

The Losing Battle Against Neoliberal Trade Agreements in Latin America: Social Resistance Against the MTA Between Ecuador, Peru, and the European Union

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ABSTRACT

This article studies the influence of the antineoliberal social movements in Peru and Ecuador in the face of the Multiparty Trade Agreement (MTA) between both countries and the European Union (EU). To identify and analyze this influence, a transdisciplinary theoretical framework was created, integrating debates and concepts from social movement theory and critical international political economy. In Peru, the movement used European allies to establish their demands on the EU's agenda, which resulted in increased pressure on the government to enforce labor rights and environmental standards. In Ecuador, the movement was able to establish food sovereignty and the rejection of free trade in the national constitution. As a result, the negotiations with the EU were delayed and Ecuador achieved certain exceptions in its adhesion protocol. Nevertheless, both movements were unable to maintain their influence, due to political and socioeconomic dynamics on the domestic and global levels.

Keywords: European Union, free trade, Latin America, social movements

The expansion of neoliberal trade policy has often been accompanied by social and political conflicts, especially in Latin America (Von Bülow 2010). While global economic powers and local elites promote free trade in the region, primarily through the proliferation of bilateral agreements, social movements throughout the continent criticize the neoliberal agenda, pointing out the social and ecological repercussions of indiscriminate liberalization. In times of climate change, this heated ideological debate has gained even more importance as the benefits of neoliberal globalization for long-term sustainable development in the Global South are increasingly questioned. In this

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context, understanding the social and political dynamics behind international trade policy has become an important academic endeavor.

Many contemporary investigations focus on antineoliberal social movements resisting the expansion of neoliberal policies in Latin America (Petras 2008; Roberts 2008; Silva 2009, 2012; Von Bülow 2010; Almeida 2014; Spalding 2014, 2023; Almeida and Cordero Ulate 2017; Silva et al. 2018; Almeida and Pérez Martín 2022; Preusser 2022; Feoli 2023). The present article contributes to this body of literature by studying the influence of the social movements in Peru and Ecuador that criticized the Multiparty Trade Agreement (MTA, *Acuerdo Comercial Multipartes*) both Andean countries subscribed to and implemented with the European Union (EU). This investigation emphasizes two aspects that have not been the main focus of recent academic production in the field: first, a neoliberal Free Trade Agreement (FTA) promoted by the EU in Latin America, as opposed to the traditional focus on US-led projects and the growing interest in recent Chinese integration efforts; and second, two social movements that have not made international headlines for their particularly massive protests or concrete political achievements, given that their claims were widely ignored during the negotiation and implementation process of the MTA. However, this does not mean that the social movements in Peru and Ecuador were not able to influence the political process of the trade agreement with the EU at all. By studying their subtle influence, this article argues that the interplay of relational mechanisms (framing and brokerage), combined with political opportunities on the domestic and the international scale, explains the different outcomes in both cases.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the EU started negotiating a trade agreement with the countries of the Community of Andean Nations (CAN), which included Peru and Ecuador along with Bolivia and Colombia. In 2008, the negotiations between the two regional blocs failed after left-wing governments came to power in Bolivia (Evo Morales in 2005) and Ecuador (Rafael Correa in 2006). In line with the other so-called Pink Tide governments in the region, the new presidents rejected the traditional model of asymmetric trade integration (Quiliconi 2011, 2013). As a response, the EU started negotiating bilateral agreements with the Andean countries as part of its global strategy to open markets and investment opportunities for European corporations and to secure access to cheap raw materials from Latin America (Grumiller et al. 2016).

In 2012, Peru and Colombia agreed to the MTA with the EU, reflecting the long history of neoliberal policies in those countries. While Bolivia kept rejecting the negotiations with the EU, Ecuador gave in to the growing internal and external pressures, finalized the country's adhesion to the MTA in 2016, and started implementing the agreement at the beginning of 2017. Peru and Ecuador were chosen as the empirical cases for this study to understand the opportunities and limitations the antineoliberal social movements faced in two distinct political environments.

The differences between the two cases contribute to a deeper understanding of political opportunities, acknowledging domestic factors as well as international dynamics. Peru and Ecuador were selected to trace the process of political influence in two distinct domestic settings. In Ecuador, a historically strong antineoliberal movement was able to benefit from domestic openings of political opportunities to establish its demands on the political agenda, generate changes in the country's trade policy, and

delay the negotiation process with the EU. When political opportunities deteriorated due to domestic and global dynamics, the movement lost its influence, and Ecuador signed the MTA and inaugurated a new era of neoliberal trade policy. In Peru, by contrast, a weakened antineoliberal movement faced closed domestic institutions; it could only briefly establish discursive influence during the implementation process through a strong network with European allies, yet without causing a change in Peruvian trade policy. The findings of this article inspire future research by identifying key elements, on the domestic and on the international level, to analyze the influence of antineoliberal movements in the Global South on international trade policies.

The data collection for this investigation was mainly based on 38 semistructured qualitative interviews with different representatives of the antineoliberal social movements, as well as academics and political actors in Peru and Ecuador. These interviews were complemented through participant observations at various events related to the MTA, along with an in-depth review of media coverage and academic production on the topic. The collected data were analyzed through a combination of process tracing and discourse analysis to understand if, when, and how the movements' discourses managed to penetrate the political agenda of the MTA and generate policy changes in Peru and Ecuador.

This article is divided into four sections. First, the theoretical framework and the explanatory model of the investigation are presented. Sections 2 and 3 detail the empirical analysis of the two cases. The final section summarizes the main findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND EXPLANATORY MODEL

To analyze the influence of the social movements that resisted the MTA with the EU in Peru and Ecuador, this article applies a transdisciplinary theoretical framework. By connecting different concepts of social movement theory (SMT) and critical international political economy (CIPE), this framework makes it possible to understand the interplay of various relational mechanisms and contextual factors that explain how and when the investigated movements managed to influence the negotiations and the implementation of the MTA.

This article follows Eduardo Silva (2009, 2012) and Rose Spalding (2014) by applying a Polanyian perspective for the analysis of social movements in Latin America. The contemporary diffusion of free trade agreements is understood through the work of Karl Polanyi (2001) as a second "great transformation" toward market liberalization (Dale 2010). The social and political struggles that accompany this great transformation are conceptualized as a double movement: On one hand are actors who promote free trade, while on the other hand is a countermovement of actors who resist economic liberalization, fighting for policy measures to protect civil society and the environment from the negative effects of free trade (Dale 2012). This investigation focuses on the latter: the antineoliberal movements that resisted the MTA with the EU in Peru and Ecuador. To understand the influence of these movements within the Polanyian view of this article, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of

relational power. The influence of antineoliberal movements in Latin America depends on their power relative to the power of their main opponents (Silva 2009; Madariaga 2020); in this case, the actors who promoted the MTA with the EU in Peru and Ecuador.

