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The Indigenous Movement and the Struggle for Political Representation in Bolivia

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The Indigenous Movement and the Struggle for Political Representation in Bolivia

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family who were my support from the distance throughout these years. Growing up in a country full of contradictions and inequalities and having the opportunity of traveling to other countries in Latin America had opened my eyes to a new reality. In vast part this thesis is dedicated to those underrepresented groups that have the courage to mobilize and demand justice and equality, women, indigenous people and Afro-Latinos who were and still are my inspiration. I also must dedicate my thesis to the indigenous people of Bolivia who are showing the world that a difference can be made in altering the political discourses and structures.

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Abstract

The theme of ethnic identity in politics is gaining importance in countries such as Bolivia, where people recently elected their first indigenous President. The Indigenous movement has been able to incorporate themselves in the state apparatus and have produced new political policies and constitutional instruments. They represent an alternative to the “white” political elites who governed them for many decades. This study analyzes the dynamics within the Indigenous social movement in Bolivia and how they reinforced a composite vision of a participatory democratic society through political representation. The results of this participation (and, moreover, political representation) can be seen in the presidential election of 2005, as well as the election of senators and deputies and the new Constitution of 2009. The case studied here provides insight into the processes of how political representation can be obtained by the oppressed and excluded, in this case the indigenous people of Bolivia, who – for centuries – were a majority governed by a white minority. In this context, the importance of ethnicity and identity, in which discourses transformed views of an indigenous consciousness, can be seen in their political demands.

Chapter I: Introduction

Politics in Latin America for many decades has been like a changing mask that covers up the realities of ethnicity, gender and other forms of inequality. There are still some countries in Latin America where women and traditionally marginalized ethnic groups do not have political representation in the state; however, recent changes brought up by dynamic processes (involving social movements and state apparatus) have changed the political nature of the region. There has been a democratic opening characterized by a continuous spirit of struggle. The theme of ethnic identity in politics is gaining importance in countries such as Bolivia, where people recently elected their first indigenous President. According to some scholars, the Indigenous movement in Latin America is one of the main aspects of modern politics (Van Cott 2005, Yashar 2005).

These dynamic social movements have been able to incorporate themselves in the state apparatus and have produced new political policies and constitutional instruments. In Bolivia the Indigenous movement has been able to insert themselves in a broader discourse about international political interests (neoliberal reforms) and foreign policy agendas. The dynamics of confrontation between these groups and political parties have created a milieu of permanent struggle between stability and instability. In Bolivia for example, new political actors have been able to emerge from this struggle and insert themselves in the political arena through mobilization¹. They represent an alternative to the “white” political elites who governed them for many decades. Other Latin American

¹ According to Eduardo Canel (1997:207) “Mobilization is the process by which a group assembles resources (material and/or non-material) and places them under collective control for the explicit purpose of pursuing the group’s interests through collective action.”

countries, such as Peru and Panama, led by the Indigenous movements are also following the pattern of mobilization.² It can be speculated that the Indigenous movement in Bolivia is an inspiration for all of the other movements in the region. Even though indigenous networks throughout the region are reacting to an international dimension that includes neoliberal reforms, for the purpose of this study the Indigenous movement will be revised at a local/regional scope. Latin America has been characterized by alternating the political power between authoritarianism and democracy during the 1960's until the 1980's, so it is fair to say that 2000's is the decade of indigenous identity politics.

There is a conflictive co-existence between antagonistic political forces developing in uncertain state of democracy that appears to be more participative. After the Second World War and during the Cold War, social movements made breakthroughs. Before then, we can see grassroots movements leading popular struggles in the region. Some of the common struggles are the fight for freedom of speech, religion, land and rights. One recalls the example of the proletariat coming together in unions to demand better salaries and working conditions. Other examples are the Communist parties who arose to ensure constitutional rights and join the trade union actions.

However, at the beginning of the 1980's new types of urban and rural organizations have demanded new political institutions. In Brazil, the "Estado Novo"(1937-1945), a fascist government that had democratic populist elements due to

² In Panama the protests are about projects involving the mines and hydroelectric sources. In Peru protesters insist on the repeal of laws encouraging foreign investment and exploitation in their territories of oil and mineral wealth.

the claims of social movements is a good representative of this struggle, it was.³ According to Harry Vanden (2008), the issue today of social movements acting against the governing elite is a continuation of the struggles that have haunted Latin America since colonial – if not pre-colonial – times. Popular resistance, the reorganization of civil society and the struggle for democratic ideas, are part of political representation. Looking at the political processes in Latin America, it can be noticed that sociological interpretations of the collective cultural identity changed the view of their political reality and institutions.

This study seeks to show that the stability of democracy depends not only on its institutions, but also on political attitudes. Social movements are collective forces that reinforce ideas and convictions within society. According to Glen David Kuecker (2008), a success for social movements is the creation and implementation of an enhanced political imagination. The different movements in turn have different types of identities that unify them.⁴ The discursive identities put pressure on a particular region creating a political representation identified by its territoriality. Ideology is the most important tool for social movements; without it there is no cause. The power of social movements is not centralized; on the contrary, it is open to new ideas and further battles. New social movements have defined new identities and communities, and also demanded the reconceptualization of citizenship rights (Kuecker 2008).

³ Women's movements gained more participation during the Estado Novo. Some of their agendas pass through legislation.

⁴ Among these working class, students, environmentalists, women and racial groups (Indigenous, black) as well as others.

This study also analyzes the dynamics within the Indigenous social movement in Bolivia and how they reinforced a composite vision of a participatory democratic society through political representation. Social movements seem to be altering the role of the state and the political arena, which challenges the participatory forms of governance. Social movements are decentralizing the power of the state and playing an important role in the ways politics are conducted. As Michel Foucault (1988:3) explains, “When an individual or a social group manages to block a field of relations of power, to render them impassive and invariable and to prevent all reversibility of movement – by means of instruments which can be economic as well as political or military – we are facing what can be called a state of domination” (As cited by David Slater 2008: 34). The Bolivian context provides an opportunity to look at those relations of power; the demands made on the state today are claims for political, social and economic inclusion in the state.

The legislation of the “ethnic quotas” is an example of governance responding to political representation. The socialization that has been attained widely by social movements has succeeded in diversifying the political representation. Along these lines, Mala Htun (2008) says that groups historically excluded (women, blacks and indigenous) are increasing their representation in political spheres. One of the reasons why there is more political representation for the excluded is the fact that social movements have fought for this representation; working to achieve popular support and then winning seats in national elections. Therefore, political identity is an important element of these social movements and the political representation that arises during the struggle of governance.

In other words, the underground becomes mainstream. Luis Albala-Bertrand (1992) indicates that under political participation (based on a pluralistic political culture)

political parties coordinate their interests and represent grassroots groups competing for state power. In Bolivia, it seems that along with social movement's formation, indigenous people have been increasingly active and participated in elections not only as voters but also as political actors. In Bolivia, the results of this participation (and, moreover, political representation) can be seen in the presidential election of 2005, as well as the election of senators and deputies and the new Constitution of 2009.

The case studied here provides insight into the processes of how political representation can be obtained by the oppressed and excluded, in this case the indigenous people of Bolivia, who – for centuries – were a majority governed by a white minority. Recently available data strongly suggests that the political participation of indigenous Bolivians has increased.⁵ In particular, it appears that indigenous people in Bolivia are more likely to participate in elections. In Bolivia, recent data also demonstrates that a high number of Bolivians believe that the indigenous people have helped the country to become more democratic.⁶

I intend to examine how the ethnic nature of Bolivian society and social mobilization has started the decentralization of the government, causing at the same time a major increase in the participation and inclusion of the indigenous people. This study seeks to show that the struggle for citizenship rights depends not only on its institutions but also on political attitudes. Social movements are collective forces that reinforce ideas and convictions within society.

Mobilizations in Bolivia came from the miners and peasants from the altiplano and rural areas, alongside urban workers and the poor. This study takes into consideration

⁵ Lapop 2010.

⁶ Lapop 2004.

the colonial period, the Republic, the period of Bolivia's 1952 national revolution, the Military regimes of the 1960's and the return to democracy from the 1980's to recent times. It will also consider some important examples of popular mobilizations like the Chaco War (1932–35), the Water War (2000) and the Gas War (2003). Some contemporary events, like the creation of the political party MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) that was born in the protests, the New Constitution of 2009 and more importantly, the election of Evo Morales, will also be discussed. The socialization that has been attained widely by social movements has succeeded in diversifying the political representation.

How did the Indigenous social movements influence political representation in Bolivia? For centuries, Bolivian indigenous people have been excluded from positions in the government and denied access to the state and its institutions. It is through mobilizations, the creation of representative political parties, the passage of laws, constitutional reforms and participation and success in national elections that their political representation has been achieved. As this study will show, indigenous representation has shifted from the merely social to the political.

Thesis Structure

Chapter II focuses on the history of Bolivia. It uses an ethnographic analysis of the Andean community to provide a deeper understanding of the origins of the indigenous people. It also examines the process of conquest and the establishment of institutions during the Colonial period that laid the foundations of the dominant ideologies and hierarchical structures that marginalized the majority of Bolivia's

inhabitants. This chapter sheds light on the Republican years and the long persistence of class power relations. It also uses a narrative perspective, to demonstrate how democracy has been experienced in the country.

Chapter III describes the emergence of the indigenous social movements in Bolivia. It focuses on the processes by which these movements achieved mobilization through protests, party formations and constitutional reforms. It also provides empirical data that demonstrates the increasing participation and representation of the indigenous people in the political structure of Bolivia. It explores the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party, which served as the vehicle within which the indigenous population achieved political representation.

Chapter IV tries to explain how the indigenous representation was achieved in Bolivian politics. It also reflects on notions of citizenship and indigenous rights. This chapter is presented in the context of a social movement that appears to be part of an evolutionary phase that is constructing representation in the state apparatus and is against international neoliberal policies.

In conclusion, Bolivia is moving forward to a period where past inequities can now be resolved with political action and policy-making instead of social action. Ethnicity and identity are achieving a relevant importance in Bolivian politics. The traditional views of the indigenous people as passive actors are not longer part of the dominant European imaginary. The active participation of the Indigenous movements in state apparatus is restructuring discourses at national and international levels.

Chapter II: The History of the Indigenous People of Bolivia

“El pueblo boliviano, de composición plural, desde la profundidad de la historia, inspirado en las luchas del pasado, en la sublevación indígena anticolonial, en la independencia, en las luchas populares de liberación, en las marchas indígenas, sociales y sindicales, en las guerras del agua y de octubre, en las luchas por la tierra y territorio, y con la memoria de nuestros mártires, construimos un nuevo Estado”.

Preámbulo de la Nueva Constitución Bolivariana aprobada en el 2009

Introduction

Bolivia should not be studied without reference to the most important element that defines Bolivia's identity: a population of indigenous people that amounts to more than 60% of nation's approximately nine million inhabitants (Wigberto Rivero, 2003:10). According to Donna Lee Van Cott (2005:50), “Indians are a majority of the population in the highland provinces of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosi, as well as the valleys and lowlands of the departments of Cochabamba and Chuquisaca.” Keeping in mind the majority of Bolivia's population and its relevance to daily life, the dynamics of who they are and what constitutes them is certainly the lens through which we should examine social change in Bolivia. In terms of the defining what the concept of “Indian” entails for the purpose of this study Maria L. Lagos (1994:131) explains that “...the concept ‘indio’ (Indian) as an ‘ethnic’ idiom for social closure- a closure that both delineates and reflects interclass antagonisms between town and village ‘elites.’” The Indigenous population is the central element of a story characterized by social conflict and class issues. This ethnic reality is what sparked the emergence of the Indigenous social movement and their revolutionary crisis.

To understand the context in which social class clashes in Bolivia are based, one must look back in time and analyze the trajectory of the indigenous people in Latin America. Studying processes of economic and social construction among the indigenous people is relevant to the purpose of this investigation. Bolivia's Indigenous societies have endured centuries of marginalization. Currently they face a major challenge: to incorporate or resist the emerging neoliberal practices that affect their territories.⁷ Their response to the neoliberal practices has been the continuous uprisings. Looking at uprisings among Bolivia's Indigenous mobilization it has not changed much over the years; even the obstructions of the roads between cities are part of an old technique of resisting authority. In 1781, for example, indigenous rebels closed down the royal highway across the altiplano (Brooke Larson, 1998:235).

Political institutions during the colonial and post-colonial periods oppressed the indigenous population, forcing to surrender their lands and work for the benefit of others. Indigenous people in the nineteenth century were second-class citizens whose position was improved by neither paternalistic proposals nor assimilation techniques. The Indigenous political struggle of the twenty first century is the culmination of the long path of exploitation and injustice walked by Bolivia's indigenous from the period of colonial empires to that of Republican States. This chapter tries to provide a discreet background of the history that pertains to the processes of transformation of the Bolivian State and all its actors, from the white elites to the "cholos"⁸ and indigenous people.

⁷ For the purpose of this study Neoliberalism will be defined as an "economic model of untrammelled free market capitalism (Veltmeyer, 2007: 8).

⁸ This term refers to someone who is "mestizo". In Bolivia it is interpreted as someone who has a blood mix between Indian and White.

The Andean Community

Since the Spanish Conquest of the indigenous' territory in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century Latin America has been the site of a centuries-long struggle against the conquistadores and their descendants. The Spanish Conquest has been the source of numerous battles for freedom, land, culture, rights and ultimately political power. In the Andean Highlands the indigenous people had a very organized communal system.

The Indian population was divided into separate communities, each of them managing an established portion of land, practicing different forms of collective ownership. The communities were named "ayllus" and they were composed of indigenous people descended from a common ancestor. According to Larson (1998:21), in Indian society "kin groups were bounded units composed of an extended network of households. Households were joined together to form larger, nested groups such as the ayllu, the lineage, and the community, tribe, or ethnic lordship (senorio)."

The Incas, who around the 900 AD invaded much of the territory of what is Bolivia today, left a profound mark on the Bolivian Indigenous community. The Incan Empire had developed a diverse political structure, and their own religion and language. As Charles Arnade (1984:209) mentions "by the fifteenth century the Incas with their capital in Cuzco had conquered most of today's Bolivia and had imposed their language, Quechua, and their culture. The agricultural plan of the Incan Empire for the region of Bolivia was a great influence on Bolivia's indigenous peoples' own agriculture. Their system of land division, learned from the Inca's system, separated the collectively owned

land into sections called “tupus.”

The “tupus” were distributed to the people in amounts necessary to support their numbers of dependents; the size of a tupu thus depended upon the size of the family to whom it was allocated. This land could not be given away, sold or exchanged; the only thing that was considered theirs as property was the product of the holding. Another structure was the class structures among the indigenous people, they had regional chiefs known as the “caciques”, “who held land independently of the “ayllu” and extracted free labor from the “ayllu” members they governed” (Herbert Klein, 2003:14-15).

The indigenous communities had a strong tradition of cooperation and unity among themselves. For instance, all the members of the community mutually cultivated the land that was set aside for the God of the Sun. According to Larson (1998:21), something that was crucial in the Andean context was that “kinship provided a language and an ideology defining and legitimating patterns of give and take, at both the ayllu and the state level, which gave a certain cohesion and unity to kin groups scattered widely across space.” Later on, this ideology characterized the meaning of land and ownership and social relations among the Indigenous movements.

