leaders permitted violators to eradicate the surplus themselves prior to initiating a process with UDESTRO. However, when UDESTRO enforced compliance, it revoked a grower's cultivation rights for one year and the military-police Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta (Joint Task Force, FTC) eradicated the entire coca field. UDESTRO enforcement was infrequent because affiliates generally responded to union demands, making social control remarkably successful at reducing illegal coca.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, under CYCN the important change for Chapare was not how much coca was destroyed, but that eradication was done voluntarily. As Figure 3 demonstrates, while eradication increased in La Paz, more coca was destroyed voluntarily in Cochabamba.

Six Federations leaders interviewed by the author in 2016 enthusiastically supported social control and CYCN more broadly even though it meant limiting regional coca production. They considered social control protective of the Cato Accord and necessary to avoid repressive policies. One union leader who resisted alongside Morales in the 1990s explained, 'We have to demonstrate that we are cooperating ... to defend what we fought so hard to win.'<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, not all farmers agreed with union leaders on coca control.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, many Chapare residents begrudged strict *cato* enforcement. To account for widespread compliance with the *cato* limit despite some dissent, previous studies point to the authority of *cocalero* organisations.<sup>82</sup> As explained in the previous section, the coca growers'

<sup>79</sup>UNDOC, 'Bolivia Coca Cultivation Survey' (2016); 'Dirigencia cocalero realiza una auditoría a productores y catos', *Cambio*, 2 Oct. 2012; Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*, p. 139.

<sup>80</sup>Author interview with a *cocalero* leader and former director of UDESTRO, 22 July 2016.

<sup>81</sup>'Los herederos de Chapare también quieren su cato', *El Deber*, 26 Aug. 2012.

<sup>82</sup>Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*, pp. 128–49, 84–91.

unions derived authority from their historic role as sources of local governance in an otherwise stateless frontier. Moreover, affiliates directly elected union leaders, instilling their authority with even greater legitimacy. Hence, union-imposed sanctions for violations of the Cato Accord were respected albeit sometimes unpopular. Sanctions for violating the *cato* limit might include relinquishing coca cultivation rights, land confiscation and expulsion from the community.<sup>83</sup> Within the first five years of social control, the Six Federations sanctioned about 800 affiliates for violating the Cato Accord.<sup>84</sup>

Union leaders sometimes abused their authority for political purposes by silencing opposition to MAS and President Morales, who remained president of the Six Federations after taking office. For example, some *cocaleros*, including an ex-*cocalera* interviewed by the author, report that they were fined or expelled from Chapare for openly criticising MAS.<sup>85</sup> Censoring anti-MAS critics could be interpreted as an indication of MAS government 'co-optation' over union leaders. However, a closer analysis reveals that allegiance to MAS largely depended on government accountability to local *cocalero* organisations. For example, Morales ignited a small defection in 2015 when he rejected the union's mayoral candidate in Shinahota, a municipality in Chapare. While Morales and some union affiliates settled on another candidate, a group of disgruntled *cocaleros*, who were later expelled, reacted by registering their own party called Unidos por Cochabamba (United for Cochabamba, UNICO), which won a significant 28 per cent of votes compared to 66 per cent for MAS.<sup>86</sup> While Chapare unions stifled political dissent to MAS, the union base ultimately controlled MAS candidate lists, so that local MAS officials answered to the union.<sup>87</sup>

Another indicator of *cocalero* organisations' strength in Chapare is that, in contrast to previous government administrations that defaulted on promised compensation for coca eradication, the unions conditioned political support for MAS on receiving government aid for development. The Morales government allocated US\$350 million to support alternative development projects including two processing plants for exporting locally grown produce and a highway facilitating transport to regional and international markets.<sup>88</sup> These programmes supported diversified production in Chapare, even as a broader initiative to industrialise coca-based products, a major goal of CYCN, was unsuccessful. In 2006, Morales created Empresa Boliviana Comunitaria de la Hoja de Coca (Bolivian Community Company of the

<sup>83</sup>'Instruyen sanciones para cocaleros con catos demás', *Los Tiempos*, 13 June 2011; 'Chapare se diversifica para cambiar su rostro cocalero', *El Deber*, 26 July 2015.

<sup>84</sup>'Unos 800 cocaleros perdieron cultivos por infringirlos límites del "cato" de coca', *Opinión*, 25 July 2014.

<sup>85</sup>Author interview with ex-*cocalera* in Sacaba, 10 July 2016; also see Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*, pp. 84–102, 155, 163, 170; 'Ex cocaleros: Dictadura sindical de Evo Morales impera en el Chapare', *Agencia de Noticias Fides*, 11 April 2001, available at [www.noticiasfides.com/nacional/politica/ex-cocaleros-dictadura-sindical-de-evo-morales-impera-en-el-chapare-63624](http://www.noticiasfides.com/nacional/politica/ex-cocaleros-dictadura-sindical-de-evo-morales-impera-en-el-chapare-63624), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>86</sup>'Cocaleros deciden quitar cato a disidentes del MAS en Chapare', *RC Noticias*, 29 April 2015, available at <http://derechos.org/nizkor/bolivia/doc/cochabamba2.html>, last access 10 May 2021; Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*, p. 170.

<sup>87</sup>Also see *ibid.*, pp. 150–72.

<sup>88</sup>Youngers and Ledebur, 'Building on Progress'; 'Chapare se diversifica para cambiar su rostro cocalero', *El Deber*, 26 July 2015.