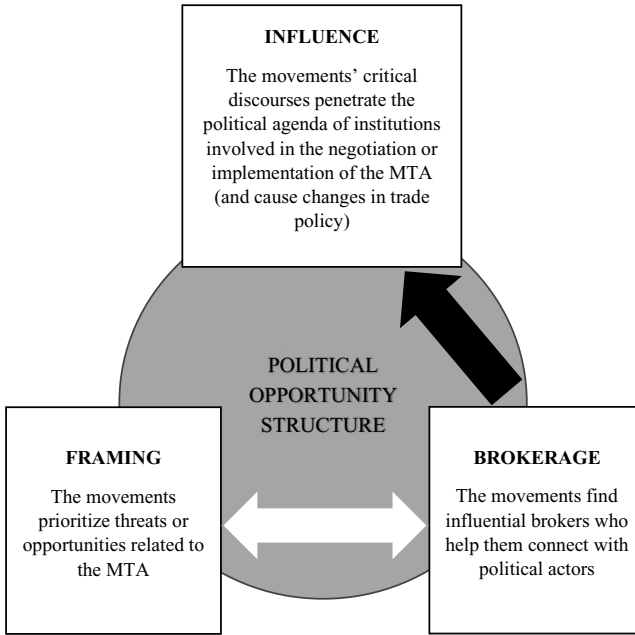
Nevertheless, measuring the influence of social movements is a complicated endeavor because of the difficulty of attributing changes to the collective action of certain movements (Amenta 2016). Furthermore, the outcomes of a social movement can be analyzed in different ways, focusing on personal consequences for the movement's members, on cultural change, or on political and institutional change (Bosi et al. 2016). In this article, the focus lies on the last, given that the object of study is the social movements' influence on the political process of negotiating and implementing the MTA with the EU. To analyze this influence, it is essential to emphasize the concrete political institutions that the movements targeted (Amenta 2016). The antineoliberal movements studied here targeted domestic institutions in Peru and Ecuador, as well as EU institutions.

Many authors have argued that the influence of social movements on political institutions can take a variety of forms, from agenda setting to changing discursive positions, achieving a transformation in institutional procedures, electoral victories, political reforms, and state behavior (Andrews 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Giugni 1998; Almeida and Pérez Martín 2022). Past studies have also shown that most social movements tend to have more influence on agenda setting and discursive concessions than on the actual adoption and implementation of political reforms (Bosi et al. 2016). Furthermore, positive outcomes of social movements are often episodic and can quickly be reversed through co-optation when political conditions change (Silva et al. 2018). These insights are especially important for this article, as they help to understand when and how the influence of the antineoliberal movements in Peru and Ecuador affected the MTA process.

In its essence, the explanatory model of this article is based on how the different discourses of the antineoliberal social movements in Peru and Ecuador managed to penetrate the political agenda of the agreement. First, the movements needed adequate ways of framing that prioritized the threats and opportunities related to the MTA. Second, the movements required brokers, who helped them connect with new actors to establish the antineoliberal discourses within the public and political debate about the agreement. Third, the movements' discourses had to penetrate the political agenda of certain institutions involved in the negotiation or implementation of the MTA in Peru and Ecuador. This penetration of the political agenda, which took place at some point in both cases, did not necessarily lead to long-term political changes. It is important to stress that the concrete influence of the two movements ultimately depended not only on the successful establishment of the relational mechanisms of framing and brokerage but also on the socioeconomic and political context, which increased or decreased their political opportunities. The explanatory model of this article is summarized in figure 1.

To conceptualize this explanatory model, the theoretical framework of this study integrates different concepts from SMT. First, framing is understood as the collective

Figure 1. The Explanatory Model



Source: Author's elaboration

construction of sense by a social movement (Snow 2004). According to McAdam et al. (2001), framing refers to the identification and interpretation of threats and opportunities. Therefore, how the social movements in Peru and Ecuador framed their discourses about the MTA represents the first important part of the explanatory model. By identifying different threats and opportunities related to the trade agreement, the movements also found different brokers and ways of influencing the negotiation or implementation process of the MTA.

In SMT, brokers are conceptualized as specific actors who connect social movements to other spaces and actors (McAdam et al. 2001). Thus, they play an essential role in moving the movements' discourses to the spheres of policy decisionmaking. In the two cases in this study, local academics helped connect the antineoliberal movements to domestic institutions (especially in Ecuador), while European NGOs played an important role in linking them to EU institutions and creating what Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) call a boomerang pattern, where local movements influence domestic institutions through the brokerage of foreign actors and institutions (especially in Peru). However, the described mechanisms of framing and brokerage, as well as the types of influence these mechanisms generate, depend heavily on the external context (Falletti and Lynch 2009; Feoli 2023); only in a favorable socioeconomic, political, and ideational environment

(Silva et al. 2018) could the social movements establish their frames on the political agenda and ultimately influence policy outcomes related to the MTA in Ecuador and Peru.

To conceptualize this environment, this article applies a particular form of the political opportunity structure (POS), one of the most widely used but also one of the least clearly defined concepts in SMT (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). In general, the POS refers to the external context in which a social movement operates. However, the different aspects, their relations, and their relevance are understood in a great variety of ways. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2007) defined the openness of political institutions to new actors, the presence of strong allies of the movements within these institutions, the instability of existing political alignments, the existence of various power centers within a political regime, and a low level of repression as some of the most important factors that characterize favorable political opportunity structures for social movements. Although these factors are helpful to analyze the opportunities and the influence of the social movements under investigation, it was necessary to broaden this concept through the inclusion of different debates from CIPE to acknowledge the external dependence that characterizes Peru and Ecuador.

In this sense, dependency theory allows us to grasp how global economic factors and political pressure limited the political autonomy of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian governments, thus also affecting the POS for the social movements in both Andean countries. Peru and Ecuador depend heavily on the export of raw materials to the Global North (Bizberg 2021); in both countries, about 90 percent of all exports consist of primary goods (Matthes 2012). Therefore, changes in world market prices for these products have strong repercussions for political opportunities (Bértola and Ocampo 2012). This was obvious in the Ecuadorian case, where the POS for the antineoliberal movement worsened during a phase of falling global commodity prices.