Indigenous people identified themselves as cultural groups by their dialects, styles of dress, music and local rituals and deities. Repeatedly they had to struggle with the intrusion of the conqueror and their descendants. The “encomienda” system was one of the sources of conflict between indigenous population and Spaniards. The “encomendero”, was a Spaniard given the authority of educating indigenous people in religious instruction and Spanish norms. In return this person was granted with the labor,

service and production of goods of the indigenous people. In terms of social structure the indigenous people was the new peasant class. This encomienda system created a paternalistic relation of power and control over the peasant class. As Herbert Klein (2003:xii) says “educated by Europeans to European norms, and even practicing a religion distinct from the folk Catholicism of the peasants, the ‘whites’ ruled over and exploited the peasantry.”

La Conquista y Colonia

The conquest of the Inca Empire by Francisco Pizarro opened the way for the actual submission of Bolivia in 1535 and the establishment of the Audiencia of Charcas, a fundamental part of the Viceroyalty of Peru, which covered all of what today is Bolivia. The city of Potosi, the most populous in America in 1574, became a major mining center for the exploitation of the silver mines of Cerro Rico de Potosi and in 1611 was the largest silver producer in the world. According to Robert Alexander (1958:xiv), “The link between the rural and urban Bolivia, between the white, Europeanized civilization and the traditional Indian one, was the mining camps.” It is precisely in this context that colonial and postcolonial Bolivia should be viewed.

The creation of colonial society was unequal and ignored the native inhabitants of the land. The empire of Charcas Castilian established in the Andes was a crucial creation of the conquest: a minority of whites dominated the indigenous people. The absence of ethnic diversity recognition of the Spaniards demonstrates a lack of importance from the colonial authorities. As Larson (1998:134) mentions “Cultural differences among the Andean peoples faded into the background as colonial authorities homogenized Andean

peoples into a single category of “Indian.” The indigenous population suffered unequal treatment; they were looked upon as an isolated and repressed mass of a lower rank than the poorest and most illiterate of the conquerors. The conquerors thought that they themselves were more capable of controlling the land, labor and taxes than the indigenous people. For example, the exploitation of mineral wealth being seen as paramount, a monopoly was established in order to assess actual mineral production and prevent evasion of taxes, the parcel.

One of the most important government institutions in colonial America was the Royal Audience, an organization engaged to perform judicial functions. The Audiencia of Charcas was the highest legal authority established in the city of Chuquisaca, also known then and now as La Plata Sucre. For a little over 200 years the territory of Bolivia was one of the most prosperous and densely populated Spanish viceroys. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, Potosi, began to decline due to the exhaustion of silver.

The pace of social change in Bolivia was influenced by factors such as population decline and exploitation of the “mita.” This system forced indigenous people between 18 and 50 years of age who fulfilled the role of primary producers to pay a tax, which was the equivalent of the parcel. This tax system generated a demographic collapse of the Indian population, causing a decrease in mining production due to lack of labor. In response to this situation the conquerors made adjustments to the tax system, lowering the tax and helping to revive the declining level of mining production.

Mining production itself, especially of silver, the economic basis of the time, was a method of exploitation. As Arnade (1984) mentions the indigenous peoples were exploited, “some as force labor in the mines, other fell into peonage.” Silver mining did

not benefit the people, but rather the Spanish crown, and the monopolization of the market, the imposition of high tax rates, and compulsory labor in mines and elsewhere generated conflict between miners and Spanish merchants for control of the mining industry, a situation that triggered open warfare between the different sides.

The depression due to the decline in silver production, which reached its peak in the late decades of the seventeenth century, began to produce a fundamental change in the economic area and the organization within the society of Charcas. The immediate effect was the depopulation of urban centers. Demographic contraction and the decline in silver production led to a reduction of the large domestic markets that supplied the mining centers, a situation that affected growing areas, turning them into subsistence economies. The landed class suffered a decline, and many large estates were converted into plots that were leased.

As the “encomienda” system declined a new economic development was created in direction of the agricultural production. This action created a new class named the “hacendados”, that were landowners. The mining crisis also led to structural changes, forcing a reorganization of commercial links and reform of previously existing restrictions, such as control of mining exports. In this situation the crown not only reorganized the business, but also subsidized the price of mercury used by local miners, and cut taxes. But all those changes, particularly related to the exploitation of the rural population, were not productive to farmers, since they remained opposed to their masters.

Finally, the Great Rebellion of Tupac Amaru in 1780, considered one of the first large demonstrations in pursuit of freedom and justice for its people was triggered. In Bolivia, Aymara communities were led by Tomas Katari, who combined judicial tactics

with armed mobilization to overturn colonial political authority. The insurgents allied temporarily with Creole elites to seize power in Oruro. According to Arnade (1984) during this rebellion many habitants died of hunger, around eighty thousand people died. This uprising has been examined by historians as a “regional movement of protest against a list of grievances which were first aired peacefully by petitions and demands” (Arnade, 1984:66). As Sinclair Thomson (2003) argues, the movement was skillfully assembled, Aymaras under the leadership of Tupaj Katari joining forces with Quechua troops under Tupamarista command to sweep across the district. He also states that even though they seemed interconnected “these movements retained substantial autonomy as regional movements” (Thomson, 2003:118) and not as national as one would have thought.

However, this Great Rebellion was not new in Bolivia; in fact local uprisings occurred all over Upper Peru throughout the colonial period. As Klein (2003) explains these revolts occurred in rural and urban areas, some of them in times of crisis or protests against royal officials. The difference from these protests can be illustrated in their claims that were against “bad governors” and not the King that represented the Monarchy. This is precisely why the Tupac Amaru rebellion represents a different case of struggle led by indigenous people against the royalty, as it aimed at ending the monarchy and establish a native empire/government. The end of 1781 stopped the rebellion by the brutal execution of their leaders and a confiscation of property by the Spaniards.

Right after the rebellion the Bourbon reforms of the eighteenth century led to renewed wealth in the mining and trading sectors, although this was not in response of the revolt. According to Larson (1998:135-6), “As the Bourbons tightened and centralized state authority over Indian communities in the aftermath of the 1781

rebellions and tried to reverse the trend toward population dispersion and migration among indigenous people, they were intent upon resurrecting the old Toledan model of the village.” The Crown enacted a massive reorganization of political and administrative authority with an emphasis on trade and the economic field. Despite the changes, they continued to maintain the oppressive system of magistrates of indigenous population, called Sergeants, who exploited the indigenous people through the systems used for the forced sale and intervention in the field of political organization.

Many of the leaders of the New World struggling for independence were educated in universities and in touch with intellectual currents and political movements from Europe and North America that argued for liberty and against tyranny. This new thinking, exemplified by the American Revolution in 1775-1783 and the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804, had a profound impact on the thinking of people in Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America and served as an inspiration for those fighting for freedom and independence in the struggles between 1809 to 1841.

The initial efforts to win independence found no support among the indigenous groups or from other urban Creole (“Criollo”) ⁹elites and ended up being defeated, leaving farms devastated, mines destroyed and an economy in ruins. But that lack of enthusiasm did not destroy the belief among a number of emerging Creole rural guerrilla leaders that they could get support from all social classes in Bolivia, including the peasant masses. At the end only the Creole elites assumed total political and economical control of the country after independence (Arnade, 1984).

In 1816 Simon Bolivar revitalized the revolutionary movement in Venezuela.

⁹ This term was originated in the Colonial period and it meant a Spaniard (of Spanish parents) born in America (Arnade, 1984).

After the victory over the Spanish in 1824 at the Battle of Ayacucho and the death of General Olañeta, Bolívar and Antonio José de Sucre led the military liberation of Charcas. In 1825 the independent Republic of Bolivia was created.

The Republic and Class Power Relations

Since emancipation, Bolivia was plunged into a chronic state of revolution and civil war. The name given to the free territory was the “Republic of Bolívar.” The first years of the Republic were marked by political instability and constant external threats that jeopardized its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The independence eliminated royal powers and took away the land that belonged to the Catholic Church. According to Klein (2003) the republican regimes were abusive and their economic expansion was at the cost of the indigenous workers laboring at the mines or in agriculture.

Klein (2003:xiii) has noted “much of local politics of the nineteenth and twentieth century involved the white elite’s attempts to organize themselves into a cohesive group capable of denying power to the cholos and Indians.” In 1825, the Bolivian Constitution stated that only literate men with property or who rented had access to citizenship. As Alexander (1958:18) notes “Not only was the Indian landless, he was deprived of citizenship in the Republic. Suffrage was the monopoly of those who were literate, which excluded the great mass of the indigenous population.” The majority of the indigenous people were illiterate, which denied them opportunities to access an equal status. The white elites saw the indigenous people as “lazy, illiterate and unknown.” It is not surprising that until a few years ago, the indigenous peoples were considered marginal players in national development and market dynamics. As Klein (2003:xii) indicates

“Indians were denied access to power except as they abandoned their traditional norms and languages and integrated into the national society as cholos or whites.”

The republican period did not benefit the indigenous people in matters of social and political life of the nation. According to Alexander (1958:13), “The republican regimes which succeeded the Spaniards did far more damage to the Indian community and way of life than the conquerors.” As a starting point the republican governments that were established represented only a small percentage of the population. Only those who were Spanish-speaking literates had access to participate in the political system. In respect to these regimes they did not have democratic or participatory view of governance and it is obvious that the Indian population was excluded from this processes. As Klein (2003) explains, during the republican regimes the elites were concerned on how to keep the Indian masses out of politics. They used the army as a tool for submission and suppress of the indigenous uprisings.

Bolivia began its independent life devastated by war and economic depression, a situation that accompanied a capitalized mining sector and a subsistence-based economy. In order to reorganize and re-develop the economy, it was decided to nationalize all abandoned mines by inviting foreign capitalists to return to the mines to begin operations, but high costs were prohibitive. Bolivia was still a predominantly rural society and gave the impression of being in worse condition than at the beginning of the republic in the 1820s. Among the higher costs was that of labor, caused by the abolition of the “mita.” Employers now had to pay high wages if they wanted to attract farmers away from agriculture. The mid nineteenth century was characterized by crisis due to the state’s lack of resources. During the early years of this period the educational level of society was

extremely low and there was no reason to expect improvements soon. Ten thousand mines lay abandoned, and the rest of domestic industry could meet only the needs of the domestic population. Bolivia also lost access to the sea after losing a war against Chile between 1879 till 1883.

In 1866 communal ownership of land was abolished, and the land of indigenous people who could not pay government-imposed fees was auctioned off (Alexander, 1958). According to Alexander (1958:14), “The Bolivian Indian was thus reduced to a sharecropping tenant on the landholding of a white or mestizo master. He was granted a small portion of land upon which to build a miserable adobe hut and on which to grow a small amount of wheat and maintain a few animals for the sustenance of the family.” Many practices dating from the colonial periods were still in use, and indigenous people were also forced to render personal service to the master of the land.

Other matters, such as the growth of the mining industry and the discovery of significant deposits of silver in the Caracoles region, drew the attention of Bolivia's neighbors. This caused governments and foreign investors to show their interest in Bolivia, and the Bolivian government, in need of financial resources, granted concessions to them. It is precisely “...the impact of modern economic change in the second half of the nineteenth century forced the disintegration of these closed political worlds, and the elite were forced to expand the political system to include the middle class and urban workers” (Klein 2003, p xiii).

Prices changed overnight and this had an adverse impact on exports. This uncertainty explains much of the conduct of the miners and the political leaders in the period of civilian rule after 1880. The growth in tin production in central Bolivia after

1900 was rooted in the transformations of the Conservative era, when the high price of silver on the world market led to advances in mining technology.

Economic growth defined the Conservative and Liberal governments in the second decade of the twentieth century. This growth began to affect clearly the mestizo and Indian industries and the expansion of farms led to a growing conflict with the agricultural community. As a result of these conflicts, agitation and organization of the workers until 1912 was held on the first day of May. An interesting contrast between the rural and the urban is illustrated by María L. Lagos (1994:153) who express that “In both dominant and local representations of ethnic identities, the urban setting –city or town- is associated with ‘whiteness,’ whereas the essence of ‘Indianess’ is situated in the countryside or rural village.”

Bolivia’s experience of independence, according to Thomson (2003:119) has been treated as an elitist confrontation in which indigenous people are looked at “with a detached gaze, or one in which they were manipulated from above and mobilized as cannon fodder.” The indigenous population were handled as colonized subjects that were given unequal and discriminatory nationality. They were excluded from the political sphere and from matters of citizenship. According to Klein (2003, p. xii) “Bolivia is, and has been since the sixteenth century Spanish conquest, a capitalist Western class-organized society in which the Indians were for many centuries an exploited class of workers.”

The country’s postcolonial legacies of the Creole elite rule encountered themselves among two dilemmas; in one hand the Conservatives with the idea that indigenous population were not considered people and by means they did not deserve to

have rights and on the other hand the Liberals that expressed the pursue to civilize them as a condition for citizenship and rights. A minority made of whites dominated the class and social status in Bolivia. In regards to indigenous people the Liberals imposed an attitude of tutelage (Guillermo Francovich 1956). Differentiated internally, the indigenous people remained repressed and with a lower status in society. In Latin America as Deborah Yashar (2007:63-64) explains policies promoted by the state persuade indigenous people to “shed their “Indian ways” and to assimilate into the mestizo (mixed culture).” The indigenous people had to abandoned their identity and culture in order to be considered a citizen. At the beginning of the XX century, the Indian was compared with the European white resulting in a strive for whitening the country.

The Chaco War

At the beginning of the 1930's the republican governments began to fall apart. The restrictiveness of participation in the regimes caused some important changes in the political ideologies. Some if these changes were reflected in “Marxist” thoughts among students, labor movements mobilization and Indian uprisings.¹⁰ This political system was ended with the Chaco War. The Chaco War, which began on July 18, 1932 and lasted 3 years resulted from clashes over oil fields by Standard Oil of New Jersey and Royal Dutch Shell, installed in Paraguay. The Chaco War marked a turning point in economic history and a precedent for social mobilization in the country.

The war destroyed the traditional systems of belief and momentum to think radically in the nature of Bolivian society. The Chaco War, “increased the government's debt, both internal and external; during this period the government started the habit of

¹⁰ The Indian uprising in 1927 was one at Jesus de Machaca and the other at Chayanta in Potosi. See Herbert Klein (2003: 170) for more information.

borrowing from the Banco Central, the inflationary spiral commenced, and the government's deficits grew" (Alexander, 1958:8). The post-war period left an impoverishment of the mining industry and a failure to capitalize the mines (Alexander 1958). It also served as a platform for new parties formations, some of three important political parties that were established were the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), Partido de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (PIR), and Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) (Alexander, 1958).

Since 1930 the country went back and forth with periods of internal conflicts. That year, a revolution overthrew President Hernando Siles, who had ruled since 1926 without convening the national legislature and had tried to extend its mandate. A cabal led by Vice President José Luis Tejada Sorzano in 1934 overthrew Daniel Salamanca, who had been elected president in 1931. Tejada's government was overthrown by a military junta headed by Colonel David Toro, who attempted to rescue the country from the desperate situation that was as a result of the global recession and the conflict in the Chaco and Paraguay.

The reality of the Chaco War facilitated the creation of revolutionary political parties, such as the MNR. In regards to this war Klein (2003:177) analyzes that "The war shattered the traditional belief systems and led to a fundamental rethinking of the nature of the Bolivian society." The war also destroyed the traditional parties and beliefs. It brought of questions of national debate in regards to land, economic dependency, labor and Indian belonging.

The Revolution and Military Rule

In 1952 there was a revolution in which some of the current leadership of the

peasant organizations united with the political party MNR (Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario) to fight for the transformation of the country. The MNR famously made use of the peasantry to win the revolution and assume power. Henry Veltemeyer (2007:123) notes that “From the 1960’s to the 1970’s, the struggle for land and land reform was at the very epicenter of the class struggle in Central and South America.”

