

Violence in the Araucanía: Why does it Happen?

Every so often the press reports on violent events that takes place in the South of our country. This stream of information leads to both tolerance, and to the kind of logic that the violence in Araucania responds to.

The roots of violence in the south are related with the actions of some indigenous groups that, being minorities, seek to get their wishes by going outside the institutional channels.

One example is the *Coordinadora Arauco Malleco*, which has declared that "these actions aim to carry forward the struggle for resistance and direct combat against the investments of landowners, private entrepreneurs and transnational forestry companies in our Wallmapu (mapuche nation)"¹.

In seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, a cadastre was created of the different types of peaceful and violent indigenous manifestations. This was done using journalistic information from the newspapers *El Mercurio* and *Austral* of Temuco between the years 1990 and 2008.

The events were classified considering the place in which they occurred and the degree of violence that they reached:

Land Seizures: a large part of these end in the removal of inhabitants and do not always

entail violence. Their purpose is to reclaim the land for the community.

Roadway blockages: although these are generally peaceful, *encapuchados* (hooded agitators) sometimes participate. The aim of this kind of demonstration is to gain the public's attention.

Fires: intentionally set, often times with several simultaneous breakout points, intended to instill fear in the landowners.

Violent acts: this groups together attacks with rocks, sticks, slingshots, firearms and sometimes molotov cocktails, against both people and vehicles, such as Carabineros personnel. Material damages to private property, such as destruction of plantations, fences and bridges or the setting of house fires. These acts are grouped together because they always entail violence and often occur to-

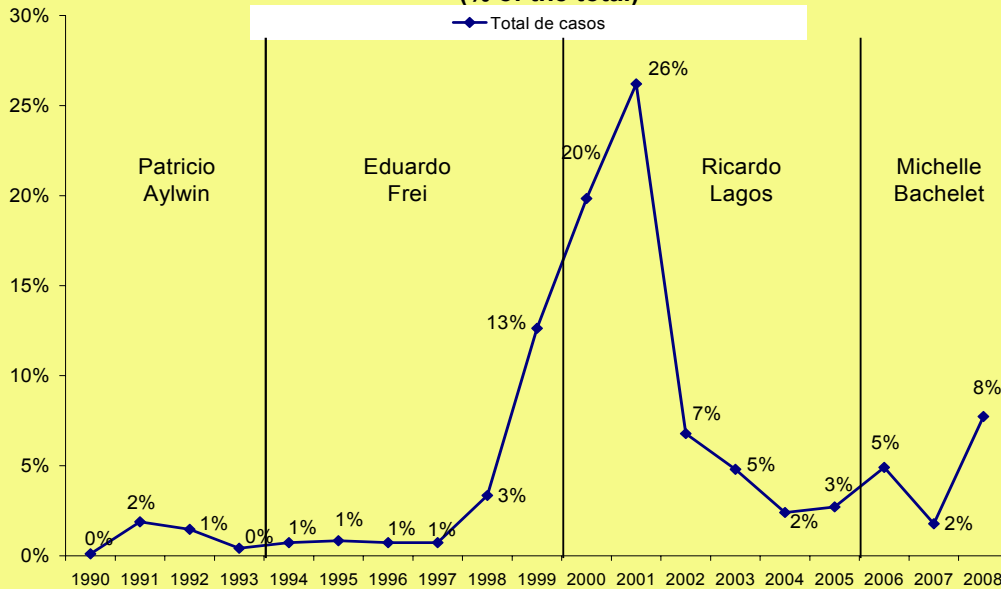
gether. The objective of these actions is to frighten.

Theft: acts that do not entail violence which are intended to take possession of goods.

Urban demonstrations: groups together all those acts, both peaceful and violent, that take place in cities (Temuco, Santiago, among others). This category is used to differentiate the urban actions from what occurs in rural areas. In this type of demonstration, not only do mapuches participate, but also students, ecologists and other followers of the mapuche

The Government should consider that violent events tend to be related with the signals sent by the authorities in regard to the transfer of land and in regard to how strong the measures for defending the state of law will be. As such, the declarations made about the latest attack on Padre Las Casas would be in the correct vein.