At the same time, changes in EU policies that restrict the entrance of Latin American products also reduce political opportunities for governments and social movements in the region. Another important aspect of dependency theory that complements the traditional understanding of POS is internal colonialism. This concept helps to understand how dependency on the Global North influences political institutions, socioeconomic structures, and even the psychology of the populations in the Global South (Kay 2011; Loza 2016). It thereby explains not only the political power and influence of domestic export elites (Bizberg 2021) but also the marginalization of Indigenous actors and their demands. In this sense, internal colonialism helps to clarify the neoliberal hegemony in Peru and Ecuador as an important factor that made political institutions and the societies in general less receptive toward critical framings of the MTA, thus closing the POS for the antineoliberal movements in both countries.

This broad conceptualization, together with the empirical analysis of both cases, helps identify the key elements of the POS that explain the types of influence the antineoliberal movements in Peru and Ecuador had in the negotiation and implementation process of the MTA with the EU. The configuration and interplay of these elements influenced the framing process of the movements, the

Table 1. Main Elements of the Political Opportunity Structure

| Elements Improving POS | Elements Worsening POS |
|--|---|
| Open political institutions | Closed political institutions |
| Low repression/co-optation | Strong repression/co-optation |
| Weak/divided elites | Strong/unified elites |
| Questionable neoliberal hegemony | Strong neoliberal hegemony |
| High raw material prices | Low raw material prices |
| Low pressure toward liberalization by EU | High pressure toward liberalization by EU |

Source: Author's elaboration

role of different brokers, the timing, and the ways their discourses entered the political agenda of different institutions involved in the negotiation and implementation of the agreement. It is important to note that discursive influence on the political agenda could be generated even in a context of a closed POS on the domestic level like the Peruvian case, through European brokers and relatively open EU institutions. Nevertheless, to generate policy changes, a certain openness of the domestic POS was found necessary. Table 1 summarizes the elements that improved or worsened the political opportunities of the movements in both cases.

PERU: DISCURSIVE INFLUENCE THROUGH THE EU DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Until the 1980s, the antineoliberal movement in Peru was organized around left-wing political parties and traditional labor unions. During the governments of Fernando Belaúnde (1980–85) and Alan García (1985–90), this movement managed to successfully resist neoliberal reforms in the country (Silva 2009). But the situation changed under the dictatorship of Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000): the president implemented a strict neoliberal adjustment policy. After dissolving the Peruvian Congress in 1992, the government deepened a unilateral free market agenda and institutionalized its cornerstones through a new constitution in 1993 (Durand Guevara 2014). At the same time, Fujimori cracked down on social resistance, prohibiting, criminalizing, and persecuting a great variety of established social organizations in the country (Honorio Martínez 2009). The internal conflict between the Peruvian State and the communist guerrilla groups of the Shining Path and *MRTA* had also weakened many social organizations in the country, especially Indigenous and rural organizations (Fernández-Maldonado Mujica 2020). When Peru started negotiating the MTA with the EU, the antineoliberal social movement in the country was still suffering from this devastating blow, while facing a political mainstream that had left the cornerstones of Fujimori's constitution unquestioned.

After Fujimori's departure in 2000, the democratic governments of Alejandro Toledo (2001–6) and Alan García (2006–11) continued the economic policy they

had inherited from the dictatorship. Contentious action by the antineoliberal movement surged but stayed limited to certain territories and narrow in participation and political impact (Silva 2009). Before signing the MTA with the EU in 2012, Peru had already subscribed to bilateral FTAs with many other countries (including the United States and China).

Most social organizations with a critical stance toward the MTA started coordinating their actions in the context of the resistance against the US-led continental project of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Through their transnational advocacy networks, many Peruvian organizations played an important role in the successful continental campaign against the FTAA (Quiliconi 2005; Saguier 2007). A diffuse network of ecological and labor NGOs, Indigenous and rural organizations, critical academics, and traditional labor unions had emerged around RedGE (*Red Peruana por una Globalización con Equidad*, or Peruvian Network for a Globalization with Equity). While labor unions, as well as Indigenous and rural organizations, were still in a weak position after years of repression, persecution, and neoliberal reforms, NGOs had taken a dominant role in the Peruvian antineoliberal movement. During this research, the NGOs that organized around RedGE worked as mediators between different social organizations and helped to build bridges toward important brokers, especially foreign NGOs.

On the other side of Polanyi's double movement in Peru, a very strong and consolidated economic elite promoted the MTA with the EU. This promarket movement was organized around the economic sectors that benefited most from trade liberalization. In 2010, before the MTA was signed, more than 91 percent of all Peruvian exports to EU countries were mining products (mainly copper and gold), natural gas, and agricultural products. By 2017, this percentage rose to more than 95 percent. On the other hand, Peruvian imports from the EU were primarily high tech products (Alarco and Castillo 2018).

Given Peru's strong dependency on raw material exports, the main actors that promoted the MTA were business organizations, such as the National Conference of Private Business Institutions (CONFEP), the Peruvian Foreign Trade Association (COMEX), the Association of Exporters (ADEX), and the National Mining, Oil, and Energy Association (SNMPE). These organizations represented a concentrated economic elite with close ties to the national political institutions. This promarket movement not only influenced policymaking through lobbying and direct participation in the Peruvian governments of the time (Crabtree 2020), but its discourses also dominated mainstream media, thereby stabilizing neoliberal hegemony in the country and widespread support for trade liberalization (Alarco Tosoni 2020). The composition of this promarket movement confirms the findings of other studies about the actors that promote neoliberal reforms and their interests (Schneider 2004, 2013; Ondetti 2021; Madariaga 2020).

In sum, the Peruvian antineoliberal movement encountered a closed POS after decades of neoliberal reforms and political repression. It faced closed domestic institutions and a powerful elite that promoted further trade liberalization, including the MTA with the EU. The domestic society and the political institutions had

internalized the discourses of the elite, making it extremely difficult for the antineoliberal movement to position its alternative claims. In this context, the EU did not have to put pressure on Peru to achieve liberalization, and the high raw material prices on the world market were not enough to improve the POS for the Peruvian antineoliberal movement.

