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Ushering in Change: Evo Morales' Election and the
Transformation of Indigenous Social Movements

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

Felipe Flores Salazar

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Professor Nancy Grey Postero, Chair
Professor Denise Ferreira Da Silva
Professor Milos Kokotovic

2009

The thesis of Felipe Flores Salazar is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2009

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family who not only allowed me to follow my dreams, but also believed in me, and my soon to be wife whose patience, serenity, and motivation made this process (at times painful) much smoother.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by

Felipe Flores Salazar

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California, San Diego 2009

Professor Nancy Grey Postero, Chair

Social movements throughout Latin America continue to not only evolve, but also continue to gain important ground. A clear example is in Bolivia where indigenous social movements played an integral role in bringing to an end to the neoliberal experience and usher in a period of change—a period brought the election of the country's first indigenous president, Evo Morales. These transformations, however, differ dramatically from social movements of the past. Social movements in the 21st century highlighted the importance of ethnicity while also addressing the gross social and economic inequalities that have stood the test of time. In this context, this study will examine the transformation of social movements from the 1952 Revolution to the neoliberal era where movements succeeded in toppling oppressive regimes—defining the change and course of their respective countries.

Introduction

On January 22, 2006 in the Andean city of La Paz, thousands of citizens lined the steps of the presidential palace to celebrate the inauguration of Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president. With world leaders looking on, the crowd of indigenous people, peasants, miners, farmers, women, and members of the middle class listened as Morales spoke of change, a change the popular classes have waited for since the country's independence in the 19th century and since the failed promises of the 1952 Revolution. The vast majority of supporters attending the inauguration represented the broad spectrum that propelled Evo Morales and the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) to the presidency. A sense of optimism and triumph filled the air as Morales declared,

We are here to say enough of the 500 years of Indian resistance. From 500 years of resistance, we pass another 500 years in power... We have been condemned, humiliated... and never recognized as human beings... We are here and we say that we have achieved power to end injustice, the inequality and oppression that we have lived under.¹

As the crowd of thousands cheered, he added, "Today is the beginning of the new year for the original people of the world, in which we seek equality and justice. With the strength of the people, with the unity of the people, we will put an end to the colonial state and to the neo-liberal model."² Morales' passionate and empowering inauguration speech spoke to not only a new era of transformation, but also the commencement of an alternative model of nation building—an indigenous-leftist

¹ BBC News, "Morales Speech Excerpts" <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4638030.stm> (accessed September 10, 2006).

² Democracy Now, "Evo Morales Sworn in as Bolivia's First Indigenous President, Hails Election as End of 'Colonial and Neo-liberal Era'" <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/01/23/1441200> (accessed September 10, 2006).

alternative to the Western model of “progress” and “development.” Morales and the MAS came to the capital with a strong mandate from the public—garnering more than 50 percent of the vote—to abolish not only the neoliberal model, but also the remnants of colonialism. To Morales and his supporters, this was both a historic challenge and an opportunity to implement an alternative model that would end Bolivia’s colonial, imperialist, and neoliberal experience, with indigenous people and the working class at the forefront. The Morales election exemplified both the Latin American tilt to the left (with the rejection of neoliberal policies at the heart of this leftward move), and the development of social movements as a catalyst for change.

This study will use this historic moment as the point of departure to analyze both the transformation of indigenous social movements that propelled Evo Morales to the presidency and an alternative model that emerged from these movements. Social movements from 2000-2005 demanded not only the termination of neoliberalism, but also a more just and equal state. Important features of this model are the nationalization of natural resources (protecting them from foreign domination and making them accessible to all Bolivians), the elimination of colonial remnants and the construction of a more equal society (through rewriting the constitution), improving the overall quality of life of its citizens, and respecting and furthering the rights of indigenous people. The model comes as an alternative to not only neoliberalism, but also to imposed forms of development. An integral aspect of the transformation of social movements in the 21st century, and the alternative model is the emergence and growth of an indigenous consciousness—one that links the historical oppression of the Aymara and Quechua majority at the hands of the mestizo/criollo class with