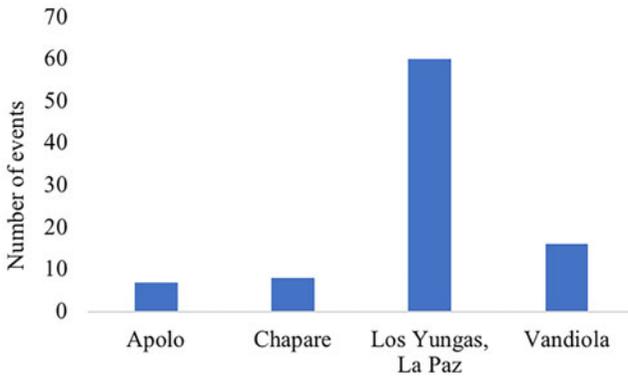


Figure 4. Reports of Forced Eradication Events by Region in Bolivia, 2006–16

Source: Author's elaboration based on data compiled from national Bolivian newspapers between 2006 and 2016 archived at CEDIB.

Coca Leaf, EBOCOCA) and built a plant in Chapare to produce coca-based commodities (e.g. coca cookies and toothpaste). EBOCOCA initiated production in 2008 under the management of the Six Federations. However, national demand was not enough for generating profits and plans to export coca-based products failed despite Morales' efforts to decriminalise coca leaf at the international level.<sup>89</sup>

Despite its shortcomings, pundits celebrated the combination of social control and alternative development for having successfully reduced coca output and repression in Chapare. Linda Farthing and Kathryn Ledebur claim that 88 per cent of coca eradication in Bolivia between 2006 and 2013 was cooperative.<sup>90</sup> However, social control did not end forced eradication for traditional *cocaleros* in the Yungas of Vandiola.<sup>91</sup> As Figure 4 shows, Bolivian newspapers reported 16 forced eradication events in Vandiola between 2006 and 2016. The government claimed the eradication in Vandiola protected a nearby nature reserve but also admitted to destroying coca fields that exceeded one *cato*.<sup>92</sup> Vandiola leaders maintained that as a traditional zone, they were not subject to the *cato* limit. They viewed eradications as a politically motivated attack on traditional *cocaleros*, and they resisted eradication teams.<sup>93</sup> For example, in 2006, about 200 *cocaleros* confronted eradicators in Totora, a historical coca market, threatening them with dynamite,

<sup>89</sup> 'Analizan traspaso de Ebo Coca; funciona a medias', *Los Tiempos*, 14 March 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Linda Farthing and Kathryn Ledebur, 'To the Beat of a Different Drum: Bolivia's Community Coca Control', North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), 17 June 2014, available at <https://nacla.org/article/beat-different-drum-bolivia%27s-community-coca-control>, last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>91</sup> 'Cocaleros amenazan con frenar erradicación', *Los Tiempos*, 13 Aug. 2014.

<sup>92</sup> Bolivian environmental regulations prohibit coca cultivation in national parks. Even so, in 2006 about 28 per cent of coca was cultivated in national parks near Apolo and the Yungas of Vandiola; 'Cocaleros dicen que subió la droga', *La Razón*, 24 May 2008.

<sup>93</sup> Author interview with Professor Carlos Crespo, University of San Simón, Cochabamba (UMSS), 9 Aug. 2016; author interview with the executive of the Federación de los Yungas Tradicionales de Vandiola (Traditional Yungas Vandiola Federation), 17 Aug. 2016.

machetes and sticks.<sup>94</sup> Months later, two coca farmers were killed during a similar clash in a nearby village.<sup>95</sup> In June 2012, the FTC eradicated 400 *catos* of coca in the Vandiola community of Machu Yungas, causing 100 *cocaleros* to block the road to Santa Cruz and threaten to close the gas valve that supplied the city of Cochabamba.<sup>96</sup>

The forced eradication in Vandiola was carried out with the support of the Six Federations, whose leaders were from non-traditional zones. Animosity between traditional Vandiola and the larger community of Chapare *cocaleros* began with the Cato Accord, which caused bitter disputes over the distribution of legal coca.<sup>97</sup> The main Vandiola organisation leading the resistance to CYCN was the Coordinadora de los Cocaleros de los Yungas de Vandiola (Coordinator of the Coca Producers of the Yungas of Vandiola), a dissident *cocalero* organisation within the Six Federations representing four *centrales* that together claimed 785 affiliates compared to 46,000 affiliates within the Six Federations.<sup>98</sup> Vandiola unions lacked capacity to avoid *cato*-isation of their fields and most Vandiola *cocaleros* eventually conceded to the *cato* limit, thereby giving up Law 1008 protections.<sup>99</sup>

### **Coca Control in La Paz**

Compared to Chapare, there is less research on CYCN in La Paz. This is problematic because La Paz includes the largest number of coca growers overall and the highest quantity of traditional growers, who were positioned differently under Law 1008. CYCN was less successful in La Paz precisely because traditional *cocaleros* in control of ADEPCOCA constrained government efforts to implement a uniform coca-control policy across the national territory. In particular, ADEPCOCA leaders claimed Law 1008 protections to resist the *cato* limit and social control in their areas, and also opposed state efforts to extend legal coca cultivation in non-traditional zones. However, ADEPCOCA supported government enforcement of a larger *cato* of 2,500 square metres for the majority of Yungas *cocaleros* settled in transitional zones.<sup>100</sup>

*Cocalero* unions in La Paz were powerful organisations that emerged out of the 1953 Agrarian Reform and later organised ADEPCOCA to resist government efforts to regulate coca production and commercialisation in the region. While ADEPCOCA opposed Law 1008 provisions that expanded state control in the domestic coca market, its affiliates benefited from protection for traditional coca zones. Hence, in the 2005 election many Yungas traditional *cocaleros* favoured

<sup>94</sup>'Gobierno evita un enfrentamiento mayor', *Opinión*, 3 Feb. 2006; '¿Otra vez a lo mismo?', *El Deber*, 4 Feb. 2006.

<sup>95</sup>'Indemnización para víctimas de Vandiola', *Los Tiempos*, 15 Nov. 2007.

<sup>96</sup>'Cocaleros de Yungas de Vandiola bloquean la carretera a Sucre', *Los Tiempos*, 20 June 2012.