The MNR captured the indigenous Bolivians support by forming a solid organizational structure that correlated cultural class with the articulation of a hybrid identity that combined identifications of peasants and Indigenous together. Along with those same lines, Luis Albala- Bertrand (1992:147) indicates that under political participation (based on a pluralistic political culture) political parties coordinate their interests and represents grass root groups competing for state power.

For an understanding of the revolution that occurred in the months following April 1952, it is essential to understand the nature of society and the Bolivian economy in the mid-century. While it still had the classic features of an underdeveloped economy, mid-twentieth century Bolivia had experienced a social change. The degree of literacy and the number of children attending school had increased after the Chaco War. In addition, each of the departments of Bolivia had grown faster than the overall population.

Bolivia was a classic example of the hacienda system; the extreme inequality in land distribution was essential for the control of farm labor and cheap labor. Tin was another source of income that was decreasing during the 1950’s. This challenging situation that Bolivia faced was the root of the revolution of 1952. According to Klein after the revolution the “Indians were finally given political power, along with their lands and the basic export sector was nationalized” (2003, p.xiii).

The MNR reorganized its forces to consolidate his own base, fully joining the miners, who created a new national labor federation, the Bolivian Workers Central (COB). As Roberta Rice (2010: 279) mentioned and quoted “The MNR reflected populist, nationalist, and anti-oligarchic sentiments (Rivera 1987). The party sought to establish an alliance of the middle-class, workers, and peasants as the base of support for its plans to dismantle the traditional oligarchic or elitist society.” Alexander (1958:xiv) states that “The miners were the first largely Indian group to become discontented with things as they were...It was the miners who became the backbone of the revolutionary movement which reached its culmination on April 9, 1952.”

After the first months under the direction of the MNR led by President Paz Estenssoro and Hernan Siles Suazo, started a process of nationalizing all mines of the three great tin companies. As Klein (2003: xiv) indicates, “Bolivian entrepreneurs made up of whites and cholos dominated the mining industry.” A frequent problem in Bolivia has been adherence of clientelism that affects all the spheres. As Pilar Domingo (2005:1731) explains, “Clientelism in Bolivia penetrates public office and government at all levels, and both overshadows and steers other aspects of the policy making process.”

Richard Graham (1990) has called “clientelism” something that facilitates political and social empowering of patrons by controlling their clients. Clientelism entails a symbiotic relationship of power; for the clients in this arrangement access always depends on the benevolence of the patron, who can provide or withhold benefits based on the client’s behavior. The relationship between indigenous people and political parties is one example of clientelism in Bolivia. As Van Cott (2005:52) explains “Relations between Indigenous peoples and political parties began in the period following the Chaco

War (1932-35) when ex-soldiers, frustrated with their leaders and the oligarchic state, became politically active.”

In mid-1952 and the first half of 1953 rural society began to collapse. The peasants began to organize unions, farmers with the encouragement of the COB creating a conflict in April 1952. The COB was one of the first organizations were the Aymara and the Quechua, improved collaboration between them and organized in topics that concerned them such as health and education. As Alexander (1958:30) notes the “MNR leaders were also socially minded, had supported the social programs of the Toro and Busch regimes, and were sympathetic to the labor movement particularly among the miners.” During the first years of the revolution, miners held an unusual influence within the government. The crucial importance of the role that the miners engaged in the revolution of 1952 meant the government took them into consideration.

The years after the revolution were crucial for the struggle for land reform not only in Bolivia as Veltmeyer (2007:123) pointed out “from the 1960’s to the 1970’s, the struggle for land and land reform was at the very epicenter of the class struggle in Central and South America.” In Bolivia landownership was aristocratic in principle as Waltraud Q. Morales (2009:569) explains the distribution was unequal in 1952 only “5 percent of landowners held over 90 percent of the land.” The Agrarian Reform Decree in 1953 restored the collective properties of Indigenous peasants.

In 1951 only 5 percent of Bolivians voted (Morales 2009). One of the “first acts of President Victor Paz Estenssoro was to issue a decree on July 21, 1952, establishing the principle of universal adult suffrage” (Alexander, 1958:80) by eliminating the literacy requirements. Even though the indigenous people were included in the universal suffrage

after the 1952 revolution, they continued to suffer from ethnic discrimination and political manipulation (Ticona and Albó 1995). All the political and socioeconomic change during the revolution focused on poor peasants without recognizing on the ethnic dimensions of exclusion in which indigenous peasants suffered.

In November 1964, just months after the elections and the triumph of Paz Estenssoro, the military by a bloodless coup, put the government in the hands of Vice President Barrientos. He insisted that his seizure of power was not a move against the previous revolution but a restoration of it. While on the one hand Barrientos repressed labor groups and the left, on the other he actively encouraged the new economic elite that was emerging in the mining sector. But his attempt to impose taxes on peasants resulted in a violent response and loss of support in rural areas. Under his mandate Comibol (Mine Corporation of Bolivia, *Corporacion Minera de Bolivia*) was placed under military control and the veto power of union leaders was abolished. The Comibol was a “semi-autonomous state enterprise to run any state-owned mines” (Klein, 2003:213). The military occupied the Catavi-Siglo XX mines in 1967 and massacred miners and their families (Klein 2003).

In January 1971, Colonel Hugo Banzer Suárez, Chief of the Military School launched a second coup attempt with the support of the right and center MNR and the fascist party the “Falange Socialista Boliviano (FSB). During the first years of the Banzer presidency, the economy improved rapidly. There was a remarkable increase in the production of petroleum, natural gas, and tin. Despite this economic growth, Bolivia reverted to the repression of earlier regimes. The new minister of interior, Colonel Andres Selich, ordered a massive crackdown on the left, abolished labor unions and

closed the universities.

The government brutally suppressed a general strike against the devaluation of the Bolivian peso in 1972. In 1974 price increases for basic goods and control of food prices resulted in roadblocks by peasants in the Cochabamba Valley and their subsequent massacre by the military. The governing alliance disintegrated almost immediately when the MNR and the FSB split. The armed forces were also divided, and various factions tried to overthrow the regime.

The economic improvement turned out to be a fairy tale, the production of petroleum declined sharply. The stability of the Banzer regime was superficial because the military remained divided by personal rivalry, ideological differences, and a generational gap. In regards to the authoritarian rule of Banzer, Morales (2009:571-572) says that his policies “protected the newly prospectus middle class and economic elite of the Media Luna (southeastern lowlands, especially Santa Cruz) whose interests in mining, import-export, petroleum, and agricultural business fueled economic growth, but he repressed labor, peasants, students and most political parties.” Growing civilian opposition was centered in the labor sector, despite the renewed military occupation of the mines. Radical students and peasant movements criticized the government.

As Klein (2003) explains in regards to the support of military regimes Bolivia was far more willing to trust their interests to a democratic party system than to continue with unknown military regimes. Along these lines Rice (2010:280) points that “between July 1978 and July 1980, the country experienced four successive military coups.” She also

suggests “throughout the dictatorship, the country's leading social and political organizations mobilized to demand a return to democracy.”

However, in the 1980s, the only ones who spoke of indigenous claims were the “Kataristas,” a small political-cultural movement of urban Aymara. As Veltmeyer (2007:124) explains, “the 1980s provided a very different context: one of debt, neo-liberal reform in the guise of the SAP, a return to democracy and civilian rule, decentralized government decision-making, and an emergent active civil society.” The SAP or structural adjustment program was a new economic structure based on the social relation of capital and labor.¹¹ Social movements in Bolivia have been able to present and alternative to this program. The “Manifiesto of Tihuanacu” by Katarista Genaro Flores evokes the Indigenous political frustration at the time:

If the peasants have voted for them (the white elite), it was because they had no other electoral choices. We had no party we could call our own. For a balance of interests and representation to exist, the peasants must have their own party that will reflect their social, cultural and economic interests. This is the only way we can truly and positively take part in the political process, and the only way to facilitate an authentic and integral rural development. (Manifiesto of Tiahuanacu 1980: 25)¹²

“Democracy” 1982-2005

In the 1980's ethnicity took a major role when lowland Indigenous movements

¹¹ See Henry Veltmeyer (2007:15).

¹² As quoted by Donna Lee Van Cott in *From Movements to Parties in Latin America* (2005: 54).

formed networks throughout Bolivia. During this period a transition from authoritarian rule to a democratic one occupied the Latin America territory. This is what some scholars have called the third wave of democracy. Bolivia was not excluded from this new wave that swept South America. Bolivia, in fact, after eighteen years of militarism, was entering into a new era with a new kind of regime.

The end of military rule produced an atmosphere of rising expectations and optimism among Bolivians. With democracy, one might expect that the marginalization that has been characteristic of Indian status would be replaced by full citizenship. As pointed out by Katherine Isbester (2010), electoral democracy is the most widespread form of government, with about 64 percent of the countries in the world. This system is characterized by the rule of the majority over the minority. In the case of Bolivia, however, the political elite, which was the minority, ruled the country for decades until 2005. Power was not dispersed among the civil society; causing considerable political anxiety and frustration. The problem of misrepresentation or participation in a democracy is a conflict of justice (Young 1997; Young 2000).

Hernan Siles Zuazo, one left wing leader of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR, Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario) who was allied to traditional labor leaders, peasant leaders and the radical intellectuals, revived the democratic political system. The severe economic crisis, and the political and social instability, filled the cup that poured the first drop of change. With a foreign debt of \$5 billion and not enough resources to even make the interest payment, and about 2 million Bolivians suffering starvation, Hernan Siles Zuazo became president of the nation for the second time. His administration started in 1982 and ended three years later in a country full of

instability. Siles was unable to control the labor movement that preceded his rule as early as the 1970's. Also, political parties, including the MNR turned against him.

Under his mandate the country was paralyzed several times because of political crises, coup plots, and general strikes. As Margaret E. Keck (1992:21) mentions, in some countries of Latin America, these transitional regimes confronted impressive foreign debts, pressure to implement International Monetary Fund (IMF) stabilization programs, low domestic growth rates and alarming rates of inflation. In the case of Bolivia, Siles was even kidnapped in 1984 by the elite anti-narcotics force until the American Ambassador intervened, which demonstrates the disequilibrium and mutability of the country.

Siles's solution for the economic crisis was to print more money, which worsened the situation. In the meantime the economic situation in the country was decaying gravely; it was suffering among other things from an external debt crisis. Veltmeyer (2007) defines the 1980's as a period of debt and neoliberal reforms. The economic crisis and the lack of proposals to solve the problem led to hyperinflation of 23,000%.

The elections of 1985 brought to prominence several political parties, including the "Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari" that represented the Indian rights party. That same year, Victor Paz Estenssoro a leader from the MNR party assumed the presidency. Estenssoro's answer to the extreme economic conditions was a "democracy with authority." He immediately tried to control the four-digit inflation and implemented austerity measures, including the closure of state enterprises. He named their fiscal, monetary and structural adjustment the "New Economic Policy" (NEP). The essential

element of this reform was a significant reduction in the size of the central government and a reduction of government interference in economic matters.

As Morales (2009:573) expresses, “this neoliberal austerity program drastically reduced the work force in the mines and bureaucracy, devaluated the peso, and held the line on wages.” The outcome for this scheme resulted in a great workforce reduction and dismembering of the workers unions, as Klein (2003:245) reports, COMIBOL¹³ was reduced from thirty thousand workers to seven thousand.

At the beginning of 1990, foreign confidence had been partially restored and Paz Estenssoro introduced more policies that would lead to privatization. He attempted to eliminate coca production and the sale of cocaine, supported by United States troops, but this measure was very unpopular, especially among indigenous people. Paz Estenssoro’s public policies drastically changed the political environment; many political actors were displaced and new leaders arose. Some international financial institutions started to play a role in the region such as the International Monetary Fund and The World Bank.

General unemployment rose to twenty percent. Some of the responses to his economic program met with authoritarian measures, as Morales points out (2009:573), “when Bolivia’s worker resisted with a national strike Paz Estenssoro imposed martial law and arrested and exiled hundreds of union leaders.” The NEP solution increased social inequality. “A stagnation and economic setback on the one hand, and an advance of civilian constitutional regimes over military dictatorships on the other in the 1980s was the explosion of social protests and collective actions” (Veltmeyer 2007:136). The

¹³ Corporacion Minera de Bolivia (Mine Company that operates in Bolivia).

democratic direction of Estenssoro consisted of an agreement between the major parties (MNR and ADN) that guaranteed him more influence to exercise control.

In 1988 the Law on Coca Regulation and Controlled Substances (Law 1008) criminalized coca leaf cultivation in most of the country. This act awoke the national “Peasant Coca Growers” Union. Juan Evo Morales Ayma became the leader of the “cocalero” movement. The Indigenous social movement grew stronger during this period of time. For them the right to grow the coca leaf was an important matter. Their demands later evolved to include civil, social and political rights. These demands were related to the unequal treatment that indigenous people had experienced over the years from the state. Some of these demands, as Klein mentions, included “agricultural prices, provisions for credit, education, and health (2003:243)”.

With an Indian leadership developing and performances of power mobilization, the elections of 1989 started. Jaime Paz Zamora became president of the republic and with him the “Bolivian Drug War” escalated. His administration also followed neoliberal tendencies. Zamora utilized the same old strategies of martial law to contend strikes and demonstrations. The result of these pseudo-democratic governments was the revival of the Bolivian labor and Indigenous movements that challenged the state politics. Both the administrations of Estenssoro and Zamora were backed by the United States, which had a special interest in narcotics regulations. In 1990 while Zamora was in power, a significant march starting at Beni and ending in La Paz was made up of some eight hundred indigenous people from twelve tribes that demanded more protection for their lands. The demands of the Indigenous social movements were widely ignored by the state. Some of the inequality present at the time included the fact that “in rural areas throughout the

country, only 52.8 percent of men and 37.8 percent of women over the age of fifteen had identity documents (Ticona et al. 1995:183-4)” as quoted by Van Cott (2005:85).

Paz Zamora supported by his political party the Nationalist Democratic Action (Accion Democratica Nacionalista, AND) was opposed to the complete eradication of coca and the “War on Drugs” promoted by United States President George H. Bush. In the late 1980’s “relocated Quechua and Aymara miners fled to Chaparre to colonize, Evo Morales and the coca-growers have been fighting a low intensity war with the anti-narcotics forces led by US DEA agents and the US embassy” (Postero, 2004:205).

In 1993 Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada took the Presidential Chair in alliance with the MBL (Movimiento Bolivia Libre), a leftist party, and the Indigenous party Tupac Katari Revolutionary Liberation Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Katari de Liberación, MRTKL). His election was possible thanks to the “Katarista” vote, which shows how important the Indigenous vote had become in national politics. He applied the “Plan de Todos,” an ambitious program of structural reforms for Bolivia.

Sanchez de Lozada carried out the capitalization with private foreign investors of the top five companies in the state. The capitalization was a “strategy that privatized Bolivia’s principal state enterprises and established the conditions for foreign direct investment (FDI)” (Eduardo Gamarra, 2008:128). He made and enacted pension reform law of popular participation and created 311 municipalities that benefited directly with income in proportion to its population, carried out the administrative decentralization law, enacted education reform and the INRA law.

Under his mandate Bolivia joined in MERCOSUR¹⁴ as an associate. According to Haroldo Dilla Alfonso (1997:175-6), “The creation of municipal governments can encourage participatory and democracy-building projects. However, it can also encourage new forms of authoritarianism because it opens a preferred space for the development of local elites, and also according to Cerroni, because it can allow fundamental decisions to be taken in a barely controlled manner.”