Framing of Rights Within the MTA

Due to all of these factors, the antineoliberal social movement was not able to frame critical discourses that rejected the MTA with the EU altogether. Stopping Peru from signing the agreement was simply seen as impossible, not only by political decisionmakers but also by the movement itself. Nevertheless, RedGE and its allies framed the dangers of the agreement for local labor conditions and environmental standards in Peru. The framing of solutions to these problems was centered within the parameters of the MTA. The fact that the agreement with the EU included a sustainability chapter (Title IX) favored this moderate approach.

RedGE connected a great variety of social organizations and NGOs with different ways of framing the threats and opportunities related to the MTA. On the one hand, most NGOs and labor unions took a moderate stance that emphasized workers' rights and environmental standards, in line with international treaties and the MTA's Title IX. The few Peruvian academics who criticized the agreement also reproduced similar discourses. On the other hand, Indigenous and agricultural organizations rejected the agreement more categorically, for its potential impact on small farmers and Indigenous territories in the rural areas (Romero 2020).

These more radical demands were marginalized in the movement. For instance, the Indigenous sectors that rejected the agreement as a threat to their sovereignty played a minor role in the framing process of the movement. Most NGOs that dominated the movement tended to see the strict rejection of the agreement as too radical and counterproductive. This dynamic on the inside of the antineoliberal movement reflected not only the POS in the country but also a racist colonial legacy (Calligros 1993; Oboler 1996). In general, most actors in the movement agreed that trade agreements with the Global North were inevitable and somehow necessary, while arguing for stronger guarantees to protect local workers, industries, communities, and ecosystems in Peru. The main threat RedGE framed in relation to the agreement with the EU was that it could exceed the liberalization commitments of the bilateral FTA with the United States. In this sense, the framing focused on the possibility of decreasing labor and environmental standards as a result of the MTA. The only opportunity the movement framed was that a strict implementation and no violation of the agreement's Title IX could potentially guarantee or even improve labor conditions and environmental standards in Peru (Romero 2020).

On the other side of the Polanyian double movement, the big business unions and export organizations of the country framed the MTA as a necessary measure to ensure the international competitiveness of the Peruvian export sector. The agreement

with the EU was also presented as a big opportunity for Peruvian consumers, who would have access to a greater variety of European import products at lower prices. These neoliberal discourses dominated the coverage of the MTA in Peruvian mainstream media, as well as the political debate about the agreement (Dongo 2015). Given the power of the elite, the stability of neoliberal hegemony, and the closed domestic institutions, the antineoliberal movement struggled to establish labor rights and environmental standards in the public debate about the MTA in Peru.

Neoliberal Continuity and Symbolic Influence Through the EU

Despite its moderate discourse, the antineoliberal movement around RedGE was not able to instill its framing in public opinion and the political agenda in Peru, as it faced an exceptionally closed POS. For decades, public opinion and political institutions in Peru had been dominated by neoliberal hegemony. Only through its European brokers was the movement able to influence the political agenda of relatively receptive EU institutions during the implementation of the MTA, but merely in a discursive and episodic way.

On the level of civil society, the neoliberal economic model of the country enjoyed broad support from most social sectors, especially in the urban zones. Since the Fujimori dictatorship, open market policies were established as a cornerstone for the country's development. As a legacy of the authoritarian regime's war against the leftist guerrilla groups, most critics of the neoliberal model were still defamed as terrorists (Durand Guevara 2014). The mainstream media and most universities in the country also reproduced neoliberal discourses (Ruiz 2016). In sum, the neoliberal hegemony was stable in Peru, which contributed to an unfavorable POS for the antineoliberal movement in the country.

During the second government of Alan García (2006–11), the antineoliberal movement was still unable to influence the political agenda, due to the clear neoliberal stance of domestic institutions. García won the 2006 presidential elections against the left candidate, Ollanta Humala, who had led a campaign in line with the Pink Tide governments in the region. The election results showed that a majority of the Peruvian population preferred neoliberal continuity to the progressive transformation Humala had proposed (Revesz 2006). After taking office, García maintained Peru's agenda, arguing that the country should exploit its natural resources through trade liberalization. In 2009, Peru signed FTAs with the United States and China, while the antineoliberal movement was unable to mobilize against these agreements or influence the negotiations. The government also promoted a quick subscription to an agreement with the EU.

The most noteworthy contentious action against this wave of trade liberalization occurred in the Peruvian Amazon region, when the government launched reforms to implement the FTA with the United States. Thousands of Indigenous people mobilized in Bagua against the reform bills 1015, 1064, 1073, 1089, and 1090, which sought to improve the competitiveness and efficiency of production in their territory

through market liberalization. The Indigenous population saw the proposed reforms as a direct attack on their territory and culture; weeklong mass protests ensued, including roadblocks and the occupation of oil infrastructure by the protesters. In June 2009, Peruvian police forces invaded the zone, leaving a total of 33 people dead and more than 200 injured on both sides (Dolorier and Paneque 2013). The massacre at Bagua showed how little the antineoliberal movement could do against trade liberalization in Peru; the POS for the movement was closed, due not only to a high level of government repression but also to the strong economic elite that dominated public opinion and the political institutions in the country (Sosa Villagarcía 2014).

In 2011, Ollanta Humala launched another presidential campaign that criticized the neoliberal economic model in the country and even proposed not to sign the MTA with the EU. His victory in the second election round against Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of Alberto Fujimori, showed that Humala had managed to strike a more moderate tone in his second campaign (Sánchez-Sibony 2011), but it also reflected an increasing instability of the neoliberal hegemony among the Peruvian population. During the first years of Humala's presidency, some domestic brokers of the antineoliberal movement, like the economist Germán Alarco Tosoni and the labor expert Enrique Fernández-Maldonado, managed to attain positions in the Humala government. Nevertheless, the economic elite soon regained its dominance over the new government, while the brokers of the antineoliberal movement were marginalized and eventually resigned. In this context, the Humala administration returned to a neoliberal policy agenda and signed the MTA with the EU in 2012 (Fernández-Maldonado 2018).

Due to the closed political opportunity structure on the domestic level, the Peruvian antineoliberal movement tried to influence the negotiation and implementation process of the MTA primarily through international brokers, especially European NGOs. The only time their antineoliberal framing entered the political debate about the MTA was through a boomerang effect (Keck and Sikkink 1998), when the European Commission (EC) put pressure on the Peruvian government to comply with the agreement's labor and environmental standards during the implementation phase, responding to the demands of European civil society. After the MTA entered into force in Peru, the movement found new political opportunities through its strong transnational advocacy networks with European civil society organizations. European NGOs had long worked with European agencies of international cooperation and Peruvian stakeholders to implement different development projects in the country. In this context, they contributed to the creation of new spaces for interaction between the antineoliberal movement in Peru and civil society organizations in the EU (Manrique Guzmán 2018). Previous experiences with transnational networks, also helped the Peruvian movement in this context.