<sup>97</sup>Author interview with executive of the Federación de los Yungas Tradicionales de Vandiola, 17 Aug. 2016.

<sup>98</sup>Alvarez, 'Coca y cocaleros'; 'Cocaleros amenazan con frenar erradicación', *Los Tiempos*, 13 Aug. 2014.

<sup>99</sup>Some Vandiola *cocaleros*, such as a contingent from Tiraque, continued to plant more than a *cato*, and their coca fields were subsequently eradicated. Author interview with executive of the Federación de los Yungas Tradicionales de Vandiola, 17 Aug. 2016; 'Cocaleros van al diálogo sin levantar huelga', *Los Tiempos*, 9 Dec. 2014; Farthing and Ledebur, 'Habeas Coca', p. 48.

<sup>100</sup>'Los productores tradicionales de coca de Yungas rechazan el cato', *La Prensa*, 19 Aug. 2008.

presidential candidate Jorge Quiroga of the party Acción Democrática Nacionalista (National Democratic Action, ADN) over Morales based on Quiroga's defence of Law 1008 against Morales' promised reform.<sup>101</sup> However, after Morales took office in 2006, Yungas federation leaders met with the president to consider a government plan to reduce coca cultivation in the region. After all, at that point coca production in the Yungas far exceeded the 12,000 hectares permitted under Law 1008.<sup>102</sup> Rather than impose government control, thereby stoking resistance, President Morales proposed a 'concerted voluntary reduction' of coca in the Yungas, but his strategy had limited success.<sup>103</sup>

In the first place, ADEPCOCA outright rejected the *cato* limit in traditional zones, and the government conceded.<sup>104</sup> Yungas leaders argued that imposing the *cato* limit would de facto eliminate the legal distinction between traditional and non-traditional areas established under Law 1008. Moreover, efforts to implement social control were less successful in La Paz because the Yungas federations lacked the capacity, and the will, to monitor their affiliates' coca fields.<sup>105</sup> As described in section two, historically the Yungas federations did not intervene in the affiliates' productive activities and, while ADEPCOCA required affiliates to self-report their coca production, there was no policing of their fields.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, the Yungas federations' reluctance to self-police coca production during the early years of the MAS government is evidenced by the uncontrolled expansion of Yungas coca to nearly 19,000 hectares by 2008.<sup>107</sup>

In addition, Morales faced obstacles to controlling coca production in the Yungas related to conflicts between and within the region's *cocalero* organisations that were in turn directly linked to divisions between traditional and non-traditional *cocaleros* caused by Law 1008. In contrast to Chapare, where the unity of the Six Federations facilitated negotiations and helped ensure compliance, the Yungas federations were more loosely united under COFECAY, which included 30,000 affiliates from both traditional (ex-hacienda) and non-traditional areas that diverged with respect to support for CYCN and MAS.<sup>108</sup> The internal division at times debilitated COFECAY leaders' ability to identify a cohesive regional interest, and local unions in the Yungas sometimes bypassed COFECAY altogether to negotiate directly with the government. For example, in 2007, leaders from Río Antofagasta in traditional Arapata separately conceded to the *cato* limit for their affiliates in exchange for remuneration, even though the deal was later abandoned.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>101</sup>Conzelman, 'Yungas Coca Growers'; Pellegrini Calderón, *Beyond Indigeneity*, pp. 48–9, 107, 114–15.

<sup>102</sup>UNODC and Government of Bolivia, 'Bolivia Coca Cultivation Survey' (2009), available at [www.unodc.org/documents/cropmonitoring/Bolivia/Bolivia\\_Coca\\_Survey\\_for2008\\_En.pdf.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/cropmonitoring/Bolivia/Bolivia_Coca_Survey_for2008_En.pdf.pdf), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>103</sup>'EE. UU. duda de compromiso de cocaleros', *Los Tiempos*, 24 May 2006.

<sup>104</sup>'Los productores tradicionales de coca', *La Prensa*, 19 Aug. 2008.

<sup>105</sup>Farthing and Kohl, 'Supply-Side Harm Reduction Strategies', p. 490.

<sup>106</sup>Spedding, *Kawsachun Coca*, p. 278.

<sup>107</sup>By 2018, production was significantly reduced but still above the lawful limit at 15,015 hectares; UNODC, 'Bolivia Coca Survey' (2009); UNODC, 'Bolivia Informe Monitoreo Coca, 2018'.

<sup>108</sup>Farthing and Kohl, 'Supply-Side Harm Reduction Strategies', p. 491.

<sup>109</sup>'Cocaleros piden reparación por hoja erradicada', *La Prensa*, 10 Jan. 2007; 'Cocaleros ocupan instalaciones del Viceministerio de la Coca', *El Diario*, 22 March 2007.

The presence of ADEPCOCA further exacerbated regional disunity among *cocaleros* in the Yungas. With only about 15,000 members, predominantly from traditional zones, ADEPCOCA had a narrower mandate than COFECAY.<sup>110</sup> Representing broader regional interests, COFECAY was more open to compromise with government representatives and sometimes entered into coca-reduction agreements or other negotiations that ADEPCOCA opposed.<sup>111</sup> ADEPCOCA at times dismissed COFECAY leaders as too loyal to MAS and considered them ‘... controlled by the government’.<sup>112</sup> At other times, ADEPCOCA supported involuntary eradication of non-traditional coca not authorised by COFECAY.<sup>113</sup> While COFECAY was generally an ally, Morales could not overcome ADEPCOCA opposition to implement the *cato* limit and social control in all of the Yungas of La Paz. Further, ADEPCOCA stonewalled government plans to regulate and open up the coca market with reforms such as Resolution 89 that required coca retailers to obtain a monthly quota of leaf from Chapare producers, and Resolution 427 that reduced the legal limit on individual coca sales in the Yungas (but was later annulled).<sup>114</sup> In other areas, ADEPCOCA protested what it considered a lack of government support for infrastructure, education, health, economic projects and especially an industrial plant for coca-based products in the Yungas.<sup>115</sup>