As some other scholars assert, the neoliberal policy implementation in Latin America stimulated mass mobilization (Walton and Shefner 1994, Lopez Maya 1999, Almeida 2002, Auyero 2002). It is not until 1994 that the government decided to take action on the matter. According to Nancy Grey Postero and Leon Zamosc (2004:2) “states have been forced to respond to them and their demands, which have included territory, autonomy, cultural recognition, and reforms to existing state structures (Assies et al. 2000).”

During the administration of President Sanchez de Lozada new constitutional and economic reforms were made. Some of the changes that the state made started with the establishment of a Constitutional Reform. This one was reformed in 1994 and it transformed the definition of Bolivia, stating that it is a “free, independent, sovereign country, that it was also ‘multiethnic and pluricultural’” (Klein 2003:261). The administration also promoted the legal status of the Indigenous population; some of these laws guaranteed the communal property rights of land. Lozada also gave more autonomy to the municipalities with the decrees of the Law of Popular Participation (LLP), the Law of Decentralization and the Education Reform Law.

¹⁴ Common Market of the Southern Cone.

The LLP amounted to a measure that facilitated the incorporation of the (largely excluded) rural and Indigenous population to political life, and has included the legal recognition of Indigenous communities" (Domingo, 2005:1733). According to Htun (2008:89) the reforms approved by Sanchez de Lozada were very effective as she mentions; "in the 1995 local elections, record numbers of Indians (around 470) were elected to municipal councils: they represented 29 percent of the total and 62 percent of councils in the highland regions." Along these lines Van Cott (1994) finds that these reforms cleared the way for indigenous people to play critical roles in the process of democratization. Some scholars have argued that the reforms possibly helped mature the civil society in which the social movement in Bolivia acted (Escobar and Alvarez 1998, Van Cott 1994, Postero, 2004).

This transformation brought new diverse leaders into the political scene by electing 437 municipal councilmen who were Indigenous peasants. Also, it promoted the election of nine deputies from Indigenous led parties (Htun, 2008:90). As Klein mentions, "between the reorganization of municipal government and the increasing power of the Senate and Congress, Bolivia has moved away from its traditional centralist and presidentialist system of government, a process that is not likely to reverse itself under future democratic governments" (2003:263). The strengthening of local democracy was crucial to giving more direct power to the citizens. Since then, municipal elections have been held regularly.

In 1997 Hugo Banzer took office as president of Bolivia. His term was characterized by an aggressive eradication of coca and the "Plan Dignity" or "Zero Coca" policy implementation. In 2000 the people of Bolivia were upset by all of these

restrictions and violent protests erupted in Cochabamba. The manifestations were in response to the privatization of water and also affected by the resentment of the “Zero Coca” policy. The situation in the country exploded with the “Water War” in Cochabamba and the Chapare peasants in large blocks and the central highlands. The state plan was to privatize the water, a suggestion made by the World Bank for Latin America. Indigenous and peasants of Cochabamba called all citizens to perform intense mobilization. Once again the country experienced several days of protests, blockades, repression and deaths. Due to the level of instability and health reasons, Banzer resigned in 2001 and left in charge the Vice President, Jorge Quiroga Ramirez. Quiroga continued the same political and neoliberal policies of his party’s platform.

This period was characterized by an economic crisis, a recession that led to the fall of the GDP and accusations of government corruption. His plan to eradicate Coca was unwelcome and resulted in a series of blockades and protests. A remarkable action in 1997 was the institution of a quota system in which women must represent 30 percent of the candidates for the Congress on each contending party (Potter and Zurita, 2009:240). This represents a success for the minority groups that were misrepresented. However, this demonstrates how class and gender were gradually been addressed but ethnicity has remained outside the official discourse of presidents and policy making.

Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada came back to presidency for the second time in 2002. Under his mandate mass protests and marches demanding the nationalization of gas were intense. The acute economic crisis was affecting to a great extent the peasants, Indigenous and miners triggered bloodshed in the country. He also decided to export gas

to other countries, which caused some unions and political parties including the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) to call a general strike.

In February 2003, the government of then President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada announced a tax between 4.2% and 12.5% on wages. Once again social movements responded against the government economic imposition. About 33 people died and 210 were wounded in the social mobilization. The same year October 2003 saw the “Gas War.” One more time there was a popular uprising, this time in the city of El Alto, led by the Federation of Neighborhood Associations (Fejuve) and COR (Central Obrera Regional). They reached growers, peasants and miners from around the country with their unions and federations. El Alto had stone blocks and ditches on streets and arteries that connect to neighboring countries like Peru and Chile. The struggle left more than 60 civilians dead and 400 wounded by the Bolivian army.

In February 2004, congress approved constitutional changes that allowed social movements and Indigenous organizations to participate in elections (Van Cott 2005). After Bolivians demanded president Lozada’s resignation he fled the country and Carlos Mesa (Vice President) assumed the presidency. Mesa ruled for eighteen months with the informal support of Morales and Felipe Quispe. Soon enough in May 16, 2005 roadblocks, marches and protests began spreading gradually. Once again, the privatization of water was the motive for the mobilization. Protesters were demanding the nationalization of the natural resource that the company “Aguas del Illimani” (Suez of France) owned.

Just a month later, the nation was paralyzed. Again, peasants, workers, urban poor and indigenous people took to the streets. The main energy resource in Bolivia,

hydrocarbons, was slated for nationalization. When Mesa resigned the transition was quite difficult, suffering pressure from the social movements, particularly the COR and FEJUVE. On June 10 that same year miners joined the demonstrations and marched to close the Parliament with the intention of preventing the succession to the presidency of Horlando Vaca Diez. Amid so much instability and insecurity he declined his rightful constitutional succession. President of the Supreme Court Justice, Eduardo Rodriguez Veltze, assumed the presidency and called elections in December 2005.

As a result, Evo Morales became the first Indigenous leader and coca farmer to assume the presidency in January 2006. “President Evo Morales in his first 100 days in office was to declare hydrocarbon resources (primarily gas) the property of the state, thus nationalizing (albeit in limited form) the industry. This move to reverse a well-entrenched policy of privatization is a major challenge for the left (given the forces of support for privatization in the congress), but in the Bolivian context the government had little to no choice. Morales promised to nationalize hydrocarbons, fight corruption and excess of multinationals, to legalize the Coca and a better distribution of land. His government can be distinguish for enabling communication and interchange with other Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, among others.

Evo Morales victory was not an easy path; his political figure was built in the arena of mobilizations, protests and Indigenous struggle. Morales’s political figure was born in the March of 1994 in which his Aymara and Quechua origins increased the sympathy and support from the movement (Van Cott 2005). Along these lines Nancy Postero (2010:64) eloquently argues, “The ascendance of formerly marginalized peasant and indigenous peoples to political power was not uncontested. Although those

identifying themselves as Indigenous are the majority in the country, there are wide regional divisions.” As Postero (2010) mentions these regional divisions had an ethno-racial character that preceded colonial and post-colonial times.

According to Vanden (2007:20), “It is the democratization and celebration of civil society that have created the political space where the masses can maneuver and mobilize and in which political movements can grow.” In Bolivia the transition to democracy was accompanied by a sense of hope from the popular sectors that expected a change in the country’s politics and more democratic participation. The popular movement was not only solidly behind the policy of nationalizing the country’s oil and gas reserves, but it was actively mobilized to demand it (Veltmeyer 2007:132).

Conclusion

The history of Bolivia is marked by the political exclusion of the indigenous people and a series of efforts demanding their inclusion in the political system. The relationship between the state that was controlled by the political elite and the indigenous people is characterized by severe problems of inequality, which contributed to high levels of instability. From revolts to protests the history of Bolivia shows instability and pursue by indigenous peoples of legitimacy.

Since the colonial and post-colonial times Bolivia was in the control of a few elites who governed the country along their private interests. The Indigenous population since it did not represent their interest was marginalized. The struggle for political participation was a memorable race throughout the centuries. It seems that some uprisings, protests and laws gave the indigenous people the opportunity to become more participative.

Until 2005 ethnicity was not a politically relevant framework for excluding indigenous people. However, it was relevant for broad mobilizations of indigenous people. Before 2005, Indigenous groups were simply treated as “poor peasants” by the government as well as left wing parties, movements and unions. The Cocalero movement of Evo Morales changes this political landscape dramatically. As to all indigenous people suffered additional discrimination compared to non-Indigenous peasants, as this chapter has shown. The following chapter will take a closer look at Indigenous mobilizations and movement in Bolivia.

Chapter III: The Formation of the Indigenous Movement

Introduction

The Bolivian Indigenous movement that has appeared on the political stage in recent years represents the outcome of many years of repression and domination by the elite white minority that has governed Bolivia for centuries. Bolivia is still visibly suffering through a period of social transformation in which, as Postero (2004:2) relates, “States have been forced to respond to them [Bolivia’s Indigenous population] and their

demands, which have included territory, autonomy, cultural recognition, and reforms to existing state structures.”

The activism of the Indigenous movement, the entire uprising in the form of marches and road blockades, cleared a path for the election of President Evo Morales - Aymara and “cocalero” leader and member of the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) - in December of 2005. Morales became the first Indigenous president of Bolivia, raising high hopes among the popular sectors. According to Ibester (2010:18), social movements can emerge in different ways, “First, they can emerge when democratic representations do not adequately express or engage with new civil society organizations, such as the women's movement. Second, social movements can emerge among the poor because they have no stake in the existing system, so they do not consider using political parties or democratic mechanisms. Third, social movements can be seen as a form of organizing parallel to democratic institutions, both of which are necessary to ensure citizen’s voices are being heard.”

Bolivia is one of the countries in Latin America with the highest percentage of indigenous people. This Indigenous population is not homogeneous; it is composed of different ethnicities including Quechuas, Aymaras, Guaranies, Yuquis, Chiquitanos, among others. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this majority has been living in the margins of national and political life for centuries, with political and economic power concentrated in the hands of the dominant Westernized segments of society, mostly Whites and “mestizos”. Even during periods of “democratic” rule Bolivian society has been completely exclusionary, the Indigenous majority lacking any representation in

parliament. “Progressive” left wing parties and movements have equally ignored the special situation of indigenous people treating them simply as part of the poor peasantry.

The Indigenous movement has opened up the eyes of the majority by bringing to light the marginalization and discrimination that has been their lot. The Indigenous movement in Bolivia presents a new alternative to the old concept of the Creoles ruling the nation-state as well as an example of a new kind of ethnical resurgence movement in Latin America, because of its strong alliance with the labor movement and peasant unions. According to Vanden (2007:21), “these new movements do not employ or advocate the radical, revolutionary restructuring of the state through violent revolution. Rather, their approach is to work within civil society and push government and society to their limits to achieve the necessary change and restructuring.” The members of the Indigenous movement are not only demanding recognition of their rights. Their class identity is very much related to their ethnicity because classes in Bolivia were constructed upon their ethno-racial character, the vast majority of peasants and miners or workers being are indigenous people.

Popular Mobilization and Politics

The Indigenous movement in Bolivia is not homogeneous. In fact there are several divisions and fragmentations among its members, which has been a major obstacle to their efforts to achieve political and economical power, severely limiting their ability to present their demands. Political parties have taken advantage of these ruptures, allying with Indian voters from different ethnicities. According to John Crabtree (2008: 2) the movement was united “by the new tide of indigenous politics (even though this

meant different things to different groups) and by the conviction that the country's raw materials should be developed in ways that would benefit all Bolivians-especially the poorest, more indigenous sectors. It was not until the presidential campaign of 2005 that a high degree of unity could be observed.

There is a tendency within the Bolivian Indigenous community to form political parties based on Aymara or Quechua ethnic identity. According to Van Cott (2005) ethnic parties were formed in Bolivia much earlier than in any other country in South America. Two opposing Indian forces can be identified: the Aymara organized as the Kataristas of the Altiplano, and, championing the interests of the Quechua, the notorious "cocaleros" movement. As Van Cott (2005:52) points out, "The Aymara have led the campesino movement, sometimes espousing an exclusionary Aymara ethnonationalism, while the Quechua are more numerous but less politically organized and ethnonationalistic." Even though they have dissimilar ideologies and also different leaders both of them became an important part of the political scene.

Katarismo started strong in the seventies with figures like Felipe Quispe who gained prominence on the political scene by founding the "Movimiento Indigena Pachacuti" (MIP, Indigenous Movement Pachacuti). According to Larson (1998:332), "Specifically, katarismo's agenda of ethnic (i.e., Aymara and Quechua) reinvindication called for a critical historiography that would place indigenous peoples (and ethnic issues) at the very center of Bolivia's modern political history." The MIP was dedicated to the principles and cultural values of indigenous people. They fought for such causes as agrarian reform, the cultivation of coca and the defense of the excluded. This political party also rejected government ideas about "pluriculturalism" and proposed a constitution

of their own Aymara, Quechua and Indigenous State. In the economic realm the MIP believed in the reconstruction of the old communal system based on the “ayllu” and the abolition of the Neoliberal system. Their demands coincided with the union movement in terms of peasant land rights, improving the economic status of indigenous people and protesting against the neoliberal policies of the State. In 1987 the coca growers led by Evo Morales created a new party, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS).

It was in Cochabamba in 1995 when the figure of Evo Morales became leader of the coca leaf movement. He spoke out against the interests of the Coca producers and state efforts to eradicate coca. Soon after his appearance on the local scene he became a member of the National Parliament. This marked a milestone in the quest for the political representation of social movements and municipal leaders. After this, Indigenous movements began to strive to reach government-controlled state structures.

The MAS main issues were the defense of the coca leaf and the opposition to the eradication of coca crops. The defense of the coca can be understood as the defense of the history and culture of the indigenous peoples. The MAS used the symbolism of the indigenous struggles in the past and opposed external pressures like that of the drug policy of the United States. The MAS did not intend to change the state’s model or the economic system; they merely demanded an improvement in the living conditions of indigenous people.

The ideology of the MAS has evolved considerably since the time of the first Coca demonstrations at the end of the twentieth century. In fact the current MAS program encompasses many more issues than just the defense of the coca leaf. These are important issues for the entire indigenous sector, such as environmental protection,

natural resources, biodiversity, alternative crops, bilingual education and multicultural models, autonomous development, and recognition of ethnic diversity. They also have delved into national sovereignty, equal rights between men and women, social justice, health and social security, participatory democracy, decentralization of the state, the strengthening of local authorities, the cancellation of external debt, among other issues.

According to Domingo (2005:1738), “The rise of both these political formations responds to a series of factors. Firstly, it is important to note that they are not conjunctive political phenomenon, but are rooted in the complex (and conflictive) *campesino* movement that gathered momentum with the foundation of the Confederation of Peasants Unions (Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia).¹⁵ Both Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe, in different ways, have won their support in hard-won grassroots power battles over several years. Secondly, they voice the demands of potentially large political constituencies -bearing in mind, albeit the high levels of electoral volatility in the Bolivian population- the politically disenfranchised and marginalized rural poor. Thirdly, especially in the case of Evo Morales, they have tapped into the widespread disaffection with the traditional political class.” However, MAS under Evo Morales, was finally able to overcome these divisions and forge a unified and coherent Indigenous movement.

The collapse in the price of tin (Bolivia’s principal mineral source) in 1985 and unemployment led miners to look for alternative jobs, such as the cultivation of coca leaves. The organization of the coca growers and workers followed very closely the miners’ organizing structure. The protesters used assemblies and leaders met institutional

¹⁵ The CSUTCB was founded in the late 1970s and it had functioned as a tool for Indigenous organizations.

measures and some of their actions included blocking the avenues and streets, marches and demonstrations with explosions of dynamite, among other activities. The movement around the “cocaleros” started first as a defense of the right to cultivate the coca leaf but in the 1990’s it broadened to become part of the indigenous discourse.