challenges (historic and recent) to abolish this oppression. This consciousness, however, is not a byproduct of neoliberalism nor is it part of the recent surge of indigenous movements. This study will demonstrate the contrary, that these movements have a historical trajectory in the country; Bolivia has a long history of popular mobilizations, from indigenous rebellions in the 17th and 18th century to a militant working class rooted in the unionism in the mines during the 1920s and 1930s and a national revolution in 1952. It parallels the changing definition of indigenusness, specifically during the period from 2000-2005, where it evolves into a category of activism and struggle. In this context, indigenusness does not just represent cultural identity; rather, it becomes a politicized marker encompassing the revolutionary spirit erupting from the social movements in the 21st century. Andrew Canessa describes the transformation of this category in El Alto and argues that there is a general sense of, “Todos somos indígenas” in the region.³

This paper will examine two main events in the development of this indigenous consciousness and the transformation of social movements, the 1952 Revolution, and the neoliberal moment in 2000. These events are important ruptures and embody transformations for indigenous social movements. The 1952 represented the zenith of struggle against an oligarchic class entrenched in a colonial mentality while 2000 represents the development of indigenous movements, from ethnic and cultural movements to political struggle.

³ Andrew Canessa, “Todos somos indígenas: Towards a New Language of National Political Identity,” *Bulletin of Latin America Research*, Vol. 25, p.241-263. In this article Canessa identifies the changing meaning of indigenusness and its mixture with a class discourse. It is important to note, however, that this evolving category is dominated by the Andean region, seen as the center of contestation, excluding the contributions of the lowlands.

The 1952 Revolution attempted to do away with colonial structures still in place, particularly the latifundio system and foreign-owned mines, and incorporate indigenous people into the formation of new democratic institutions. A radicalized working class (represented by the miners) galvanized a population eager to end this corrupt system. Riding the wave of change, the MNR took control in 1952 and quickly put forth a plan to bring about structural changes to the lasting colonial model. As I will demonstrate later in this analysis, the revolution addressed many of the concerns plaguing indigenous people, yet many of the reforms aimed at homogenizing the population—ignoring the ethnic and cultural make-up of the population. Cut short, the revolution seemingly recreated old power relationships that it sought to destroy. The revolution's reforms and failures presented a moment, however, that allowed social movements to renew their efforts to rearticulate their demands, the result of which created a movement bringing indigenous identity to the forefront. A clear example of this was the *Katarista* movement in the 1970s, which articulated a discourse that connected identity and class struggle, the first expression of an indigenous consciousness. The *Kataristas* argued that “We are not the 1952 campesinos any more,”⁴ rejecting the mestizaje project of the 1952 Revolution; instead, the *Kataristas* invoked the “long memory”⁵ of indigenous resistance, particularly using the mythic figure of Katari to reawaken an indigenous consciousness.⁶ They advanced a discourse that challenged European and *criollo mestizaje* and domination, and the effectiveness

⁴ Xavier Albó, “The ‘Long Memory’ of Ethnicity and Some Temporary Oscillations,” 23 in *Unsolved Tensions, Bolivia Past and Present* by John Crabtree and Laurence Whitehead.

⁵ Albó, 14

⁶ Xavier Albó, “From MNRistas to Kataristas” in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Century*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987),

of leftist ideals that did not consider identity as crucial to displacing centuries of inequalities.⁷ The Kataristas focused on indigenous struggle and called for indigenous liberation—connecting leftist goals with those of the indigenous people. Although the movement brought back the images of indigenous rebellions and inspired indigenous people throughout Bolivia, the introduction of neoliberal policies coupled with factionalism within the movement resulted in its decline in the 1980s.