Indeed, ADEPCOCA undercut government initiatives that threatened traditional *cocaleros*’ interests but it was also instrumental for successfully implementing government policies that benefited its social base. In August 2008, the Morales government and ADEPCOCA agreed that areas outside the traditional ex-hacienda municipalities were subject to a *cato* limit of 2,500 square metres, more extensive than the 1,600 metres permitted in Chapare because, ADEPCOCA argued, coca fields have a lower yield in the Yungas.<sup>116</sup> A month later, the government began collecting biometric information for a registry of coca growers in the Yungas and strictly delimited the traditional coca area to impose the *cato* limit (2,500 square metres) in outlying zones.<sup>117</sup> In 2014, ADEPCOCA authorised a similar registry of legal growers in Apolo, but government representatives faced resistance from protestors. ADEPCOCA denounced the demonstrations, reaffirming that the ‘legitimate traditional producers’ were in agreement with eliminating new farms.<sup>118</sup>

The biometric registry increased forced eradication and social unrest in La Paz. In fact, the Yungas experienced the highest number of reported resistance events related to coca eradication between 2006 and 2016 (see [Figure 4](#)). Supported by

<sup>110</sup>Farthing and Kohl, ‘Supply-Side Harm Reduction Strategies’, p. 491.

<sup>111</sup>‘Unresolved Equilibrium: Yungas Coca Growers Test Bolivian Government’, *Andean Information Network*, 19 Oct. 2010; ‘Cocaleros no ceden y Gobierno califica a bloqueo de “político”’, *El Diario*, 14 Oct. 2010.

<sup>112</sup>‘Cáceres intenta frenar protestas de cocaleros’, *El Deber*, 30 Jan. 2013.

<sup>113</sup>‘Cocaleros de Nor Yungas rechazan la erradicación’, *La Razón*, 28 Aug. 2015.

<sup>114</sup>‘Cocaleros de Yungas se sienten discriminados por el Gobierno’, *La Prensa*, 9 Oct. 2009; ‘Cocaleros no ceden’, *El Diario*, 14 Oct. 2010.

<sup>115</sup>Wilson Aguilar, ‘Gobierno detiene a 39 cocaleros que pretendían bloquear vías en Yungas’, *Los Tiempos*, 11 Feb. 2016.

<sup>116</sup>‘Los productores tradicionales de coca’, *La Prensa*, 19 Aug. 2008.

<sup>117</sup>‘Cocaleros de “La Asunta” impiden concluir delimitación de cultivos’, *El Diario*, 2 Sept. 2008.

<sup>118</sup>‘Gobierno reabrirá el registro de los cocaleros de Apolo’, *La Razón*, 4 June 2013.

ADEPCOCA, most eradication occurred outside the traditional ‘coca belt’.<sup>119</sup> Some of the most intense eradication took place in the municipality of La Asunta, a non-traditional coca community impacted by eradication and related social unrest as early as 2008. One MAS deputy in Congress, echoing a bygone era, proclaimed that La Asunta growers were ‘obligated by international treaty’ to eradicate.<sup>120</sup> In response, La Asunta growers initiated a march to La Paz in April of 2008 and threatened other forms of resistance. They argued that their coca supplied the legal market (in contrast to Chapare) and criticised the Morales government for favouring Chapare farmers who have the same legal status under Law 1008 as non-traditional *cocaleros* of the Yungas.<sup>121</sup>

Predictably, ADEPCOCA did not support La Asunta growers in their struggles against forced eradication. La Asunta leaders told the press that ADEPCOCA had ‘... sold out to the government’.<sup>122</sup> Meanwhile, more than a thousand La Asunta growers descended on the capital city of La Paz, forming a ‘human carpet’ at the doorstep of the Ministerio de Desarrollo Rural (Ministry of Rural Development), demanding that their coca be protected and encouraging government eradication in other non-traditional zones such as Caranavi and Palos Blancos, and areas of expanding coca production in Apolo.<sup>123</sup> Eventually, forced eradication extended to all of these zones, thus galvanising broader resistance which sometimes turned violent. For example, Caranavi *cocaleros* planted crude explosives called *cazabobos* in their coca fields to deter eradication teams.<sup>124</sup> In Palos Blancos, protestors ambushed eradication teams, causing injuries and the arrest of 13 coca farmers in 2010.<sup>125</sup>

Local struggles over CYCN implementation in the Yungas contributed to eroding electoral support for the MAS, with implications for the 2019 political crisis that led to Morales’ forced resignation. As Figure 5 shows, the Yungas of La Paz supported MAS in the 2014 national elections with strong majorities, but support for Morales declined in the 2016 referendum to vote on a constitutional amendment that would allow Morales to run for a third term. Some of the decline between 2014 and 2016 reflects concern for conserving constitutional term limits and not a decline in support for MAS. However, it is notable that national support for the incumbent MAS declined by 12 points between 2014 and 2016 compared to higher losses of 23 and 17 points in the Nor and Sud Yungas, respectively.

In addition, in the 2015 subnational elections, several new parties contested MAS dominance in the region. For example, the centre-left party Soberanía y Libertad para Bolivia (Sovereignty and Liberty for Bolivia, SOL.bo) won the gubernatorial race for La Paz with competitive vote shares in Yungas provinces.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>119</sup>UNODC and Government of Bolivia, ‘Bolivia Coca Cultivation Survey’ (2007), available at [www.unodc.org/pdf/research/icmp/bolivia\\_2006\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/icmp/bolivia_2006_en_web.pdf), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>120</sup>‘Sube la presión de los cocaleros con una marcha’, *La Razón*, 26 April 2008.

<sup>121</sup>Rainsford, ‘Bolivia Coca Growers’.