After the elections of 2005, the Indigenous movement had representatives in parliament, but continued to struggle in the streets because of the impossibility of presenting their proposals in the parliamentary forum. There is a tendency of the movement to articulate political parties, but some organizations like the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Bolivia (CIDOB), the Coordinator of the Indigenous Peoples Santa Cruz (CPESC), the National Council of Qullasuyo Allus and Markas (CONA-MAQ) do not participate in the political arena. But they had played an important role in the mobilizations and empowerment of the Indigenous movements.

The Movement in Action

Indigenous mobilizations in Bolivia were always in some ways political. After 1982, the democratic context in Bolivia allowed for a more political response from the Indigenous movement because it was a beneficial structure in which they could forged solidarity and placed their demands. The Indigenous social movement debate in Bolivia is about ethnicity and it can be observed during this political opening in the late 1980’s. As Bernd Reiter (2011:159) explains “Instead of treating these movements as “new,” it is more fruitful to examine them through the lens of an ever adapting and changing struggle for rights and recognition that takes advantage of political opportunities when they exist

and resorts to different protest repertoires and organizational forms when political organizing is made impossible by oppressive states or a lack of resources.”

The Bolivian Indigenous movement is characterized by its great capacity for mobilization. Such scholars as Yashar (2005:72) have reflected on this fact, noting that “the State, churches, unions, and/or NGOs have all played crucial roles in supporting the growth of social movements: networks enable people (or communities) to interact, to exchange information, to build social capital, and to mobilize for change” (As cited by Deere and Royce, 2009:8). As a tool to pressure the government, the movement practiced marches, hunger strikes, work stoppages and road blockades. Popular uprisings in Bolivia are common, given the inefficiency of the democratic route as a means of influencing government policies.

In fact, it seems that only through street protests and violent clashes have the popular sectors been able to protect their rights and achieve political representation. The Indigenous movement does not participate in all protests; however, it contributes to the mobilizations by fostering solidarity and unity of all the currents of the movement. It is significant that voter registration has increased greatly, this was in part because of “massive government sponsored voter registration campaign in rural areas between 1993 and 2002 (Van Cott, 2005:87). As Reiter (2009) mentions political organizing arises when the state allows for it, even when the state can either facilitate it or block this type of organizing.

The level of participation in protests in Bolivia is very prominent. The vitality of social movements in Bolivia represents the new popular forces of resistance and mass

mobilization. The following figure illustrates Bolivia with a 37% of participation in public protests, which represents the highest number of participation in Latin America.

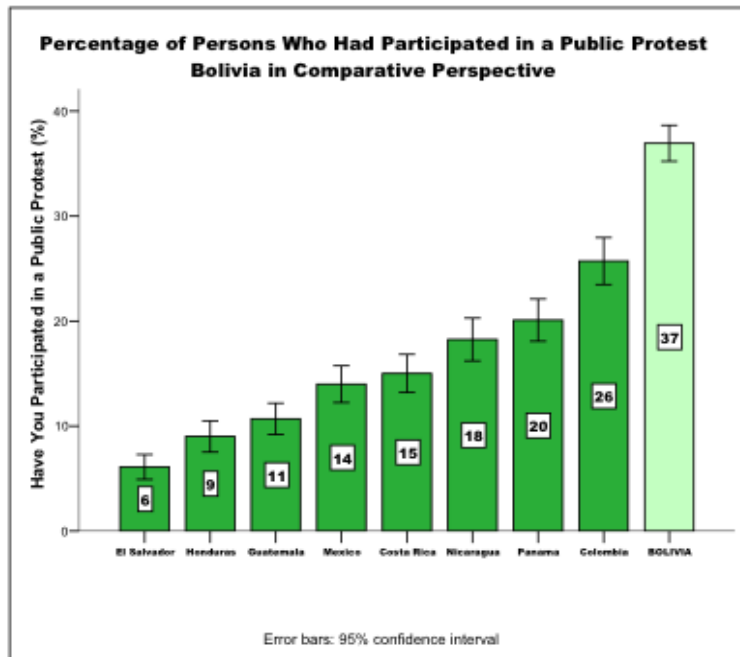


Figure 1 - Percentage of Persons Who Had Participated in Public Protest. Source: LAPOP 2004.

The following figure shows the acceptance of the different types of political participation. It includes blocking streets and roads, aggressive participation, invasion of property, overthrowing government and taking over factories and buildings. It is worth mention that the strategy of blocking the streets is the one who obtained greatest acceptance in Bolivia.

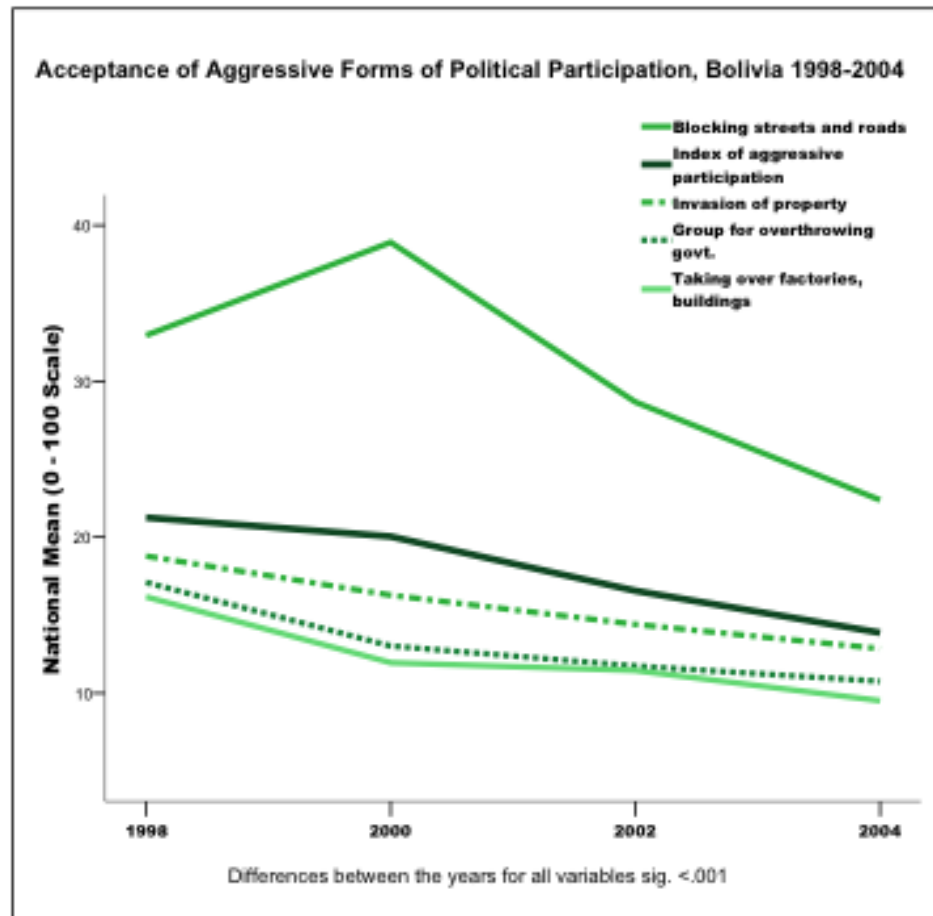


Figure 2- Acceptance of Aggressive Forms of Political Participation, Bolivia 1998-2004.
Source: LAPOP 2004.

However, once mobilized, the government did not seem to be responsive to the needs of their citizens. According to Vanden (2007:20), “As has all too often been the case in Latin America, the political systems have become unable to provide basic security in food, housing, education, employment, or monetary value and banking to wide sectors of the population.” Indeed, this insecurity along with neoliberal practices has been an inspiration for the majority of protests in the region. While all the upheavals in Bolivia related to the Indigenous movement are remarkable, for the purpose of this research I will

concentrate on several events that have contributed significantly to the recent political and social changes in Bolivian society: “The March for Territory and Dignity” in 1990, the “Water War” of 2000, the “Gas War” of 2003, the MAS party and Evo Morales, the foundation of the Conalcam, and the New Constitution of 2009.

Searching for Dignity

In the year 1990 communities in Bolivia including coca growers, Aymaras and Quechuas came together to defend their land and environment, mobilized to make their claims and demonstrate resistance against neoliberal policies and the inequitable state. These neoliberal policies included the privatization of land and natural resources (gas and water) for the benefit of multinational companies and white elites. The groups that put forward their demands were part of a broader movement of ethnic identity, directed against white domination. Veltmeyer (2007:124) reflects on this unity among these groups in Latin America in general saying that “In the 1990s, these new social movements in their turn gave way to a third wave of socio-political movements that were both peasant-based and peasant-led and, in some contexts, were rooted in the struggle of indigenous communities for land, territorial autonomy, and freedom and democracy if not social justice.”

Indigenous marches began back in 1987 in the territory of Chiman, where the State had granted logging concession to 17 firms without considering that the land was home to indigenous communities. The community was forced to evacuate their land, intimidated by the white settlers that were representing the interest of the companies.

The ongoing conflict between the logging and oil companies and East Indians became a struggle for survival. On February 17, 1989, the government of Victor Paz Estenssoro sided with the indigenous community, passing Resolution No. 205862. This resolution declares “the national and social necessity of recognition, assignment, and tenure of Indigenous territorial areas in order to guarantee their full economic and cultural development.”¹⁶

This law was not respected by the logging firms. In response, the first assembly of indigenous people of the region of Beni took place the same year. In the assembly they agreed to promote the resistance of their territory and founded the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Beni (CPIB). The following year, leaders of the territories in conflict organized a Commission’s March. The “March for Territory and Dignity” stretched all the way from the city of Trinidad to La Paz on August 15, 1990.

At first, the conflict affected indigenous people that lived in the forest, like the Mojeño, Siriono Yuracarés, Movimas and shamans; however, the march captured the support of various organizations such as the Guaraní People's Assembly, the CIDOB (Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia), coca growers and later, the indigenous residents of the department of La Paz, Aymara and Quechuas and other organizations such as the Confederation of Peasant Unions of Bolivia (CSUTCB). Some of the slogans read “Viva la unidad del pueblo contra los sirvientes del neoliberalismo!” (“Long live the unity of the people against the servants of neoliberalism!”) “Contra el gobierno vende-

¹⁶ See: Secretaría de Asuntos Étnicos de Género y Generacionales—Programa Indígena, Organización Internacional del Trabajo, Oficina Regional para América Latina y el Caribe-Lima-Perú, Proyecto BOL/92/102, Reforma de la Constitución Política de Bolivia en Relación con los Pueblos Indígenas—Propuesta de Articulado sobre Comunidades y Pueblos Indígenas para el Anteproyecto de Ley de Tierras, Informe de Misión, Raúl Arango Ochoa, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia, noviembre de 1994.

patrias!” (“Against our sell-out government!”), and “Muere este gobierno asesino y corrupto!” (“Die, corrupt assassin government!”) (Albro, 2005:251).

The two main demands of the March focused on the problem of “wild” Indian Territory, known to be used by the indigenous communities. They also demanded the suspension of logging and the departure of the companies from Chi-Manx multiethnic territory, removal of the cattle ranches from Sirionó territory and finally, respect and recognition of the culture of the indigenous peoples of Beni.

This March gained support from all the indigenous sectors around the region. The march undertaken by ethnic minorities of the East, managed to reunite to other indigenous groups, the Aymaras and Quechuas who had previously ignored the inquiries of the people who lived in the forest. A large gathering among all peoples of the Amazon and Andean countries took place during this demonstration. The participants of the march arrived in La Paz, and forced the government to negotiate. The march was very famous due to its scale, “700 men and women from lowland tribal groups walked 400 miles from the Amazon rain forest through the snow-capped Andes on route to La Paz” (Larson, 1998:336).

The march ended with a sense of victory after the government promised to accept all their demands, however nothing had been firmly gained yet. The government promised to forward the development of a “Law of the Indigenous Peoples of the East.” The companies, protecting their interests, pressed the government to annul the decrees concerning the indigenous people. Despite this fact the march gained some achievements by amendments recognizing indigenous territories in the constitution.

Inside the Water War

One of the leading indigenous uprisings in recent years was the “Water War.” This popular mobilization started in April 2000 in response to the privatization of water by the Bechtel Company. People of Cochabamba insisted on the cancellation of the contract with “Aguas del Tunari,” headed by a private partnership between Bechtel and others. The contract gave the company the right to distribute water in the Cochabamba department and the right to increase prices. According to Albro (2005:256), this process was driven by the shared experiences of “people suffering disenfranchisement under the State’s ongoing neoliberal policies and articulated around a shared concern for the shrinking public commons, in this case the water.” The very idea that water could be privately owned differs against the indigenous beliefs and Cosmology.

The increase in water rates sparked protests among the Cochabamba people, who took to the streets using barricades. Among other forms of protest, they began to burn buildings that belonged to local authorities and finally they took control over the city. They established their own authority and the civilians replaced the police, the assemblies the parliament, and the coordinator the executive power. Simultaneously, a significant roadblock in all the departments of Cochabamba and La Paz was ordered by the CSUTCB and led by its Executive Secretary, Felipe Quispe.

A national blockade of all the roads to La Paz was organized by the Aymaras led by the “Mallku” (Quispe’s nickname, which means Eagle) and the coca growers guided by Evo Morales, who obstructed the roads leading to Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. The indigenous sectors, truck drivers and merchants, among others, joined this peasant

struggle. According to Veltmeyer (2007:132), “In Bolivia, mobilizations against the government’s attempt to extend this privatization to the commercialization of water created conditions that not only led to the overthrow of two governments but to the installation of the first president with solid roots in both the Indigenous community and the popular movement.”

Despite their differences in economic occupations, various sectors were joined in an ethnic alliance, in a fight in which each sector had its own demands; an indigenous peoples struggle was identified as facing the Creole nation-state. The general approach was based on communal tradition, intended to serve only their community. They were very well organized, providing food to the “blockers,” for example. While the rural areas were mobilized, the cities of La Paz, Cochabamba and El Alto lacked agricultural goods.

The popular sectors in the cities, including the urban indigenous population or “cholos,” joined the peasant protest. The movement evolved and became a political force aimed at modifying the INRA Law.¹⁷ The conflict had an ethno-racial character alluding to a historic white vs. indigenous debate. The big question included a practice of unfair and discriminatory relations of power.

To contest the demonstrations, the government decided to take the military intervention route that led to the deaths of two peasants and a soldier. The confrontation with government forces started when indigenous communities were preparing to protest in a march in the town of Achacachi. The participants of the protest armed with sticks

¹⁷ The Law of Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA), No. 1715 signed on October 18, 1996. It was a compromise between the government projects to amend the agrarian reform law intended to introduce the free market in agriculture, and Indigenous demands in defense of property of their ancestral lands.

clashed with the army. The protesters beat some soldiers, and attacked and destroyed all the institutions that symbolized power.

Achacachi was not the only territory that was under rebellion; the uprising extended all over the provinces of La Paz. In some places clashes with the army left several injured. The second stage of the “Water War” took place in September 2000 and was inspired by a spirit of confrontation including the origin of the uprising the privatization of water. In this occasion the “Water Law” project included the privatization of the springs and rivers managed by the indigenous people themselves.

The new road blockades began on September 11 and lasted until October 7, 2000. It became a massive uprising, in which the participation of the Aymaras was of particular importance. On the roads the slogan: “We will not pay for water, do not want to pay for our land, we plant coca for life ... we own this land and foreigners go away” (Hylton and Thomson 2003: 216) was shouted by the protesters.