Graph N.1
Total Cases of Indigenous Violence 1990 – 2008
(% of the total)



Source: Author's own. Data from newspapers *El Mercurio* and *Diario Austral de la Araucanía*.

cause (including foreigners, factions of movements, politicians and other anarchist groups).

For a more detailed analysis these were divided into whether they turned out to include violent acts or if they remained peaceful.

The Data

Upon analyzing the events from 1990 through December of 2008, the data shows that they have increased from 1998 forward, reaching a height of cases in 2001 and descending between 2002 and 2004, but never arriving back to the low level of incidents of the early nineties. While in 2006 the number of cases climbed again to then fall in 2007, they rose significantly in 2008 (See Graph N. 1).

This means that indigenous manifestations increased starting in the final year of Eduardo Frei's administration, reaching its

highest during the first years of the Lagos administration and then decreasing toward the end of his tenure. However, they began to rise again during Michelle Bachelet's term.

In taking a second look, we analyze how the violent events have evolved over time. From that perspective it is observed that urban demonstrations (38%) followed by land seizures (34%), were the most recurrent events in 1998, the year in which the number

of incidents began to rise (See Chart N. 1).

Whereas, during 2000 and 2001 the majority of events were fires (35% and 37%), for 2002 it became violent acts (32%). The next relevant change came about between 2005 and 2007 where the majority of events were urban demonstrations (46% and 60%). In 2007 land seizures once again took over the second position (18%). The next variation occurs in 2008 with another rise in violent acts (49%), followed by urban demonstrations (30%) and then fires (16%).

In taking a look at the complete set of trends the data shows that whenever there is an upward curve in events the majority are concentrated in land seizures (1998-1999). In the most critical moment the majority of events are fires or violent acts. (2001). When the curve trends downward the urban demonstrations begin to increase (2005-2006).

Chart N. 1
Trends according to Type of Violent Act
% by Year

Type of Violence	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Land Seizures	0%	44%	36%	50%	29%	50%	43%	0%	34%	26%	12%	15%	12%	9%	17%	12%	0%	18%	5%
Roadway blockages	100%	6%	0%	25%	14%	0%	0%	14%	9%	13%	4%	8%	11%	4%	9%	8%	9%	18%	5%
Theft	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	19%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Fires	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%	35%	37%	15%	17%	17%	19%	15%	6%	16%
Violent acts	0%	6%	7%	0%	0%	0%	14%	14%	10%	27%	24%	17%	32%	35%	22%	15%	17%	24%	40%
Urban Demonstrations	0%	39%	57%	57%	57%	63%	43%	71%	38%	18%	5%	8%	29%	33%	26%	46%	60%	35%	30%
Total Cases	1	18	14	4	7	8	7	7	32	121	190	251	65	46	23	26	47	17	74

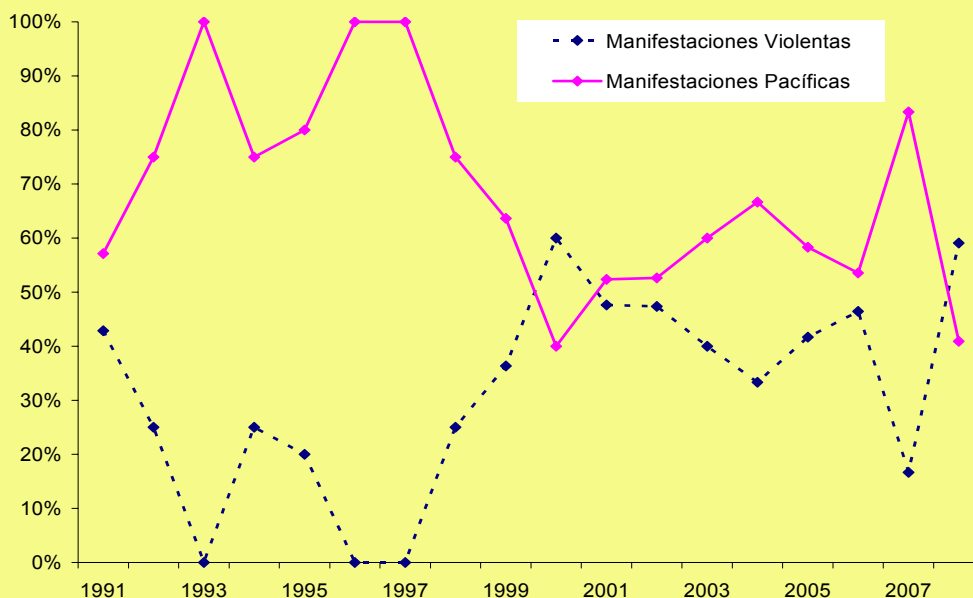
Source: Author's own: Data from newspapers *El Mercurio* and *Diario Austral de la Araucanía*.