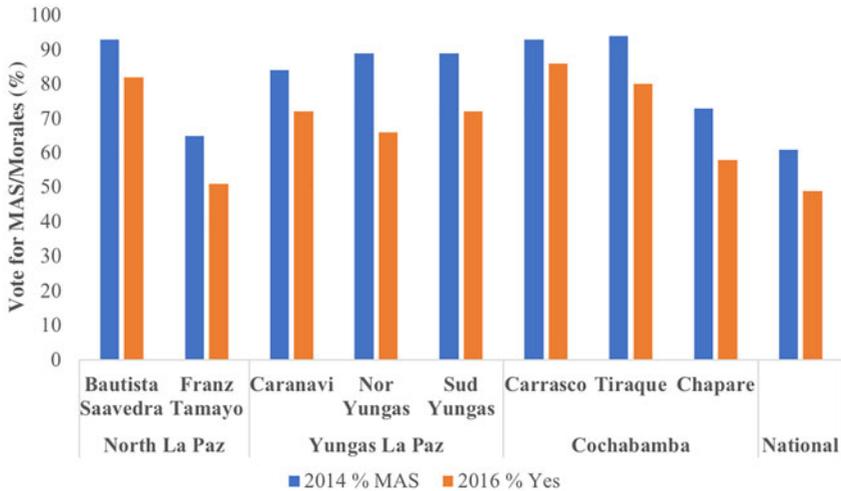
<sup>122</sup>‘Cocaleros de “La Asunta”’, *El Diario*, 2 Sept. 2008.

<sup>123</sup>‘Gobierno y cocaleros, enfrentado’, *El Diario*, 28 April 2008.

<sup>124</sup>‘Caranavi deslinda responsabilidad’, *La Prensa*, 13 Aug. 2011.

<sup>125</sup>‘Gobierno minimiza ultimátum cocalero’, *Los Tiempos*, 7 Dec. 2010.

<sup>126</sup>Órgano Electoral Plurinacional (OEP), *Atlas Electoral de Bolivia, Tomo IV* (La Paz: OEP, 2017), pp. 59, 211.



**Figure 5.** Support for MAS and Morales in Coca Regions, 2014–16

Notes: 2014 data captures support for MAS in the presidential election; 2016 data captures support for Morales running for a fourth term in 2019. Chapare is skewed downward by Sacaba, an outlier municipality located near Cochabamba city.

Source: OEP, *Atlas Electoral de Bolivia*, Tomo IV, pp. 14, 35–8, 41–2, 376, 379–82.

Likewise, the leftist Movimiento por la Soberanía (Movement for Sovereignty, MPS) party, formed by MAS dissidents, won the mayoral election in the Caranavi municipality of Alto Beni.<sup>127</sup> In the run-up to national elections planned for May 2020 (but later postponed until October), the MPS allied with the MNR to back Quiroga for president. Quiroga was vice-president during Plan Dignidad (1998–2001), and the 2005 presidential candidate who appealed to traditional *cocaleros* in La Paz by defending Law 1008.<sup>128</sup>

The strongest signal of declining support for MAS among Yungas traditional *cocaleros* in 2015 was ADEPCOCA's registration as a political party and presentation of candidates in traditional municipalities. Indeed, ADEPCOCA leaders aspired to form a Yungas-based party, thus resembling MAS' trajectory that emerged out of the resistance movement.<sup>129</sup> ADEPCOCA did not claim electoral victories in 2015. This may be because, despite conflicts, traditional *cocaleros* had not yet experienced significant losses linked to CYCN. ADEPCOCA had, up to that point, successfully evoked Law 1008 to oppose the *cato* limit in its communities, sometimes by taking direct actions to challenge the law. However, the 2017 General Law of Coca (Law 906) solidified a more visible opposition in the Yungas.

<sup>127</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 211; Anria, *When Movements Become Parties*, p. 125 (footnote).

<sup>128</sup>El MNR y el Movimiento por la Soberanía presentan la primera alianza de cara a las elecciones', *Opinión*, 13 May 2020, available at [www.opinion.com.bo/articulo/pais/mnr-movimiento-soberania-presentan-primera-alianza-cara-elecciones/20200124172133747536.html](http://www.opinion.com.bo/articulo/pais/mnr-movimiento-soberania-presentan-primera-alianza-cara-elecciones/20200124172133747536.html), last access 10 May 2021; Conzelman, 'Yungas Coca Growers'.

<sup>129</sup>'Cocaleros de La Paz buscan crear su partido', *La Prensa*, 7 March 2010; OEP, *Atlas Electoral de Bolivia*, Tomo IV, p. 519.

### The General Law of Coca

The 2017 General Law of Coca (Law 906) exacerbated the divide between traditional and non-traditional *cocalero* communities with respect to CYCN while also revealing the power of *cocalero* organisations in national drug policy. While widely unpopular, Law 1008 was politically difficult to overturn because the contents of a new law were bitterly contested between *cocalero* communities. The process sparked protests and a new ADEPCOCA leadership that excluded MAS loyalists.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, while the traditional far-right opposition in Santa Cruz and Sucre was the main force behind Morales' ousting in 2019, there were opposition pockets in some former MAS strongholds, including the Yungas of La Paz. ADEPCOCA organised anti-government protests that sparked violent confrontations between demonstrators and state forces and caused widespread unrest in the Yungas within months of the contentious 2019 election.<sup>131</sup>