Thus the European NGOs became essential brokers for the RedGE in Peru. Nevertheless, as scholars of transnational advocacy networks have pointed out, the collaboration between actors from the Global North and the Global South tends to

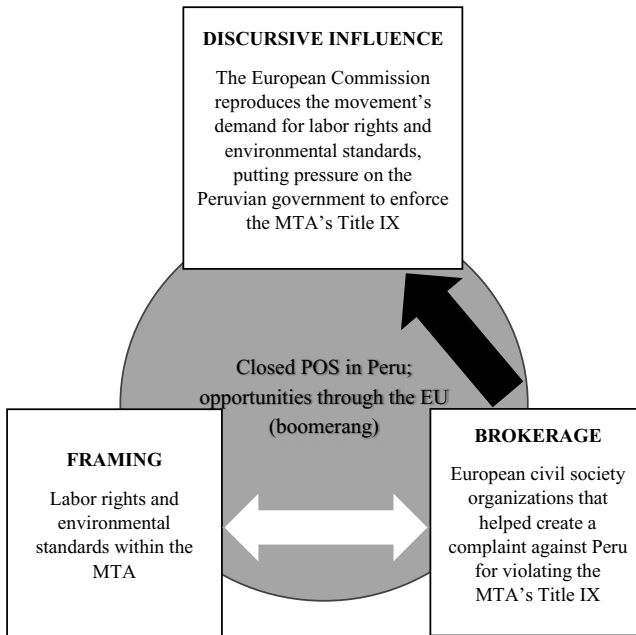
entail asymmetries (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Von Bülow 2010). In this sense, the European brokers also worked as a platform to promote the Peruvian movement's moderate rights-based frames. At the same time, they filtered more radical frames based on Indigenous worldviews (Mujica Petit 2020). For the European NGOs, the MTA was ambiguous. On the one hand, they benefited from the MTA because it created a better environment for their work in Peru. On the other hand, the agreement's liberalization requirements threatened the local producers the NGOs were supposed to help. During the implementation phase of the agreement in Peru, the antineoliberal movement finally managed to influence the political process, but only briefly and discursively through relatively open European institutions.

While the domestic institutions kept ignoring the antineoliberal demands in Peru, the local movement and its European brokers managed to establish the framing of labor rights and environmental standards on the EC's agenda. In 2017, RedGE organized a joint publication compiled by more than 30 Peruvian and European organizations. The document consisted of a complaint against the Peruvian government for the violation of the MTA's Title IX. The participating organizations had collected a vast number of details about violations of labor rights and environmental standards in the Peruvian export sector (Responsable de la Edición: Centro de Políticas Públicas y Derechos Humanos, con la colaboración de 11.11.11 2017).

The European brokers of the antineoliberal movement in Peru not only helped to develop the complaint but also to diffuse it in Europe. After reviewing the complaint, the EU commissioner for trade, Cecilia Malmström, sent a letter to the Peruvian trade and tourism minister, Roger Valencia, expressing her worries about the violation of labor rights and environmental standards in Peru, mentioning the persecution of union leaders, widespread informal work, child labor, and the absence of civil society participation in the implementation of the MTA. The EU commissioner even suggested sending a European mission to Peru to evaluate the situation and asked the Peruvian government to come up with an action plan to solve the described problems (Romero 2018). This reaction by the EC confirms that political influence through the boomerang pattern tends to work when transnational advocacy networks pressure international players to comply with their own standards (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Malmström's insistence that Peru respect Title IX marked the most influence the antineoliberal movement had during the negotiation and implementation of the agreement. Nevertheless, due to the closed POS in Peru, this influence was only discursive and vanished quickly, after the Peruvian government sent an answer to Malmström, rejecting all accusations and arguing that the EU was illegitimately undermining Peru's sovereignty. Following this exchange, the EU stopped pressuring the Peruvian government (Romero 2018) and the limited discursive influence of the antineoliberal movement disappeared. Figure 2 summarizes this process from the movement's rights-based framing over European NGOs to the European Commission and back to the Peruvian government. Nevertheless, the studied movement never managed to seriously challenge the neoliberal model in Peru, due to the closed POS in the country.

Figure 2. The Influence of the Antineoliberal Movement in Peru



Source: Author's elaboration

ECUADOR: LIMITED CHANGES IN TRADE POLICY THROUGH THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION

One of the main differences between the two cases in this study lies in the recent past of the social movements under investigation. While the Peruvian movement had been weakened and unable to impede neoliberal reforms in the country for decades, the Ecuadorian movement had been, since the early 1990s, one of the strongest antineoliberal forces on the continent (Silva 2009).

The Indigenous sectors of the country assumed a leading role after their first nationwide uprising in 1990. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) became an influential political actor and the undisputed leader of the antineoliberal resistance. In 1995, CONAIE even created its own political party, Pachakutik. In 1997 and in 2000, Presidents Abdalá Bucaram and Jamil Mahuad had to resign in the face of mass mobilizations against their neoliberal market reforms (Lalander and Ospina 2012).

With the support of the Indigenous movement and an antineoliberal campaign, military general Lucio Gutiérrez took office in 2003. Pachakutik collaborated with the new government but was ultimately betrayed and weakened. Gutiérrez excluded the Indigenous leaders from policymaking, and his government assumed a neoliberal

agenda, including negotiating an FTA with the United States (Petras 2008). After breaking with the government, CONAIE supported mass protests that culminated in the ousting of Gutiérrez in 2005. Even if this failed direct political participation would eventually divide and weaken the Indigenous movement, CONAIE and its allies were still the most important antineoliberal force in Ecuador (Silva 2009).

Like the Peruvian case, the antineoliberal movement that opposed the MTA with the EU in Ecuador was organized around a diverse network of different social organizations. A great variety of NGOs, labor unions, and the strong Indigenous movement were connected through a small organization called *Ecuador Decide* (Ecuador Decides). The network between the different actors related to Ecuador Decide had developed since the neoliberal Ecuadorian governments showed interest in the continental FTAA and later in a bilateral FTA with the United States. The Indigenous movement was clearly the strongest antineoliberal force related to Ecuador Decide, but it also managed to create important ties with other social organizations, mainly ecological NGOs, labor organizations, and local academics (Silva 2009). With the fall of the Gutiérrez government, the proposed free trade projects were off the table, marking an important victory for the country's antineoliberal movement.