Felipe Quispe led the blockade in the department of La Paz, other indigenous people joined the uprising of the cities and were in the streets shouting: “Mallku!” The ethnic discourse that Quispe was promoting represented to them the awakening of their indigenous identity and the restoration of dignity. The demonstration was radical, more than a simple protest against the privatization. The situation was so serious that in the city of La Paz there was a shortage of food, one of the primary reasons that forced the government to negotiate.

At the beginning of October the first meeting was settled between the representatives of state and leaders of the CSUTCB. Such a meeting only served to

express the two projects in the form of speeches. The religious organizations and the Ombudsman mediated the dialogue between the government and CSUTCB. A relief in the entire country started to happen when the government finally approved the replacement of the INRA Law for a future project negotiated with the indigenous people, the distribution of land for the settlement program, the annulment of the “Water Law,” the modification of the Forest Act and mining and civil code, the promotion of “Integrated Rural Development Plan”, and the non-eradication of coca in the traditional areas of the Yungas.

The indigenous uprising demanded “self-determination,” but the achievement was concerned with other matters such as agreements with the government. Although the uprising ended in most areas of the country, the event left 15 dead, 265 wounded and 20 tortured (Roberto Laserna 2001:34). The “Cocalero” movement led by Evo Morales, one of the three main political actors of the “Water War,” included in their demands a request for permission to grow 0.6 hectares of coca per family and the creation of an agricultural university and market places for the development of their products. The “Water War” thus was able to unite and organize different indigenous groups from different regions of the country against one common face: the government.

The “Gas War”

On October 2003 a fourth uprising since 2000 started in five departments in the Andean region: La Paz, Oruro, Potosí, Cochabamba and Chuquisaca. This movement included diverse social networks, both urban and rural. They demanded the restoration of ownership of the hydrocarbons and gas industry of Bolivia. Even though indigenous

people had representation in parliament after the 2002 elections the parliament still passed laws that did not take into consideration the interests of indigenous communities and were of no benefit to the popular sector. The formal President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada issued a Supreme Decree that acknowledged the right of the corporations for the exploitation and marketing of natural gas, which, to many signified the loss of national sovereignty of the natural resource. The multinational companies under this scenario began exporting natural gas to the United States across Chile.

On September 19, 2003 the MAS held a protest march to reject the government's position on the gas issue. Marches were held in almost all major cities of La Paz department, challenging the conditions of the export of Bolivian gas. The slogans began to circulate "No to the sale of gas to the U.S." The outbreak of the demonstrations began just before this march on September 8 when about 3000 peasants marched from Batallas to the city of El Alto to request the application of the 72 points that were previously signed by the CSUTCB in the last uprising in 2001 and were not addressed by the government.

Throughout the month of September different types of demonstrations were seen around the nation. Farmers went on hunger strikes and indigenous people from the region of Osmasuyos blocked the main roads to La Paz, Achacachi, Warista and Sorata. The government decided to use the force option to rescue the tourists trapped in Sorata by the blockade. Accompanied by the army and police, the tourists were transported in buses to Warisata, where their appearance caused a confrontation with the blockers.

The indigenous groups decided to maintain the blockade and did not let the tourists continue their route. While peasants used dynamite to explode the hills so that the stones fell on the road, the army decided to use weapons of war. The violent confrontation led to seven deaths, while 17 people were wounded. After the incident, indigenous groups occupied and burned state institutions and a private hotel.

The same year in October, an indefinite general strike was declared by the unions and social movements. The 'Bolivian Central Workers Union' called for demonstrations across the country. The strategy was to seize control of the gas distribution plant and cause gasoline fuel shortages in Sencata to affect the city of La Paz, to make the citizens join demonstrations. The state responded with a violent military intervention with the purpose of regaining control of the plant. These actions caused dozens of deaths and hundreds of wounded among the protesters and civilians that were in their homes.

A few days after this happened the Indigenous movements mobilized and headed to the city of La Paz from El Alto, the Yungas, the Highland and miners centers. Other marginalized groups in La Paz joined the movement. Across the country, the popular sectors added to defending the gas, the demand for the resignation of the president, who they believed was responsible for the massacres. The demands of social movements included state-owned Bolivian oil and gas, and the adoption of a new hydrocarbon law in the state to regain control of the oil and increased taxes paid by oil companies.

Vice President Carlos Mesa declared himself independent of the executive power and disapproved the government's repressive strategy. The social movement against President Sanchez de Lozada expanded their bases: intellectuals and representatives of

the middle class began a hunger strike, demanding the constitutional succession of the presidency. Under pressure from popular movements in October 17, 2003, President Sanchez de Lozada abandoned his mandate and left the country. He left a toll of 80 dead and 300 wounded. The vice president, Carlos Mesa Gisbert assumed the presidency of the Republic and held a referendum on the gas, which facilitated the development of a new Hydrocarbons Law, and ensured the functioning of the Constituent Assembly with the participation of indigenous representatives. The referendum was supported by the MAS and rejected by the MIP members. His presidency was not popular, indeed “By the beginning of 2005 there was a growing popular perception that the essential rights of the people were not being honored by the successor government of Carlos Mesa and that the natural gas reserves were once again being looted by foreign interests” (Vanden, 2007:24).

The popular uprising of 2003 accomplished the gas defense and the president's resignation as results of direct action and spontaneous grassroots mobilizations, from the neighborhood councils, the Regional Workers Central of El Alto, to the Bolivian Workers Central and political parties the MAS and the MIP. According to Postero (2004:208), “After the successful alliances between the MAS, Aymara peasant organizations, and other popular sectors in the 2003 uprising, Bolivian Indigenous groups have greatly increased their political power.” It also cemented a collective consciousness about the natural resources defense. On the other hand, these events highlighted the problems in articulation and direction of the popular movement, in which each sector had its own objectives and their own leader. They also demonstrated how well organized the popular movements were; they used tools like the Internet to make public their causes and sent

delegations to the World Social Forum (Vanden 2007). The events of October confirmed the failure of the economic, social and political state execution vs. a new alternative coming from the Bolivian popular movement who won direct influence on the management of public affairs.

The MAS and the Election of Evo Morales

The Movement for Socialism (MAS) was born as a result of paradoxical movement; on the one hand, it is the product of the process of deepening democracy in the period 1982-2000, and on the other hand, it is a consequence of the crisis in the very process of democracy that was allowed to develop over those 18 years. According to Postero (2010:65), “For MAS’s delegates, their election to the assembly and the election of Morales to the presidency was not just an election in the liberal sense of representation. Rather, for them it was a revolutionary intervention, not just to occupy the old structures of power but to fundamentally reshape them.” As Andreas Tsolakis (2011:4) explains “the former [state form] hailed the MAS as constituting something new, something more than a political party: an inclusive, grassroots organisation unifying a wide variety of historically oppressed urban and rural social forces, which successfully sidelined the racist alternative on its flank (the indigenist *Movimiento Indigena Pachacuti* [MIP] led by Felipe Quispe)”. This movement opened a window into the policy for rural and Indigenous populations. The MAS also open a path for new political leadership that was previously controlled by a “white minority” that monopolized political participation (Crabtree, 2008).

Despite the fact that democracy in the 1980s was perceived as a promise of inclusion, it was not until the 1990s when some promises were fulfilled. By the late

1990s, the popular rural and urban society felt deceived and excluded. During the stabilization of democracy in Bolivia, between 1982 and 2000, the political class did not realize the importance of the role of social integration of the State or acquired the institutional strength to fulfill that role.

There were no leftist parties that advocated for the interests of the indigenous masses, while the forces of the center right were good pupils of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), promoting economic liberalization and the dismantling of the state. They were not interested in the important role of social integration of the state to the consolidation of democracy. The emergence of MAS can be seen to be the product of the confluence of four factors: the emergence of politicized urban rural cleavage, the crisis of the neoliberal economic model and the visibility of the social debt, and the crisis of representation of political parties in particular the absence of left-wing parties with a strong institutional and political integration process. As Veltmeyer notes (2007:136), “recent political development that include an apparent swing to the centre-left and anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal policies (ALCA, the regional free trade agreement sponsored by the US is ‘dead’ in the currents of political change) suggests that internal forces are beginning to override external ones.”

Interaction in the political arena can be interpreted as a result of the post-colonial character of the Republic of Bolivia, which is based on the relationship between indigenous people and the state embodied in its institutions, which has been controlled by the white elites. It also can be looked at as the result of the weak state of rural land ownership, which sets a dual relation of peasant and indigenous to the state, causing an abstract feeling of what it means to be “Bolivian.” The MAS offered two pragmatic

propositions: “(1) to nationalize natural resource to recover income for the state and (2) to convoke a constituent assembly to ‘refund’ the country and to enable the coming together of diverse sectors of the Bolivian people” (Eduardo Gamarra, 2008:129). These propositions became ideal for the unrepresented and excluded sectors.

The economic crisis of the late 1990s and the political deadlock of the government of Hugo Banzer gave substantive content to the perception of democracy as a promise unfulfilled. The crisis of representation of parties opened the space for the process of circulation of indigenous people. In 1994 the Popular Participation Act allowed a period of political integration that was reinforced and expanded to a larger territory with the definition of single-member constituencies. This decentralization policy of the state allowed the politicization of different sectors of Bolivia.

In the panorama of crisis of democracy that opened up in the decade of the 1990s, the Indigenous movement felt the need to build a “political instrument” whose base was a society full of inequality that they contested by the unity among them. This contemplation of the unity hoping for a better future, and based on respect for the individual and their right to dissent, both in the communities or in a political context inspired the movements. The movement was also stimulated since 1995 by the implementation of single member councils in the municipalities.

At this point unity under the leadership of the coca movement assumed a central importance in the elections. Indeed, the electoral experiences led to an appreciation of democracy and voting took place effectively in terms of choosing and authorizing governments. In the 2002 elections the MAS (21 percent) was second behind the MNR

(23 percent), while the MIP led by Felipe Quispe won 6 percent. Thus the MAS did not won the presidential election it could be noticed that “the radical and pro-Indian vote was on the rise (MAS and MIP with 27 percent)” (Morales, 2009:579).

Even though Evo Morales did not win the elections in 2002, the results indicated that he was very close to being the victor. Sanchez de Lozada, representing the MNR, was re-elected by a margin of 3 percent of the votes. The electoral outcome was split between two other candidates: Morales who represented the MAS with 21 percent and Manfred Reyes Villa who represented the New Republican Force (NFR, Nueva Fuerza Republicana) with 21 percent also (Morales 2009:579). The MAS (Movement for Socialism) won “20 percent of parliamentary seats in the 2002 election” (Postero and Zamosc 2004:11).

The indigenous leader Morales expressed the collective aspirations of his ethnic group by affirming that: "The majority of people in this country--people from more than 30 indigenous groups--did not participate in the foundation of Bolivia in 1825. We have to re-found Bolivia in order to end the colonial state, to live united in diversity, to put all our resources under state control, and to make people participate and give them the right to make decisions”(as quoted by Htun 2008:91).

According to Htun (2008:90), “These two Indigenous-led parties came to hold 33 of 130 seats in the lower house of the Congress and 8 of 27 Senate seats.” The coca grower’s movement, which made significant electoral gains, came to power in the municipalities of El Chapare, challenged the rest of the peasants and captured the leadership of the new party. The MAS, which is supported and encouraged by the highlands people, declared itself “to be the representative of all the popular and

indigenous peoples of Bolivia who had suffered indignities and oppression by the White elite” (Postero, 2004:205).

The MAS Governing Bolivia

In 2002 the MAS held 20 percent of the seats in parliament (Postero 2004). Bolivian society experienced a structural change with the end of the process of white elites representing them. This process had been triggered by the serious crisis of representation of the old party system, along with the politicization of the urban-rural cleavage. Both factors determine a displacement of the old criteria of legitimate access to power. According to Postero (2010:62), “Since his election in 2005, Morales and the MAS Party have used liberal electoral politics to push forward a two-pronged agenda. First, through executive decrees and laws passed by the MAS-controlled Congress, they have substantially reworked the relation between the state and market, making the state once again a primary actor in economic development.”

The goal of achieving a more “politized” society, especially in the popular sectors, gave them the possibility of an organized society ready to occupy the political arena and eventually the State, its institutions and the international political agenda. In December 2005, the MAS won the national elections with 53.7% of the vote, “defeating all traditional political actors” (Gamarra, 2008:125). That same year they won 70 of the 130 seats in the lower house (John Crabtree, 2008). Half a year later, in July 2006, the party won the elections with 51% in the assembly. Two years later, in August 2008, the government won a recall referendum with 67% of votes. In the general elections in

December 2009, the MAS reinstated their victory, with 64%. As Tsolakis argues (2011:2),

Morales was elected with promises to deconstruct the entire political and economic edifice painfully erected since 1985, by refounding Bolivia through the re-nationalisation of its strategic jewels (gas, mining, telecommunications), by sponsoring the election of a Constituent Assembly, by ridding the Bolivian state of its corrupt and inefficient comprador lackeys, by promoting traditional coca production and by redistributing Bolivia's social surplus to its subalterns.

Women along with the indigenous people are an important part of this change, "As a result of the national elections of December 2005, there are ten MAS congresswomen, representing 14 percent of the total MAS congressional delegation, and there is only one female MAS senator, representing 8 percent of MAS senators. Women did slightly better as 'runners-up' with MAS female alternate representatives (Corte Nacional 2006)" (As cited by Potter and Zurita 2009:240). These data demonstrate that the strength expressed in the elections it is a powerful process of building representation. Between 1995 and 2002, the MAS represented the Indigenous, miners, and peasant's party, with a horizontal decision-making process and declarations that emerged from the social organizations. Beginning in 2002, but more clearly after the triumph of 2005, the transition began from an indirect structure to a politicized society that created tension and changes in Bolivia. According to Van Cott (2003) "In Bolivia, where the population is almost 60 percent Indigenous, the success of Evo Morales and his MAS party in the June

2002 election reflects a population that is beginning to vote according to its ethnic makeup”(As cited by Postero and Zamosc, 2004:17).

The party affiliation in Bolivian politics after the series of transformations that the mobilizations caused became a relationship between social organizations, some individuals and union members. Since 2002 the MAS faced the challenge of convening the electorate of the urban centers. The challenge was to convince the urban social organizations to join them because they did not have the same organizational discipline as rural groups. About their ideals Gamarra (2008:126) mentions, “On the ideological front, it framed an ‘anti-imperialistic and anti-neoliberal’ discourse that included several dimensions. It proposed first and foremost a nationalist and class-based identity that promised the inclusion of those who had historically been excluded from power.” Along these lines Postero and Zasmoc (2004:16), indicate that “One result of the neoliberal political decentralization programs that have been implemented across Latin America is increased participation by citizens in local development decisions.”

The MAS has been recognized for its origin in the field of protest, struggle and confrontation, and it has the ability to take advantage of situations of extreme polarization, thanks to its high degree of cohesion and organization. The party experiences seem to be transported in two main discourses; cultural and identity issues on the one hand, and access to crisis of power faced by minorities, on the other. Under this politicized context in a popular urban form from a peasant nationalist indigenous face reflects and expresses that the party does represent one of the most important challenges in contemporary Bolivia, the expansion of political representation and democracy.

The following figure shows the perception that indigenous people are helping the country to become more democratic or less democratic.