For traditional Yungas *cocaleros* represented by ADEPCOCA, the 2017 General Law of Coca that replaced Law 1008 directly threatened their privileged position among Bolivian coca growers, which was a direct consequence of divisions created under the US-imposed Law 1008.<sup>132</sup> Law 906 resulted from a lengthy and combative, but also robust and democratic, public discussion with direct participation of *cocalero* organisations that pitted traditional farmers from La Paz against the Chapare sector. The debate revolved around key issues including the expansion of legal coca and the extent of government regulation of coca production and commercialisation. Each group, represented by its regional organisation, attempted to shape the law to conform to its sectoral interests.<sup>133</sup> La Paz *cocaleros* represented by ADEPCOCA envisioned a law restoring the privileged status of traditional areas. While rejecting government regulation of *their* coca, ADEPCOCA members supported a strong state role outside traditional zones, including harsh criminal penalties for coca in 'unauthorised zones'.<sup>134</sup>

Indeed, the highest priority for traditional growers in La Paz was to ensure the new law did not permit further expansion of legal production. ADEPCOCA leaders considered CYCN a 'pro-Chapare system' that, among other things, increased legal production to benefit Chapare.<sup>135</sup> Alessandra Pellegrini Calderón describes the Yungas position on the new law: 'Yungueños want to be those who cultivate coca, those who trade it, and those who industrialise it, those who do research on it, and ... those who give licences and permits.'<sup>136</sup> ADEPCOCA's proposed

<sup>130</sup>Rainsford, 'Bolivia Coca Growers'.

<sup>131</sup>Gram Slattery and Manuel Seoane, 'Bolivia's Indigenous Divided over Ousted Champion Morales', *Reuters*, 21 Nov. 2019, available at [www.reuters.com/article/us-bolivia-election-indigenous/bolivias-indigenous-divided-over-ousted-champion-morales-idUSKBN1XV17M](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-bolivia-election-indigenous/bolivias-indigenous-divided-over-ousted-champion-morales-idUSKBN1XV17M), last access 10 May 2021; Rafael Puente, '¿Guerra entre cocaleros?', *El País*, 12 July 2019, available at <https://elpais.bo/guerra-entre-cocaleros/>, last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>132</sup>Pellegrini Calderón, *Beyond Indigeneity*, p. 116.

<sup>133</sup>Franz Chávez, 'Bolivia Passes Controversial New Bill Expanding Legal Coca Production', *Inter-Press Services*, La Paz, 9 March 2017, available at [www.ipsnews.net/2017/03/bolivia-passes-controversial-new-bill-expanding-legal-coca-production/](http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/03/bolivia-passes-controversial-new-bill-expanding-legal-coca-production/), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>134</sup>'Congreso cocalero verá Ley General de la Coca', *Cambio*, 27 Aug. 2012.

<sup>135</sup>Pellegrini Calderón, *Beyond Indigeneity*, p. 116.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*

law distinguished two zones, those that are *originario* (originary; a term meaning Indigenous) to include only areas of La Paz and Vandíola where coca was produced before 1953, and *no originario* (non-originary) to include Chapare and expansion areas of La Paz. ADEPCOCA proposed that government regulation, including social control, be limited to *no originario* communities.<sup>137</sup>

In contrast, the Chapare federations' proposed law called for a legal limit of 20,000 hectares of coca, which included 7,000 hectares gained under the Cato Accord for Chapare and 13,000 hectares of legal coca for the Yungas of La Paz and Vandíola.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, the Chapare law proposition recognised all *cocaleros* as *originarios* with the same legal status.<sup>139</sup> Importantly, the Six Federations conditioned their electoral support for MAS on the expansion of legal coca, a strategy that assured the approval of additional hectares, while also providing further evidence of the power *cocalero* organisations had to shape national policy.<sup>140</sup>

The final promulgation of Law 906, enacted in March 2017, strongly conformed to the Chapare version, thereby illustrating the Six Federations' strong political influence on the Morales government. The promulgated General Law equalised the status of all coca growers and initially granted Chapare's proposed expansion to 20,000 hectares. However, that limit was later increased to 22,000 hectares, distributing 14,300 to La Paz regions and 7,700 to Chapare. The latter was in response to protests by non-traditional Yungas growers, represented by COFECAY, who argued that the new law disproportionately favoured Chapare.<sup>141</sup> The expansion accounted for the number of registered growers, but it was controversial because earlier studies estimated domestic demand for coca leaf in Bolivia at 14,700 hectares, considerably less than the 22,000 hectares permitted under the new law.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to expanding legal production, Law 906 also expanded government authority to eradicate illegal coca exceeding the limit in any authorised zone, traditional or non-traditional, and to destroy all coca in 'unauthorised' areas. In this way, Law 906 increased state authority to provide access to legal coca markets for more farmers, a collective good that was previously thwarted by traditional *cocalero* organisations. However, the new law broke the already tenuous relationship between ADEPCOCA and MAS. In May 2018, ADEPCOCA registered its executive leader, Franklin Gutiérrez, as a candidate for president in the 2019 election to challenge President Morales. Gutiérrez promised to eradicate all surplus coca in Chapare.<sup>143</sup> However, in August 2018, Gutiérrez was arrested after a group of ADEPCOCA affiliates ambushed coca eradicators in La Asunta, resulting in the

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 112, 115.

<sup>138</sup>'Cocaleros garantizan ley hasta diciembre', *Los Tiempos*, 8 May 2015; 'Alistan ley de coca para octubre', *Los Tiempos*, 12 Aug. 2015.

<sup>139</sup>'Hay posturas encontradas entre los cocaleros', *Página Siete*, 2 July 2011.

<sup>140</sup>'Legalizar 20 mil ha de coca, la tarea de candidatos cocaleros', *Página Siete*, 22 Aug. 2014.

<sup>141</sup>'Bolivia legalizará 22.000 hectáreas de coca tras la presión de los cocaleros', *Agencia EFE*, 23 Feb. 2017, available at [www.efe.com/efe/america/politica/bolivia-legalizara-22-000-hectareas-de-coca-tras-la-presion-los-cocaleros/20000035-3188774#](http://www.efe.com/efe/america/politica/bolivia-legalizara-22-000-hectareas-de-coca-tras-la-presion-los-cocaleros/20000035-3188774#), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>142</sup>A 2014 European Union study estimated 14,705 hectares of coca were needed for domestic consumption; 'Editorial: Acerca de los cocaleros', *La Prensa*, 15 Jan. 2013.