The Indigenous movement and its allies had not only led successful mass mobilizations against neoliberal reforms but also had effectively weakened the neoliberal hegemony in the country by establishing alternative demands in the political debate. In this context, Rafael Correa launched a presidential campaign in line with the Pink Tide of progressive left (and center-left) governments that had started to question the neoliberal development model in Latin America since the beginning of the twenty-first century. To win the 2006 presidential elections, Correa assumed many of the social movement's claims, including the rejection of FTAs with trade partners in the Global North (Becker 2013).

During the first years of Correa's presidency, the antineoliberal movement faced a relatively favorable POS and even found important brokers that established their discourses in the government's agenda. The president himself had taken a clear stance against these asymmetrical trade agreements (Acosta et al. 2006). Nevertheless, the relationship between Correa and the social movement eroded rapidly when the government started to promote export-oriented extractivism, especially in the rural and Indigenous territories of the country, and repressed critical voices (Becker 2013).

On the other side of the Polanyian double movement, the traditional economic elite of the country saw its POS worsen during the first years of the new left-wing government as it lost direct influence on the political institutions. However, the powerful economic groups that controlled the main export industries and the import sector of the country were able to gradually reinstate their influence on the economic policy agenda. When the country negotiated the agreement with the EU, the Ecuadorian exports to the European countries were very concentrated. Excluding oil, 29 percent of all exports to EU countries were bananas, 23 percent shrimp, 20 percent canned fish, 6 percent flowers, and another 6 percent cacao grains. All these sectors were controlled by a few powerful families.

Regarding imports from the EU, just 56 Ecuadorian corporations controlled more than half of all the European products that entered the Andean country (Cajas-Guijarro 2018). The main actors who promoted the MTA with the EU in Ecuador were closely tied to this export and import elite. This promarket movement was led by business organizations like the Corporation for Promoting Imports and Exports (CORPEI), the Ecuadorian Association of Banana Exporters (AEBE), the Ecuadorian Federation of Exporters (FEDEXPOR), the National Chamber of Fishery (CNP), the National Chamber of Aquaculture (CNA), the Ecuadorian Chamber of Tuna Industries and Processors (CEIPA), and the Ecuadorian Association of Tuna Producers (ATUNTEC). Still, the Ecuadorian elite was less united than in Peru, which made the POS for the antineoliberal movement more favorable (Silva 2009).

In sum, the neoliberal hegemony in Ecuador was heavily questioned after decades of political and economic crisis, as well as large-scale mobilizations against market reform. During the first few years of Correa's government, the antineoliberal movement also benefited from relatively open institutions, high raw material prices, and low levels of political pressure by the EU, which opened political opportunities and made it possible to establish its critical discourses on the political agenda.

Framing of Sovereignties and Rejection of the MTA

As a result of its relative power and a more favorable POS, the antineoliberal movement in Ecuador framed the threats and opportunities of the MTA with the EU in a more radical way. Reflecting the leading role of the Indigenous sector, wide portions of the movement rejected the MTA on the grounds of traditional Indigenous demands for sovereignty. The fact that Ecuador had not signed similar agreements before and the existence of regional alternatives to neoliberal FTAs (Quiliconi 2013) also helped to establish this more radical framing process.

The movement's dominant way of framing the dangers of the MTA was closely related to sovereignties. Not only the powerful Indigenous movement but also many environmental NGOs and other allies framed food sovereignty as a viable and necessary alternative to free trade, which would expand the agricultural export industry. The concept of food sovereignty was originally developed by the transnational organization *Vía Campesina* as a form of empowering farmworkers and consumers through autonomous and sustainable production and consumption of agricultural products (Páez 2015). From this perspective, the MTA with the EU was rejected for promoting industrial agriculture and export-oriented production, which would endanger food sovereignty by destroying the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and biodiversity in Ecuador (CDES and IEE 2014; Daza 2015).

By promoting modern export-oriented agriculture in Indigenous territories, the MTA also was seen as a threat to the Indigenous peoples' traditional and ancestral ways of living. In Thus the agreement was seen not only as a threat to food sovereignty but also as a danger to territorial and cultural sovereignty. This framing was based on an Indigenous worldview and again reflected the dominant position of the Indigenous sectors in the antineoliberal movement (Quevedo 2019).

Of course, the framing around food sovereignty was not shared by all the actors in the Ecuadorian movement. Articulating this framing on the basis of the Indigenous worldview created problems, especially with the urban sectors of the movement, which reflected the latent presence of coloniality in the urban population of the country (something emphasized by many Indigenous leaders who were interviewed for this study). Many union organizations and NGOs in the cities struggled to relate to the demand for food sovereignty and assumed positions much closer to the rights-based framing that predominated in the Peruvian case. On the other hand, most ecological NGOs and even many academics (Acosta et al. 2006) were drawn to the more radical framing of sovereignties, especially before Ecuador signed the MTA. After the implementation of the agreement, internal disagreements grew. While the Indigenous movement and its closest allies maintained a position of radical rejection of the MTA, more moderate actors tried to gain influence within the parameters of the MTA through their rights-based framing, especially labor unions related to the export sector. This internal division weakened the movement's unity in terms of framing at a time when it faced an increasingly closed POS (Burbano 2019), thus explaining the very limited influence of the movement during the implementation of the agreement.

On the other side of the double movement, the economic elites framed the MTA as an opportunity for the Ecuadorian export sector and for the consumers in the country. As in Peru, the promarket movement presented the agreement with the EU as a necessary step to opening new markets for the country's export products while also emphasizing the new consumption possibilities the agreement would offer through the influx of a greater variety of European products at lower prices. One important difference with the Peruvian case was that the Ecuadorian promarket movement could also frame the rejection of the MTA as a major threat to the competitiveness of the Ecuadorian economy, especially after the neighboring countries Peru and Colombia had signed the agreement in 2012 (Quiliconi 2014).