Possible Explanations

From this perspective, without enough data to form a hypothesis, we may currently be on an upward curve in events. In 2007 the per-

centage of land seizures increased 18% and in 2008 violent acts (49%) and urban demonstrations (30%) increased.

Graph N. 2
Peaceful and Violent Urban Demonstrations 1990-2008
(% by year)

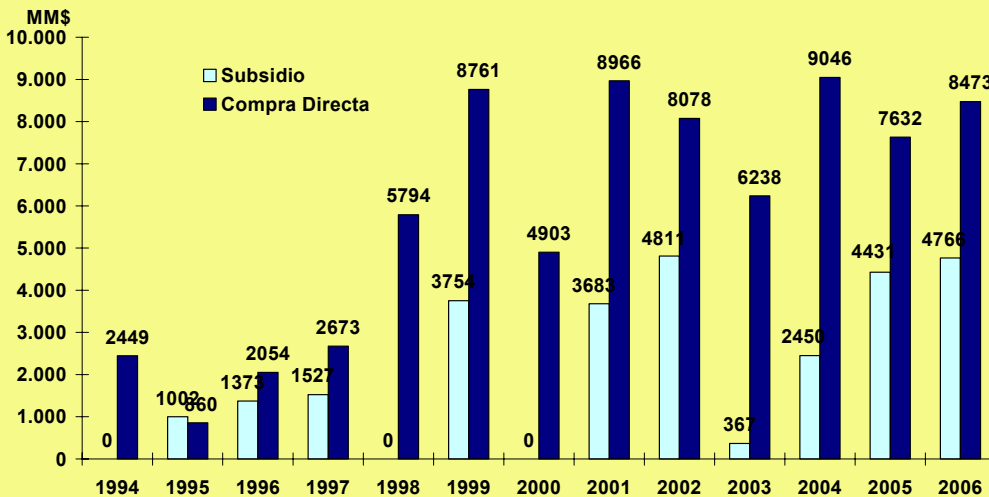


Source: Author's own. Data from newspapers *El Mercurio* and *Diario Austral de la Araucanía*.

Another factor to consider is that over the years the proportion of violent urban demonstrations has increased (See Graph N. 2). In addition, we can see that violent manifestations increased one year before (1999) the maximum level of events that occurred in 2000. Furthermore, the percentage of violent demonstrations once again surpassed that of peaceful ones during 2008.

One way to find explanations for the cycles of the analyzed events is to

Graph N. 3
Investment in the Land and Water Fund 1994 – 2006
(% by year)



Source: Author's own. Data from the CONADI Public Account 2006-2007.

correlate them with the policies on indigenous issues followed by the authorities.

The Indigenous Law that went into effect in 1993 establishes in Article 20 two ways to finance the purchase of land. The first way is the subsidy that establishes a score mechanism by which applications are organized. The second way is through a direct purchase, which was specifically established to resolve land conflicts. This mechanism, which should be an exception given that it allows much more room for discretion, has been used much more than the other by CONADI (See Graph N. 3).