<sup>143</sup>'Franklin Gutiérrez promete erradicar la coca ilegal del Chapare si es elegido presidente', *Los Tiempos*, 18 May 2018, available at [www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/pais/20180518/franklin-gutierrez-promete-erradicar-coca-ilegal-del-chapare-si-es-elegido](http://www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/pais/20180518/franklin-gutierrez-promete-erradicar-coca-ilegal-del-chapare-si-es-elegido), last access 10 May 2021.

death of a drug-enforcement officer. Several ADEPCOCA leaders were detained, and Gutiérrez was later charged with the officer's murder, although he and his supporters insisted on his innocence and maintained that he was a political prisoner.<sup>144</sup>

Gutiérrez's imprisonment fuelled more protest in the Yungas of La Paz in the months prior to the contested 2019 election. MAS won the election by a slim margin, leading to allegations of electoral fraud and widespread social unrest resulting in Morales' forced resignation on 11 November 2019. Two days after proclaiming herself interim president, Jeanine Áñez, an opposition leader and former senator of the rightist party Movimiento Demócrata Social (Social Democratic Movement), released Gutiérrez from prison on 14 November 2019.<sup>145</sup> In December 2019, as the Áñez government brutally repressed anti-government protests in Chapare, killing ten people,<sup>146</sup> Gutiérrez and other ADEPCOCA leaders met with President Áñez, signalling potential support for the new government in exchange for the repeal of the General Law of Coca.<sup>147</sup>

## Conclusion and Implications

Bolivia's CYCN drug-policy programme was remarkably successful at controlling coca production in certain regions and benefitting historically marginalised communities, yet its effect was not homogeneous for other regions. This study finds that the strength of local coca organisations was instrumental in shaping different policy outcomes at the local level. CYCN was successful in areas where *cocalero* organisations were unified and committed to reform, and less successful in areas where *cocalero* organisations resisted reforms that threatened the interests of coca farmers. These findings have implications for two research programmes on social movements in the MAS government and CYCN impacts on living standards in coca regions, while also contributing policy lessons for drug-producing countries.

First, the main finding that *cocalero* organisations influenced matters of national coca policy contradicts a prevailing view that MAS abandoned its social-movement roots after taking power.<sup>148</sup> Indeed, demonstrating the power of social organisations, ADEPCOCA, a small regional organisation with only 15,000 members, successfully blocked a *cato* limit in traditional areas of La Paz, and resisted President Morales' ambition to overturn Law 1008 for over a decade. When, after years of consultation with *cocalero* organisations, Law 1008 was finally overturned, ADEPCOCA led an organised resistance against the MAS government.

<sup>144</sup>Rainsford, 'Bolivia Coca Growers'.

<sup>145</sup>'Coca Growers' Leader Calls for Unity in Bolivia amid Political Turmoil', *Agencia EFE*, 26 Nov. 2019, available at [www.efe.com/efe/english/world/coca-growers-leader-calls-for-unity-in-bolivia-amid-political-turmoil/50000262-4119995](http://www.efe.com/efe/english/world/coca-growers-leader-calls-for-unity-in-bolivia-amid-political-turmoil/50000262-4119995), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>146</sup>Angela Davis, Noam Chomsky, Molly Crabapple and John Pilger, 'Repressive Violence is Sweeping Bolivia: The Áñez Regime Must Be Held To Account', *The Guardian*, 24 Nov. 2019, available at [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/24/bolivia-anez-regime-violence](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/nov/24/bolivia-anez-regime-violence), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>147</sup>Áñez compromete apoyo del Ministerio de Justicia para productores de Adepcoca', *Los Tiempos*, 4 Dec. 2019, available at [www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/pais/20191204/anez-compromete-apoyo-del-ministerio-justicia-productores-adepcoca](http://www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/pais/20191204/anez-compromete-apoyo-del-ministerio-justicia-productores-adepcoca), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>148</sup>McNelly, 'The Incorporation of Social Organizations'; Laserna, 'El caudillismo fragmentado'.

Second, this article's analysis supports earlier studies that link CYCN to improved living standards for non-traditional *cocaleros* in Chapare.<sup>149</sup> However, by taking a more comparative approach that includes traditional zones, the study uncovers important negative political and social impacts. Above all, the empirical sections show how CYCN triggered a contentious zero-sum game that pitted *cocaleros* against *cocaleros*. This happened because the reforms expanded access to a small domestic market for legal coca in a context of continued international pressure to control total coca production. The resulting distributional conflict exacerbated divisions between traditional and non-traditional *cocaleros* created by Law 1008. In addition, CYCN increased pressure to enforce production limits in traditional zones thereby igniting social unrest.

Finally, this article's central findings contribute policy lessons for drug-producing countries. While punitive drug policies prevail internationally, the Bolivian experience shows that illicit cultivation can be controlled without repression. However, policy success was contingent on the distinctive organisational strength and political capacity of Bolivian coca farmers. In contrast to Bolivia, in Peru and Colombia local support for voluntary eradication of illicit coca is often undercut by the political marginalisation of coca farmers. For example, in 2019, Peruvian *cocaleros* proposed a coca-reduction plan mirroring the 'Bolivian model' that would limit production to one and a half hectares per affiliate with self-policing, but the Peruvian government disregarded the plan and expanded forced eradication anyway.<sup>150</sup> Likewise, nearly 100,000 Colombian *cocaleros* eagerly signed on to a 2016 voluntary coca-eradication programme that promised direct compensation and technical assistance to farmers who eradicated their fields, but the Colombian government failed to follow through with the support in some regions, contributing to a steep rise in coca cultivation in Colombia after 2016.<sup>151</sup>