Changes in Trade Policy Before the Neoliberal Turn

After decades of political crisis and mass mobilizations, the antineoliberal movement in Ecuador had established its critical discourses on the government's political agenda, mainly through domestic academics as brokers. This influence of the movement was reflected in the new Constitution of 2008, which led to a delay in the MTA negotiation process and the establishment of some exceptions in the accession protocol. Nevertheless, the POS for the antineoliberal movement worsened quickly, due to domestic and global dynamics. In this context, the promarket movement of the country managed to make its interests prevail; Ecuador subscribed to the MTA, and the government inaugurated a new phase of open trade policy.

The first government of Rafael Correa (2007–9) not only included many claims of the social movement (Becker 2013) but also gave high positions to a significant number of critical academics with close ties to the antineoliberal movement of the country. One of the movement's most prominent brokers in this context was the economist Alberto Acosta, who presided over the Constituent Assembly in 2008.

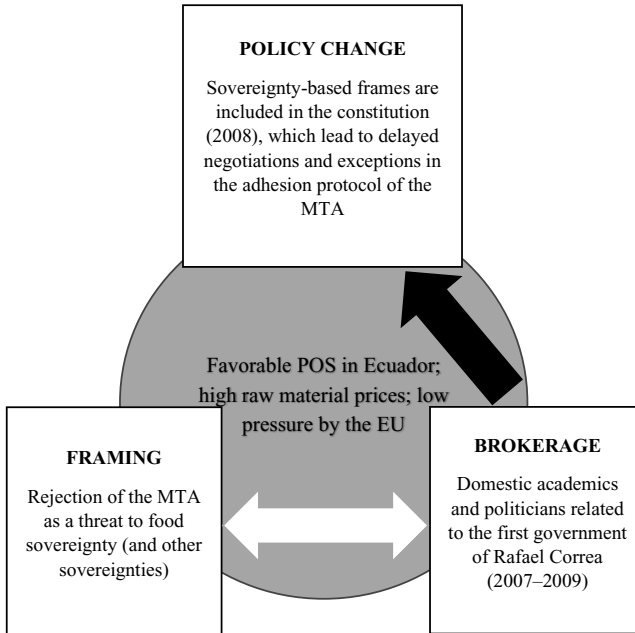
The government had responded to one of the antineoliberal movement's central demands by starting the process of drafting a new constitution for the country. Through Acosta and other brokers, the constitutional text came to include many of the movement's most important claims: It defined Ecuador as a plurinational state, granting autonomy to Indigenous communities; it included *Sumak Kawsay*, or *Buen Vivir*, the protection of Mother Nature, and food sovereignty as some of the country's main political objectives (Acosta 2012).¹ For many observers, the new Ecuadorian constitution was one of the most progressive ones in the world, especially in terms of Indigenous rights and environmental protection. In 2008, the text was accepted by more than 64 percent of the Ecuadorian voters (López and Cubillos 2009), showing how the Indigenous movement had successfully challenged the neoliberal hegemony, and also the persistent coloniality in Ecuadorian civil society and political institutions (Walsh 2012).

Furthermore, some of the antineoliberal movement's brokers had direct access to the negotiation process with the EU. Alongside Alberto Acosta, other critical academics like Pedro Páez, Fander Falconí, René Ramírez, Katuska King, Kinnto Lucas, and Pabel Muñoz occupied different functions in the main government institutions in charge of economic planning. As a result, the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (SENPLADES) wrote in the development plan for the period 2009–2013 that Ecuador should block the negotiation of “free trade agreements, which would limit the sovereignty to promote an endogenous economic model for a Good Life (*Buen Vivir*)” (SENPLADES 2009, 78).

The government's adoption of the movement's critical discourses complicated the interbloc negotiations between the EU and the CAN and partly explain why Ecuador abandoned the bilateral negotiations with the EU in mid-2009. Therefore, the antineoliberal movement clearly influenced the negotiation process of the agreement more than just discursively, as it generated a tangible change in Ecuador's trade policy (Preusser 2022). Figure 3 summarizes this process of influence in the Ecuadorian case.

Nevertheless, the internal and external elements of the POS soon started eroding for the antineoliberal movement in Ecuador. After his reelection in 2009, Rafael Correa broke with most of the social movement's brokers while granting the traditional economic elite more influence in the government (Preusser 2022). At the same time, Correa implemented a policy of repression and co-optation that increasingly weakened the social movement (Becker 2013). Correa even expelled 26 foreign NGOs (*La República* 2012), which could have helped the domestic movement as brokers to develop stronger transnational advocacy networks. The government hollowed out many of the critical discourses of the social movements by giving certain functions to Indigenous leaders and constantly using terms like *Sumak Kawsay* and food sovereignty. At the same time, the government's progressive discourse obscured and legitimized a policy based on natural resource extraction and export orientation that endangered these Indigenous concepts (Lewis 2016). In civil society, many of the formerly widely accepted antineoliberal claims lost support because of Rafael Correa's instrumentalization of the underlying discourses (Chérrez 2019).

Figure 3. The Influence of the Antineoliberal Movement in Ecuador



Source: Author's elaboration

Meanwhile, the POS also worsened on the global level. Raw material prices started falling in 2012, putting high pressure on the economic model the Correa government had promoted in the previous years (Gudynas 2010; Svampa 2019). Facing lower world market prices for exports, the government had to increase its budget deficits to sustain its popular redistribution programs for the urban middle and lower classes (Bizberg 2021). Almost simultaneously, the EU increased the pressure on Ecuador to sign the MTA. First, the European bloc reached an agreement with Peru and Colombia in 2012, which put Ecuador's export sector at a disadvantage compared to its neighbors. Furthermore, the EU decided to remove Ecuador from the list of countries that received tariff benefits through the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) by 2015 (Schade 2016). While worsening the POS for the antineoliberal movement in Ecuador, the increasing external pressure made the pro-market movement's framing of the MTA as a necessary measure to keep Ecuador's economy competitive more attractive to the population and the political decisionmakers.

Pressured by the economic elite, the government decided to return to the negotiation table in 2014. While representatives of the business organizations had direct access to the government and managed to convince the president of the importance of joining the MTA, many activists close to Ecuador Decide were repressed and threatened (Muñoz 2019). After just a few months of negotiations, an

agreement on Ecuador's accession to the MTA was reached. In 2016, the European Parliament and the Ecuadorian Assembly both ratified the agreement with great majorities; the Constitutional Court in Ecuador immediately ruled that the agreement did not violate the constitution. In January 2017, the MTA took effect in Ecuador. After concluding the negotiations, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Commerce explicitly thanked the big business organizations of the country for their contributions during the process (Ministerio de Comercio Exterior (Ecuador) 2017), which showed the direct influence of the promarket movement on the negotiations, as well as the deterioration of the POS for the antineoliberal movement.