In addition, during the administration of Ricardo Lagos the policy of "handing over land in exchange for social peace" was applied. This policy consisted in giving out land via direct purchase to communities that had used violence as a mechanism to reach their objectives. One graphic example of this mechanism is the purchase of lands for the Temucucui community.

In 1993 the Temucucui community, or Ignacio Queipul, had 250 hectares and claimed ancestral rights to the Fundo Alaska Estate (2035 hectares), property of the company Forestal Mininco. After applying to the Land and Water Fund, CONADI, in 1998, provided the community with 98 hectares of the Fundo Alaska estate and 58 from Hijueta Santa Elisa by way of the mechanism of direct purchase.

Nevertheless, the community demanded the entire property, and as such declared themselves "mobilized." This brought about a series of land occupations, marches, takeovers of Ruta 5, fires and the burning of machinery. As the indigenous-supporting E-journal Mapu Express put it; "A new occupation took place in November of 2000 and as a result, the Government has consented to the demand of the community's people." (www.mapuexpress.net)

The then Minister of MIDEPLAN, Alejandra Krauss, ignored the calendar for land transfers established by CONADI and negotiated directly with the communities that opted to claim the rights to land through violence. At that time the indigenous associations that had opted for dialogue and had taken a peaceful path said that they felt displaced in favor of the violent groups. The Minister, however, maintained that the communities with which she was negotiating had abandoned their violent attitude².

Chart N. 2
Lands acquired for Temucuicui (Ignacio Queipul)

Año	Provincia	Comuna Predio	Predio	Hás. Adquiridas
1998	Malleco	Ercilla	Parte Fundo Alaska Lote A	98,3
1998	Malleco	Ercilla	Hijuela Santa Lucía	58,0
2002	Malleco	Ercilla	Fundo Alaska	1.937,0
2004	Malleco	Victoria	La Soledad	278,0
2005	Malleco	Victoria	Santa Filomena	425,2

Source: CONADI

The effect, however, was not a decrease in violent actions, but just the opposite. The signal that Lagos's administration sent was that the communities that engaged in violent acts would receive their lands faster. In light of this scenario, the administration itself recognized the error and changed the strategy and announced that it would not hand over lands to violent groups. That is how the policy of "Estate seized is an estate not purchased"³ began.

Additionally, the Temucuicui community began to divide up further in order to be able to gain access to new land. This played out in 2004 when the Ignacio Quipul II community was provided 425 hectares bought through the direct purchase mechanism of the CONADI Land and Water Fund (See Chart N. 2).

Nevertheless, they have furthermore begun to claim the La Romana (60 hectares) and Montenegro (130 hectares) properties. The strategy of harassment and violent actions was the same as the one utilized during the mobilization to get Fundo Alaska turned over to them.

In 2008 CONADI announced a new purchase for Temucuicui, which was never finalized due to conflicts within the community. Nevertheless, this event could mark the return of the policy of "land in exchange for social peace".

Upon analyzing the actions taken by the authorities with respect to direct purchase and especially the transfer of land to violent com-

munities done outside of the established mechanisms, and correlating it with the cycles of violence in the South, a relationship can be observed. When the Government sends

signals that it will give in to violence as it did in the first years of the Lagos administration, the violence increases.

Another aspect of the Government's actions is how forceful it is in defense of the State of Law. In this sense it is powerfully attention-grabbing that acts of violence decreased significantly after the dismantling of Coordinadora Arauco Malleco in December 2002.

During 2008 the Government sent signals that it may be giving in to the violent groups. However, it should consider that violent events tend to be related with the signals sent by the authorities in regard to the transfer of land and in regard to how strong the measures for defending the state of law will be. As such, the declarations made about the latest attack on Padre Las Casas would be in the correct vein.

¹ Newspaper *La Nación*, January 14, 2009. Statement by CAM claiming responsibility for new inflammatory attacks.

² Newspaper *El Mercurio*: "Comunidades piden fin de burocracia" (Communities ask for end to bureaucracy), April 22, 2001.

³ Report on the mapuche conflict by the Constitution, Legislation and Justice Commission, August, 2003.