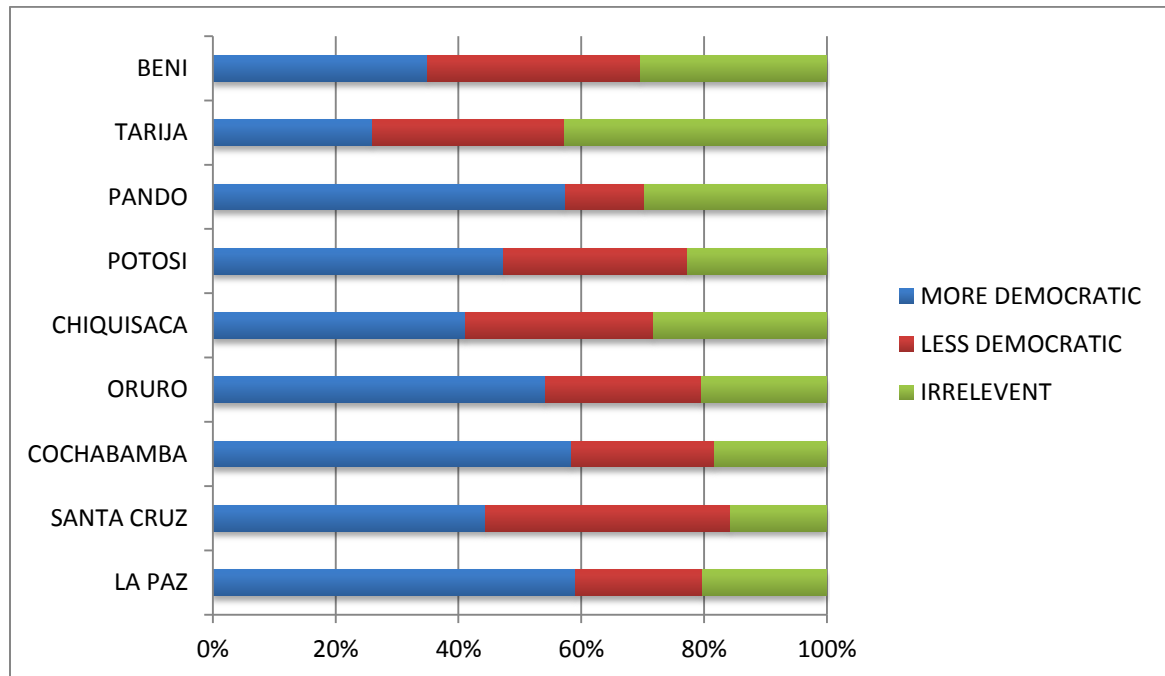


Figure 3- Do You Believe That Indigenous Groups Are Helping Our Country To Be More Democratic? SOURCE: LAPOP 2010 translated by the author.

The 2005 Evo Morales presidential campaign was an extraordinary victory for the majority of the country. This particular incident represented the shift in the rigid political representation of Bolivia. As Vanden (2008:49) articulates “they had initiated a form of participatory governance that would radically alter decision making practices in their Andean nation and that suggested that government must indeed serve the people if it was to endure.”

The Unity Pact CONALCAM

The Unity Pact and the Constituent Assembly Pact is a coordination of peasant and indigenous organizations in the East and West of the country which was established

to coordinate the struggle, first for the realization of the Constituent Assembly and later, when the Assembly had already begun to articulate and promote the interests of peasants and indigenous people in the conclave. On January 23, 2007, President Evo Morales and Vice President Alvaro Garcia met with representatives of 16 social movements, to make up the National Coordination for Change (Conalcam), a policy aimed at supporting the Government. Morales faced a series of protests by the political opposition, and since then Conalcam became the main instrument he employed to pressure his opponents to approve his policies.

The Conalcam is the strategic alliance of government between the executive and legislative bodies and the country's social organizations and political instruments. This political organization is identified as a fundamental principle and supports the anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal and anti-colonial revolutionary struggle. The Conalcam also recognizes the leadership of Evo Morales, President of Bolivia as a legitimate expression of the Bolivian people's electoral choice. It also proposes the defense of Mother Earth, environment, water, natural resources, renewable or not, to preserve the planet. Another basic principle is the strengthening and defense of social organizations and of its organizational structure as a condition and guarantee of the change process.

The Conalcam also defended the Plurinational State unity and the Bolivian people, ensuring the integrity of national territory. It rejects any claim of separatism and any attempt to interfere in national independence by U.S. imperialism. It also established penalties against militants, authorities or leaders who commit offenses that harm or are against the process of change. Every social organization that is part of the Conalcam is

entitled to be recognized as social sector, a grassroots, and community within this structure.

The decision making process of the Conalcam was concentrated in a once a week meetings in which the participants managed situations for analysis, define tasks and coordinate with the unions and the executive and legislative bodies. The Conalcam foundation was a strategy from the Evo Morales government to give substance to the idea of “government for social movements” as it established the form of action of social organizations as part of the government. The aim of this formation was to achieve more coordination between rural organizations and the government leadership in managing the process of change from the street.

Conclusion

The action of the Indigenous movement for more than a decade in Bolivia is the undertaking of permanent revolution, one that asked for representation, equal treatment, protection and most of all inclusion. Since Independence in the XIX century the Creole elite had used the structures of the State to marginalize the indigenous majority, and institute a vision of a Bolivarian Nation that was ethnically and culturally homogenous and did not permit participation in the political scene for nonwhites.

The Indigenous movement saw an urgent need for change: to end the exclusionary, discriminatory, and illegitimate power of oligarchs. The intention of reforming and democratize the State structures by building a multinational and multicultural State was carried forward by the movement and well represented in the figure of the MAS party. As Rice says, “In contrast, the most recent round of protests

joined together a diverse array of actors, including indigenous peoples, students, workers, neighborhood associations, and sectors of the middle-class united through a common frustration with the promises and failures of neoliberalism (Arce and Rice 2009:287).”

In Bolivia the action of the Indigenous movement has ended the regimes of white domination and colonization, and has established or reestablished an indigenous state, based on tradition. As some scholars have mentioned the “two Bolivias” are in the task of forming a single nation. There is always the existent discourse of the “us” or “they”, the “we” or “others” that in the case of Bolivia represents a gap between the indigenous people and the Creole society. It is the same discourse of the “civilized” or “barbaric” associations.

These divisions of the “two Bolivias” are based on inequality, discrimination and oppression. The creation of the Indigenous movement and later on the formation of political parties such as the MAS, has given Bolivia a remarkable opportunity to change the nation’s political life. The indigenous struggle seems to be increasingly radical; when demands are not satisfied resurgence and revolution threaten. Social and political actors are emerging seeking a new pattern and structure for their multiethnic and multicultural conceptualizations previously rejected by the dominant Western society.

Chapter IV: Representation of Indigenous People and Bolivian Politics

Introduction

The object of this chapter is to discuss the political representation of the indigenous people in the democratic state of Bolivia. It pays attention to societal norms in Bolivia and how the Indigenous social movements have redefined political representation by democratic participation. I argue that starting in the late twentieth and early twenty first century representative democracy in Bolivia has experienced a series of

transformations as a result of historical and social interactions produced by the Indigenous movement. These historical and social makeovers include the mobilization of the indigenous sector of Bolivia through networks that reaffirmed power in activism, the law 1551 of Popular Participation (1994), the law 1654 of Administrative Decentralization (1995), gains against Neoliberal practices and the renovation of the Constitution in 2009.

To support this argument I analyze the indigenous politicization and how it is related to the democratization process. One of the current debates about social movements concerns their potential political relevance in relation to democracy. The Bolivian Indian Movement has transcended ethnic rights by contesting political power and inserting themselves in the democratic process. They represent what some scholars have called a “new social movement.” According to Vanden (2007:18) “The origins of what we now term new social movements can be traced to mobilizations like the Peasant Leagues in Brazil's Northeast in the 1950s and early 1960s or those of mass organizations in El Salvador in 1979 and the very early 1980s.”

Most Latin Americanists agree that “social movements are in some senses ‘new’ by definition in that they eschew the conventional political institutions of the day in favor of heterogeneous collections of groups and individuals, employing impolite (‘contentious’) tactics and organizing challenges to old social values” (Stahler-Sholk, Vanden, Kuecker 2008:4). Veltmeyer (2007:142) notes that in the case of Bolivia “the miners and coca producers, the teachers, and a new type of union bound to the social movements have coordinated their protest actions with an amalgam of social organizations, rather than with the parties of the left. But, more than anything, it can be

seen in the struggles that are taking place in the countryside-the apparent centre of a new wave of insurgency.” This new wave of revolts includes the MAS party that represents the vast majority of the indigenous politics in Bolivia.

I claim that political representation in Bolivia has been produced as an artifact of power caused by the agitation of the masses that were being excluded. In recent years, indigenous peoples in Bolivia have staged events of vital importance to the political landscape, including economic, social and cultural development. Their demands have led to debates among social scientists of Bolivia and elsewhere in Latin America as to whether they are fighting for the full applicability of civil rights, and how these rights have been completely closed to marginalized ethnic groups. According to Yashar (2005: 34) “by the end of the twentieth century . . . the entire landscape of Latin American politics shifted as Indigenous movements formed to contest contemporary citizenship in one country after another. Vocal and increasingly powerful Indigenous movements have emerged throughout the region.” Most Latin America countries initiated a few multicultural reforms in the last two decades of the past century (Van Cott 2000).

Indigenous Political Representation and Citizenship

In Bolivia, indigenous dynamism (including that of peasants, miners and coca leaf growers) is the principal force behind the massive mobilizations that have agitated the country building a new reality of political representation. The rise of this ethnic group, demanding autonomy and cultural rights, challenges the prevailing views of citizenship, democracy and national identity. According to Joe Foweraker (1998:271) “On the one hand, social movements may claim rights directly from the state and its apparatuses. On the other, they may seek more indirect influence within political society, where the

formal struggle for public power and political rule takes place.” Political representation in any of its modalities determines the relationship between the social and political. The hegemonic power of the state in a democracy represents the vision of the political parties and on some occasions the voters. The established representatives are the mediators between civil society and the state.

In order to bring indigenous people into existing state structures the state has to change because it has been the enforcer of a vast range of inequalities. This is precisely what the social movements have been able to do in Bolivia; while doing so, they also have appropriated the space of these state structures. Along these lines Vanden (2007:24) explains this phenomenon arguing that “The new social movements had been able to take politics out of the presidential palace and the halls of congress, where elitist politics and the traditional political class dominated, and into their space - the villages, neighborhoods, and popular councils and the streets and rural highways that they could control.” As Will Kymlicka (1995:112) argues “in a multinational state, decisions on boundaries and the division of powers are inevitably decisions about which national group will have the ability to use which state powers to sustain its culture.”

In the political arena, Bolivia’s existing policies imposed large fees to participate in the party system, fees which the ethnic excluded majority was not able to pay. These fees kept indigenous people out of the political scene for many years. As Van Cott (2005:83) points out, “Indianista and Katarista parties repeatedly lost their registration when they were unable to pay fines for poor performance.” The new forms of representation produced by the Indigenous movement are based on the significant participation of “power from below”. According to Elizabeth Jelin “the struggles from

below, in which subordinate social sectors redefine their identities and their rights” are “an attempt to widen their space for action and extend boundaries of their social and political citizenship” (As cited by Foweraker, 1998:272).

According to T.H. Marshall, citizenship involves a full membership in a community where membership implies participation of individuals in determining the conditions of their own association. It is a status that guarantees individuals’ equal rights and duties, freedoms and restrictions, powers and responsibilities (Marshall 1950). On the other hand, Reinhard Bendix (1997) explains that the extension of citizenship rights is not a purely legal logic derived from liberal philosophy, but results from political dynamics within which people's struggles play a central role in the attainment of rights.

Following Bendix (1997), achievement citizenship through the political system in Bolivia was not effective; therefore mobilization forces were the only tools available to indigenous people to achieve full citizenship. As several scholars assert, citizenship is not just a status but also a social role (Holston 2008, Fikes 2009) and as a social role it requires a certain “performativity” on the part of individuals. In the case of Bolivia, indigenous people seized political status through the performance of activism.

Indigenous citizenship challenges the notion of special rights and the proposition of multiculturalism by contesting the idea of inclusion based on political, social and economical integration as equals. According to Kymlicka (1994), minorities and majorities clash over issues like political representation. In the case of Bolivia the majority is the one vulnerable to injustice and inequality caused by the minority.¹⁸ He

¹⁸ Bolivia is an example contrary to what Kymlicka argues about minorities suffering at the hands of the majority. See Will Kymlicka, 1995.

argues that a differentiated type of citizenship for minorities or ethnic groups is consistent with the liberal principles of freedom and equality (Kymlicka 1995:34). The idea behind this, as he explains, is that external protections that can promote fairness between groups should be endorsed. The persistent inequality of Bolivia's indigenous majority might be alleviated by the application of differentiated rights.

Marshall (1950) argues that there are different sets of rights that need to be implemented before democratization is achieved. Political rights in Bolivia have now been restored by the ability to participate in the civil and political life of the state. Hannah Arendt says that "We become aware of the existence of a right to have rights and a right to belong to some kind of organized community, only when millions of people emerge who had lost and could not regain these rights because of the new global political situation (1968: 177)." In part this awareness in the Indigenous movement in Bolivia was possible because of the attainment of certain political rights¹⁹ that they had been lacking and the victory in the 2005 democratic elections which gave them control of the government.

I argue that in Bolivia the Indigenous movement's role as mere actors has changed into that of a greatly empowered body. As Foweraker (1998:290) mentions, "Above all, social movements will mobilize to close the gap between the rhetoric and reality of citizenship, between the promise and the practice of democratic rights." The Indigenous movement eventually reformed the main character of Bolivian society, forging their own discourse in the heat of the struggles, needs and interests of indigenous peoples. Their entrance into the political arena affirms that "social movements are battles

¹⁹ Such as the law 1551 of Popular Participation (1994), the law 1654 of Administrative Decentralization (1995) and the Constitution of 2009.

to redefine citizenship, in effect, constructing broader and more inclusionary meaning (Stahler-Sholk, 2007:9).”

About Constitutions

The new Constitution of 2009 institutionalized corporate participation in a part of society decision-making process. This establishes a supranational body that assumed control functions within a legal framework. From another perspective, putting more attention in the process than the norm, what we see is a domestication of social organizations. To incorporate social movements to the State after the adoption of the Constitution, the government created the National Mechanism for Participation and Social Control.

This institutionalization of the participation of civil society can be viewed from two perspectives: from the perspective of the State, as an organized participation, in which the government sets the agenda. Or on the other hand, the perspective of society, social organizations are called upon to State initiatives and, when they participate, they do it gradually.

The MAS government wrote the seventeenth constitutional text in the republican history of the country. “In January 2009, Bolivians passed a national referendum approving the new constitution, which enacts fundamental changes in the form of the state; grants autonomies to Indigenous nations; recognizes Indigenous cultures, languages, and customs; and institutionalizes a far-reaching new land-reform program”

(Postero, 2010:62). This set important legal precedents by expanding the rights of the indigenous people and recognizing environmental rights.

The Indigenous movement has been able to provoke significant political changes in the constitutional order as part of their process of empowerment, representation and participation in the Bolivian State bureaucracy. These changes are primarily orientated to the recognition of rights previously forbidden in the former constitutional regime. The new Constitution of 2009 redefined the concepts of citizenship, State, power and political representation. The information below reveals some of the most relevant changes brought by the new constitution.

In the first Article, it is established that “Bolivia becomes a Unitary State Law Social Plurinational Communitarian, free, independent, sovereign, democratic, intercultural, decentralized and autonomous. Bolivia is based on the plurality and political, economic, legal, cultural and linguistic integration process within the country.”