Even if the antineoliberal movement was not able to avoid Ecuador's accession to the MTA, it still had indirect influence on the negotiated agreement through the constitution. Some of the most progressive parts of the constitutional text incompatible with the MTA (Acosta 2012; Fundación Heifer 2014). Therefore, the EU had to include minor changes in the adhesion protocol for Ecuador. One of the most important of these modifications was that local peasants were given the right to exchange their seeds freely, something that Peruvian and Colombian farmers could not do in the framework of the agreement. Furthermore, most sectors of public procurement in Ecuador were excluded from liberalization to comply with the constitutional requirements. For vulnerable agricultural products (dairy, meat, cacao, chocolate, beans, etc.), Ecuador achieved longer periods until the complete elimination of tariffs or higher thresholds for permitted imports from the EU (Latorre 2017). In this way, the constitutional guidelines for food sovereignty protected some sectors of the Ecuadorian economy from European competition.

Despite these achievements in the negotiation process, the subscription of the MTA was still a defeat for the antineoliberal movement in Ecuador (Preusser 2022), especially because it marked just the first step toward deeper trade liberalization in the country (Cajas-Guijarro 2018). None of the movement's representatives were satisfied with the adhesion protocol, arguing that it did not include sufficient protection mechanisms for the local population, the environment, and food sovereignty (Herrera Morocho 2020).

After the agreement took effect, the antineoliberal movement struggled with an internal division that weakened the internal framing process. On the one hand, NGOs and labor unions tried to influence the implementation process through the MTA's mechanisms for civil society participation, promoting the enforcement of Title IX guarantees for labor rights and environmental protection. On the other hand, the more radical actors of the movement, especially Indigenous and peasant organizations, held on to their sovereignty-based framing and decided to not legitimize the MTA through their participation (Suárez 2019). One of the most prominent actors of the first group was the Trade Union Association of Agricultural and Peasant Banana Workers (ASTAC). Together with the German NGO FES-ILDIS, ASTAC developed a complaint against the violation of banana workers' rights in the context of the MTA with the EU (Acosta and Macaroff 2019), but it was completely ignored by the domestic institutions and never reached the EU. ASTAC's general director, Jorge

Acosta, stated that the participation mechanisms were just “a way of legitimizing an illegitimate agreement” (Acosta 2020).

While most actors of the antineoliberal movement abandoned the Title IX participation mechanisms due to disappointing results, the new Ecuadorian governments of Lenin Moreno (2017–21) and Guillermo Lasso (since 2021) started negotiating new FTAs with the United States and China. This lack of influence during the implementation of the MTA reflected not only the deterioration of the POS for the antineoliberal movement in Ecuador, but also its problems creating a unifying frame and a strong transnational network with foreign brokers after the country’s accession to the agreement.

CONCLUSIONS

The antineoliberal movements in Peru and Ecuador were unable to influence the negotiation and implementation process of the MTA with the EU in the way they had wished for. In both cases, the pro-market movement that promoted the MTA established its interests on the political agenda, and both countries implemented the agreement with the EU as part of a broader liberalization process. Nevertheless, the antineoliberal countermovements managed to achieve a certain influence at different moments. This article has explained the different types of influence in both cases as a result of framing and brokerage mechanisms that depended heavily on the domestic and international context (or political opportunity structure) in each country.

In Peru, the POS for the antineoliberal movement was extremely closed during the negotiation and implementation process of the MTA. The neoliberal model had gained undisputed hegemony since the Fujimori dictatorship, and the economic elite that promoted trade liberalization was well represented in the political institutions of the country. In this context, the antineoliberal movement accepted the necessity of FTAs. Its framing of the MTA centered on labor rights and environmental standards, given that these topics were included in the agreement’s sustainability chapter (Title IX). During the negotiation process, this framing was widely marginalized and unable to penetrate the political agenda of the agreement. But during the implementation of the MTA, the Peruvian antineoliberal movement found new political opportunities through its European brokers and briefly managed to establish the demand for labor rights and environmental standards within the EU institutions. Through a boomerang effect, the European Commission put pressure on the Peruvian government to address labor rights violations and enforce the agreement’s Title IX. Nevertheless, the Peruvian authorities rejected the EU’s critique and maintained its neoliberal policy; hence the influence of the antineoliberal movement never generated a change in trade policy.

In Ecuador, the antineoliberal movement faced a relatively favorable POS, characterized by a crisis of the neoliberal political elite, open domestic institutions, and high raw material prices. In this context, the movement managed to install its critical discourses (including food sovereignty and the rejection of FTAs) on the country’s political agenda. During the first years of Correa’s presidency, the movement had important brokers in high government positions who helped institutionalize its

demands, especially in the Constitution of 2008. As a result, the negotiations between Ecuador and the EU were delayed. Even after the POS worsened for the antineoliberal movement and the government finalized the country's adhesion to the MTA, the constitution protected certain vulnerable sectors from indiscriminate liberalization. Thus the Ecuadorian antineoliberal movement generated changes in the country's trade policy, at least for a time. However, falling world market prices, political pressure from the EU, growing repression and co-optation by increasingly closed domestic institutions, and the resurgence of the economic elite in the country deteriorated the POS for the movement, which was ultimately unable to resist a new era of neoliberal trade liberalization in Ecuador.

The comparative analysis of this article has shown how different domestic and international factors increased or decreased political opportunities for antineoliberal social movements in Peru and Ecuador to influence the negotiation or implementation of the MTA with the EU. By identifying key elements of POS and linking them to the important relational mechanisms of framing and brokerage, the findings of this investigation aim to inspire future research in the field. Most clearly, the explanatory model of this article could be used to analyze the influence of the social movements in the other two Andean countries that negotiated the MTA with the EU: Colombia (signed in 2012) and Bolivia (did not sign). At the same time, the framework also allows the study of other antineoliberal movements in the Global South and their influence on international trade policies. In this sense, this article builds on previous work and represents another step toward deepening our understanding of political opportunities and limitations for social movements that resist neoliberal trade liberalization in the contemporary age of globalization.

NOTE

1. *Sumak Kawsay* is Kichwa for good life; the Indigenous concept stands for an alternative to neoliberal capitalism, emphasizing the harmony between all members of society and the environment.

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