In closing, Bolivia's experimental CYCN mollified the most pernicious domestic effects of the drug war derived from punitive approaches. In a context of unrelenting international pressure to crack down, CYCN presented a promising alternative to repressive national drug policies. Nonetheless, the 2019 political crisis permitted opponents of MAS to rapidly dismantle the CYCN framework, revealing the programme's vulnerability to counter-reform. During a short term in power, President Áñez closed legal coca markets, usurped control over producer licences and used military force to subdue *cocalero* protests.<sup>152</sup> In new elections held in October 2020, MAS presidential candidate Luis Arce won with strong support, ushering in hope of a revived CYCN. However, President Arce took office amid a rapid expansion of drug trafficking in Bolivia that renewed international pressure to

<sup>149</sup>Grisaffi *et al.*, 'Integrated Development with Coca'; Grisaffi, *Coca Yes, Cocaine No*.

<sup>150</sup>Kathryn Ledebur and Thomas Grisaffi, 'Bullets in lieu of Dialogue: Coca Eradication in Peru's Central Jungle', *Andean Information Network*, 4 Nov. 2019.

<sup>151</sup>Felipe Puerta and Maria Paula Chaparro, 'A Death Foretold: Colombia's Crop Substitution Program', *InSight Crime*, 1 April 2019, available at [www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/a-death-foretold-colombias-crop-substitution-program/](http://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/a-death-foretold-colombias-crop-substitution-program/), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>152</sup>UNODC, 'COVID-19 and the Drug Supply Chain: From Production and Trafficking to Use', May 2020, available at <http://ain-bolivia.org/2020/05/analysis-on-covid-19-and-the-drug-supply-chain-from-production-and-trafficking-to-use-about-bolivia-in-colloration-with-criminologist-gabriela-reyes/>, last access 10 May 2021.

reduce coca cultivation.<sup>153</sup> Moreover, Arce's urban middle-class background contrasts with Morales' roots in the Chapare *cocalero* unions, signalling a change in MAS leadership that could diminish *cocalero* influence in national drug policy. Hence, while President Arce campaigned on a promise to protect Bolivia's coca farmers, the future of supply-side harm reduction remains uncertain.<sup>154</sup>

**Acknowledgements.** I thank Dr Huáscar Salazar Lohman, Lee Cridland and the Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia (CEDIB) for support during fieldwork in Bolivia. An earlier version of this manuscript, entitled 'Turning Over a New Leaf? Drug Policy as Clientelism in Plurinational Bolivia', was presented on 19 June 2019 at the Development Studies Association Conference in Milton Keynes, UK. The current manuscript was submitted to the *Journal of Latin American Studies* for review on 9 October 2019.

### Spanish abstract

La presión internacional para suprimir el tráfico de cocaína produjo décadas de leyes duras sobre drogas en Bolivia contra los cocaleros, afectando así la producción de hoja de coca para el consumo tradicional y también para la producción de cocaína ilegal. Estas duras leyes antidroga crearon descontento social en las comunidades cocaleras fuera de las zonas tradicionales de coca. El presidente Evo Morales, líder del partido Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), implementó la política de 'Coca Sí, Cocaína No' (CSCN), una estrategia de reducción de daños que autorizaba a los labriegos 'no tradicionales' a cultivar coca legal y para el autoconsumo. Este artículo compara los resultados del CSCN entre las regiones de coca tradicionales y no tradicionales y encuentra que las poderosas organizaciones de cocaleros fueron vitales para el éxito del CSCN en áreas no tradicionales. Por el contrario, la resistencia organizada en las zonas tradicionales restringió el éxito del CSCN y se sumó a la inestabilidad del régimen en el proceso que llevó a la renuncia forzada de Evo Morales en 2019. Por lo tanto, mientras que Evo Morales condujo al poder estatal para cambiar las políticas hacia las drogas, éste fue constreñido por las organizaciones rurales de base que lo llevaron al poder.

**Spanish keywords:** Bolivia; política hacia las drogas; coca; cocalero; erradicación

### Portuguese abstract

A pressão internacional para suprimir o tráfico de cocaína sustentou décadas de duras leis sobre drogas na Bolívia contra os cocaleros, afetando assim a produção de coca para consumo tradicional e para a fabricação de cocaína ilícita. Essas leis severas sobre as drogas causaram agitação social nas comunidades de cocaleiros fora das zonas tradicionais de coca. O presidente Evo Morales, líder do partido Movimento ao Socialismo (MAS), implementou 'Coca Sim, Cocaína Não' (CSCN), uma estratégia de redução de danos que autorizava agricultores 'não tradicionais' a cultivar coca legal e a produção autopolicada. Este artigo compara os resultados do CSCN nas regiões de coca tradicionais e não tradicionais da Bolívia e conclui que organizações de cocaleiros fortes foram vitais para o sucesso do CSCN em áreas não tradicionais. Em contraste, a resistência organizada em zonas

<sup>153</sup>Parker Asmann, 'Bolivia's New President Faces Complex Drug Scenario', *InSight Crime*, 11 Nov. 2020, available at [www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/bolivia-president-drug-policy/](http://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/bolivia-president-drug-policy/), last access 10 May 2021.

<sup>154</sup>*Ibid.*

tradicionais restringiu o sucesso do CSCN e aumentou a instabilidade do regime antes da renúncia forçada de Morales em 2019. Portanto, embora Evo Morales aproveitasse o poder do Estado para mudar a política de drogas, ele foi limitado pelas organizações rurais de base que o levaram ao poder.

**Portuguese keywords:** Bolívia; política de drogas; coca; cocalero; erradicação

---

**Cite this article:** Brewer-Osorio S (2021). Turning Over a New Leaf: A Subnational Analysis of ‘Coca Yes, Cocaine No’ in Bolivia. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 53, 573–600. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X21000456>