²⁰ As opposed to the 1967 constitution and the subsequent modifications (1994, 1995, 2002), the 2009 text includes the concept “plurinational,” thereby raising this notion to a constitutional rank. This Article recognized the variety of nations within the Bolivian state, and ruptured with the ancient regime of one nation-state.

In the previous Bolivian constitution (1967), the country was only described as “multiethnic and pluricultural.”²¹ Article 3 of the new text affirms this plurinationality. “The Bolivian nation is made up of all the Bolivians, nations and peasant indigenous peoples and Afro-Bolivian communities intercultural and which together constitute the

²⁰ <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Bolivia/bolivia09.html>

²¹ <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Bolivia/consboliv2002.html>

Bolivian people.” Art. 30. I. defined indigenous people as a “Nation's peasant indigenous people throughout the human community that shares cultural identity, language, historical tradition, institutions, territory and worldview, whose existence predates the Spanish colonial invasion.”

In terms of religious freedom the Catholic Church of Bolivia enjoyed for a long period of time the preeminence as the official religion of the State. This preferential treatment ends with the approval of Art. 4. It establishes not only freedom of worship, but also the complete separation of Church and State. “The State respects and guarantees freedom of religion and spiritual beliefs, according to their worldviews. The State is independent of religion.” It should be noted that the 1967 constitution established freedom of worship, but portrayed Catholicism as a proper religion and the others as mere cults; “the state recognized and sustained the Roman Catholic and apostolic religion.”

The rights of Indigenous populations, although recognized in the 1967 constitutional text, were not clearly demarcated and often were simply ignored. By contrast the 2009 constitution attempts to particularize the rights of different social groups, among them the indigenous populations. The new constitution recognizes nearly 100 articles, incorporating language that recognizes the equality of men and women. Among these rights are included such basic services as water, sewerage, electricity, house gas, postal and telecommunications services. Even though private companies may provide some, the provisions of these services are established as a state responsibility. Also it makes access to water and sanitation a human right, and prohibits the privatization of these services.

There is also in the new constitutional text recognition of the Indigenous. For example, Art. 5. I. established as official languages Castilian along with 36 Indigenous languages. “The multinational government and departmental governments must use at least two official languages. One of them must be the Castilian; the other will be decided taking into account the use, convenience, circumstances, needs and preferences of the population as a whole or the territory in question. Other autonomous governments must use the languages of their territory, and one of them must be the Castilian.” Art. 6. II established a co-official flag named the “wiphala,”²² as a national symbol of the Bolivian state.

The Constitution of 2009 also provides for the establishment of an Indigenous-peasant judicial system in which all members have to be members of one of the two groups. It established as well a quota of indigenous representatives. It provides also for the right of indigenous self-government and the official recognition of their territories and institutions. Moreover, the constitution introduces four levels of administration: departmental (departments), regional (provincial), municipal (in municipalities) and Indigenous-peasant territories. The self-government provisions include the right to elect their own authorities and to locally manage natural resources. In the interest of asserting plurinational identities the constitution proclaimed as aims and essential functions of the State the establishment of “a just and harmonious society, rooted in decolonization, without discrimination or exploitation, with full social justice, to strengthen multinational identities”(Article 9.1; Constitution, 2009).

²² The origins of this word come from the Aymara language.

Another significant change in the new constitution is the introduction of an entire article devoted to coca. The state declares coca to be a part of Bolivia's original and ancestral cultural heritage, a renewable natural resource of biodiversity and a factor of social cohesion in its natural state. The law governs the production, commercialization and industrialization of coca. Finally, the new constitution prohibits ownership of more than five thousand acres of land, thus effectively altering the traditional way white elites have invested their money, namely in large cattle farms. Indigenous lifestyle has become the new way guiding the Constitution.

Constructing Representation

This cultural democratic struggle, this democratic cultural revolution, is part of our ancestors struggle, it is the continuity of the *Túpac Katari* struggle; this struggle and these results are the continuity of Che Guevara. We are there, sisters and brothers of Bolivia and Latin America; we will continue until obtain that equality in our country, it is not important to place capital in a few hands causing many to starve, those politics have to change but they have to change with democracy.” (Evo Morales, 2002 public discourse translated by the author)

Bolivia has always been a country where inconsistencies have been the order of the day, a nation where minorities ruled the majority for centuries. In fact, this preferential system was a legacy from the colonial scheme. This created a political class or “elite” that was able to dominate the political arena from independence in 1825 until 2005. Bolivia is a country to paradoxical contrasts rich natural resources set against a

population that suffers terrible poverty and a history of failed economic development. “Even today, its eight million nationals, despite significant improvements, still have among the highest death rates, lowest life expectancies, and lowest per capita wealth in the Western hemisphere” (Klein, 2003:xiv).

Indigenous people in Bolivia, as in other parts of Latin America, have been excluded from political participation since the Spanish Colonial domination; successive governments reproduced the exclusionary and oppressive character of the Spanish conquerors. The white minority ruled over the indigenous majority and other ethnic groups. As Klein explains, “Indians were denied access to power except as they abandoned their traditional norms and languages and integrated into the national society as ‘cholos’ or whites” (2003: xii). In the nineteenth century the white elite was forced to expand the political system to the middle class and urban workers because of the impact of modern economy. Institutional structures and regulations implemented by the “political elite” limited access to the ballot and prevented political competition.

Social movements try to break down the traditional practices produced by the “political elites” allowing the participation of other members of civil society that can promote a different discourse marked by the equality of race and class representation. According to Domingo (2005:1740), it is difficult to establish which social groups and political formations (old or new) can be categorized as consistently democratic, or consistently undemocratic or anti-systemic.”

The issues that indigenous peoples cared about were brought to the forefront of the political scene by the MNR electoral alliance with the “Katarista” sector, which in

1992 brought to power Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada as president and Aymara intellectual Victor Hugo Cárdenas as vice president. In such circumstances Van Cott (2005:50) explains that “in a context of centralized politics, where considerable financial resources are necessary to launch electoral campaigns, fledgling indigenous parties repeatedly became dependent upon external sponsors, particularly leftist parties.” The revolutionary efforts from the Katarista political parties were stifled when the existing political parties took the activists under their wing and co-opted them.

After 180 years without genuine political representation since the formation of the republic, the indigenous community took over the state with the victory of president Evo Morales. Traditional patterns of inclusion and exclusion have been shifted. According to Boff (1991), Latin America was witnessing a seminal form of resistance and liberation movements of Indians, blacks, marginalized workers and "intellectuals." As Vanden (2003) points out, these movements challenge power and at the same time change traditional rules. There are different types of representation that I would like to mention before moving into the actual facts.

Htun (2008) explains that inclusion of minority groups in politics is important but it not necessary for the promotion of the interests. She suggests that “policy change come about in various ways, not all of which are related to descriptive representation” (2008:74). To understand this descriptive representation it needs to be look at its two dimensions:

1. Descriptive representation of excluded groups, also known as political inclusion or the presence of bodies. This can be achieved

through (a) regular elections or (b) guarantees such as candidate quotas or legislative reservations.

2. Substantive activity of representing, ideally leading to policy outcomes on behalf of excluded groups. This activity can be performed by (a) group members, including those who gain power thanks to quotas or reservations and those who gain power through regular elections, or (b) non-group members, such as politicians from a political party committed to gender and ethnic equality.

(2008:75)

Indigenous mobilization clearly influenced protests and was one of the main inspirations for such a rethinking of democracy and an alternative role and exercise of citizenship. This makes Bolivia a fascinating case for studying the “reinvention of democracy” (Tom Salman, 2008: 88). One example of this “reinvention of democracy” is the political party “Movement Toward Socialism” (MAS). This party was created by leaders of the Confederation of Coca Growers of the Tropic of Chapare with Evo Morales as the main leader. This political and social party is the only one in the democratic history of Bolivia to win an absolute majority since the democratic transition in 1982 (Rice 2010:278).

Social conflicts, one more time, transformed Bolivia demonstrating the power of social movements. As a result civil society starts questioning the institutions and democratic processes. As Domingo (2005:1740) mentions “in the Bolivian case, there is a long-standing discourse of radical participatory democracy rooted in the union politics of

the revolutionary period, and picked up in a different format in the communitarian language of Indigenous politics.” Indigenous movements began to demand the state benefit the civilian population, and called into question how the state had been managing the country's resources. “The popular movement in its actions (protests, roadblocks, and marches on public buildings as well as mass demonstrations) has produced little more than a political vacuum in most places and a lack of confidence in the possibility of change” (Veltmeyer 2007: 132).

The old union and movement leaders become organizers of this new common cause that included calls for nationalization. Their struggles were driven by a desire to indigenize Bolivia and ensure that in democratic countries, institutions, culture, the distribution of power economic and political and public life in general more reliably reflected the reality of the indigenous majority. Significantly, their presence in power structures within the state gives indigenous people a higher status and a source of pride after having been excluded for so long (See Mala Htun (2008:73).

In Bolivia, indigenous organizations are present and have become major actors that have a decisive influence on public policy. As Yashar (1998) suggests the emergence of Indigenous movements can be analyzed by looking at three aspects: the chances provided by democratic boundaries, the motivation behind organizing against neoliberal reforms (state-Indian relations) and the ability to organize offered by “trans-community networks.” Vice-President Alvaro Garcia Linares from the MAS asks “How can you govern through social movements?...Governments concentrate the decision-making process and social movements decentralize it...Social movements cannot direct or occupy the state (cited in Zibechi 2005)” (As cited by Potter and Zurita, 2009:238).

Indeed it was the decentralization of political power that permitted the social movement to participate in state matters.

Along these lines Gamarra (2008:126) explains that “The change that allowed the election of prefects was the result of a broad process social mobilization organized mainly by regional civic committees and other local groups that had long demanded some sort of decentralization of political power.” According to Sydney Tarrow (1998:71), “when institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines, challengers find opportunities to advance their claims.” The Indigenous movement in Bolivia dynamically had access to reform Bolivian politics; the opening grew more plausible as cracks appeared in the traditional white political parties. So far I have made a connection between the opportunities the Indigenous movement have in the democratic regime and their capacity to communicate among their networks.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that indigenous people in Bolivia are engaged in significant political activity. The authority or political influence of Indigenous movements, depends on their ability to recognize existing political opportunities, to strategize their actions, to mobilize and use their resources, and to frame their claims in such ways that they will succeed in increasing the numbers of allies and supporters.

The struggles of indigenous peoples have brought about changes in the reality of a colonial society previously dominant and racist. Contributed to the radical transformation of the law with respect to indigenous people, with an expansion of civil rights and has

also encouraged the development of a sense of citizenship. According to Postero (2010:71) “For hundreds of years, Indians were not considered legitimate bearers of either sort of universal right because they were not considered fully human, rational persons and/or because they did not meet the requirements to be fully participating citizens (Egan 2006; Postero 2007b).” This underestimation eventually injects dynamism to their cause.

The dynamism of the Indigenous movements in Bolivia from the 1980’s to the present has changed the normative of the majority domination rule and has opened a path for equality among all the Bolivians. “The current situation is also a laboratory for rethinking and remaking democracy and (differentiated) citizenship” (Tom Salman, 2008:88). According to Yashar (2008:72), “citizenship regimes can grant formal equal rights for an officially defined political community, but they cannot do away unequal experiences –vis-à-vis citizenship regimes, other citizens, and the state. Given different social backgrounds and social contexts, experiences are uneven, social marginalization can persist, and other kinds of exclusions and inequalities can result – particularly for subordinated or marginalized ethnic groups.”

Recent uprisings against Evo Morales’s administration prove that not even political representation is going to guarantee democratic stability but only the people of Bolivia will. As Tarrow (1998:201) concludes “sustaining a movement is the result of a delicate balance between throttling the power in movement by providing too much organization and leaving followers to spin off into the tyranny of decentralization.”

Chapter V: Conclusion

In 2005 Evo Morales Ayma won the presidency in a national election, a watershed moment representing a shift in Bolivia to a new, different set of paradigms. A new face of Bolivia was being born while the reign of the old Bolivian political elite was coming to an end. The insertion of indigenous representation in the state apparatus gives Bolivia the possibility of becoming a truly democratic and inclusive state. More than half of the population, those who identified themselves as indigenous can now be officially included in the political sphere. However, increasing participation in the state matters does not necessarily guarantee that exclusionary forms of governance will expire and that actual conditions will improve; but one can now hope that decisions will be made with input from the population and will reflect the needs and hopes of the Bolivian citizenry.

Bolivia is moving forward to a period when past inequities can now be addressed with political action instead of social action. Institutions are looking after indigenous identity and power is no longer representative only of the interests of political elites. Ideological paradigms can now be shifted only if the indigenous population allows it. The achievements obtained by the social movements in Bolivia have been able to enact important changes in social and political standpoints. Nonetheless, the movement's ability to challenge these notions was enhanced by a maturation process.

The campaigns against the Neoliberal economic model represented the struggle of an indigenous population that recognized the harm to their identity and interests that these economic strategies could do to them. The combativeness of the social movement in

the defense of identity, water, gas, land and coca, among other things, reflects the fact that mobilization can be articulated in different paradigms but with a common recognition. In this context, the importance of ethnicity and identity, in which discourses transformed views of an indigenous consciousness, can be seen in their political demands. This debate itself belongs to the state and at the same time points to a questioning of the national character of Bolivia.

The national discourse of Bolivia had for decades ignored the cultural identity of the indigenous majority. An example of this is in the Revolution of 1952 that viewed the indigenous people from a classist perspective. The view of the indigenous people as passive participants in national life made it difficult for the indigenous population to feel any sort of belonging to a society that did not include them in socio-cultural aspects and did not recognize Bolivia's multicultural character. Recognition of ethnic identity seems to be growing since the presidential election of Evo Morales.

This study argues that indigenous people are now engaged in significant political activity. Participation in local organizations and representative political parties such as the MAS and the MIP can serve as a means to achieve political importance at a national level. These organizations expressed the interests of the indigenous people and the poor and challenged important elements of the dominant conception of politics in Bolivia.

To a significant extent, the abuses of the Colonial and Republican states in Bolivia nurtured the marginalization and exclusion that later on translated into a struggle of class, citizenship and autonomy. Throughout this study, I have argued that understanding the nature of the Bolivian transition in the context of a political

restructuring in which the Indigenous movement has developed was crucial to understanding their actions and evolution. The critical issue of differentiation among the indigenous, whites and “cholos” pushed the social movements to find creative means of constructing political representation devoted to improve their lives.

This study has traced the diverse ways in which social movements in Bolivia acted in pursuit of political power and representation. The preceding chapters focused primarily on the ways in which the Bolivian political environment and its legacies from dominant groups have shifted to a more representative and participatory democracy. The Bolivian case study demonstrates a new generation of indigenous representation at the local and national level influencing the state decisions. The relevant role of social participation in Bolivia goes hand in hand with a restoration of democracy that must lead to equality and social justice.

In conclusion, in order to understand how Indigenous social movements’ demands translated into outcomes furthering political representation it must be understood that the socialization of their dynamics are also political in principle. The creation of the MAS party within the struggle represented a means to strategically place political actors that recognized their demands and created a dialogue between the local and the national. Not only did they recognize the diversity among them but they had a sophisticated ideology about the views of the indigenous community and the state. In a region where indigenous political representation remains limited in many countries, and where indigenous rights are still deeply contested, Bolivia represents an extraordinary model of success.

Yet current events present a serious dilemma that opens the possibilities for new debates. The development of social movements in Bolivia sends a message to important sectors in society that are seeking to make change and redress inequities and injustices. Even though the future of Bolivia's Indigenous movements is uncertain, at this point there is no doubt that they have already redefined Bolivian politics.

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