Understanding the neoliberal project is crucial in order to grasp the transformation of social movements not only in Bolivia, but also in Latin America. Neoliberal policies, mirroring the transition to democracy in the region (except in Chile), brought about a new attitude of governance—dismantling state structures that kept the historically marginalized population out of the decision-making process. In Bolivia, these policies took the form of multicultural legislation acknowledging the state's *plurinacionalidad* and extending greater citizenship rights to indigenous people.⁸ Neoliberal policies, however, simultaneously dismantled the notion of the welfare state—slashing social services and cutting spending for these programs. Although many neoliberal theorists viewed cutting spending as crucial for Latin American countries to overcome the debt crisis, the dismantling of the welfare state, increased poverty and produced dire social conditions. Another major transition facing the region was the declining state of the Left. Following years of persecution under dictatorial regimes, the Latin American Left's influence in the region was waning after the transition to democracy. Globally, the Left was at a crossroads as the Soviet Union

⁷ Sanjines, *Mestizaje Upside-Down* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004),

⁸ See Albo, “Kataristas to MNRistas” and Postero, *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 2007),

began a democratic transition—signaling the end of the Cold War. Leftist movements began to lose legitimacy throughout Latin America creating an oppositional void. This moment marked a transitional phase for the organization of social movements to develop, beyond a class discourse, new challenges to the state.

Despite this significant void, the neoliberal moment provided new avenues for social movements to articulate their demands, demands that were once under the auspices of a class movement. One mobilizing factor in particular was the saliency of cultural identity, particularly indigenism. The early 1990s witnessed indigenous movements taking the lead in challenging the new global order, from the 1992 March for dignity in South America (a gathering of indigenous groups from all over the Americas condemning the previous 500 years of oppression and vowing to create 500 years of indigenous liberation) to the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. Condemning neoliberal policies and highlighting the historical oppression of indigenous people, these movements used identity in order to highlight structural inequalities. Although these movements differed in their specific demands, they appealed to vast sectors of society, bringing to light the growing inequalities facing the region, the degradation of the environment, and the violation of human rights. In this context, indigenous social movements in Ecuador and Bolivia achieved impressive victories using a discourse of anti-neoliberalism and ethnic identity.

Indigenous movements in Bolivia exemplify not only the transformation of social movements in the 21st century, but also demonstrate successful mobilizations. While indigenous social movements became more apparent in the 21st century, it is important to note that they were neither spontaneous nor solely a product of

neoliberalism. Rather, in the case of Bolivia, indigenous social movements were products of a long history of social and political action. This view helps breakdown the notion that indigenous people, particularly the Aymara, have a cultural resistance trait.⁹ These movements, evolving from the early drives of unionism in the mines in the 1930s, combined historical memories of oppression and struggle (appealing to indigenous culture) with challenges to neoliberalism and imperialism.¹⁰ Indigenous people carried the challenge against neoliberalism and became an alternative to leftist movements, which had excluded indigenous people from decision-making positions. Although identity was a central aspect of indigenous movements' discourse, it was not the only one. For example, mobilizations such as the Water War and the Gas War in 2000 and 2003 respectively intertwined the notion of ancestral right to natural resources with a discourse of anti-neoliberalism (an end to privatizations, an end to IMF and World Bank centered economic policies, and a redistribution of wealth). At the heart of these movements were the same demands that drove movements from earlier generations. Yet, as mentioned, these movements succeeded where past movement failed by galvanizing indigenous people to take the lead in challenging the neoliberal government. Social and political conditions also played a major part in the transformation of social movements.

In shaping this research project, I drew upon many authors who analyzed indigenous memory, the political and economic transformations during neoliberalism,

⁹ In the introduction to their compilation of indigenous movements in Bolivia, Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson argue that there is resistance is an inherent cultural trait to indigenous people in the Andean region. I refute this claim and instead view Andean resistance as part of their historical roots.

¹⁰ In chapter 3, I discuss the important moments in Bolivian history that helped shape an indigenous consciousness and the images of fallen heroes that were integral in the movements' discourse. For a discussion of indigenous memory, see Albó, Sanjines, and Cusicanqui.

and indigenous social movements. Xavier Albó was instrumental in shaping my conception of the transformation of indigenous social movements into political parties. In one of his seminal works, Albó examines the emergence of the Kataristas in the 1970s, demonstrating how this movement benefitted from not only the 1952 Revolution's reforms, but also from its proximity to a growing urban center. In addition to Albó's work, I relied on Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's work on indigenous movements, specifically her historical account of the development of a campesino class. Furthermore, both Albó and Cusicanqui demonstrated a growing indigenous consciousness through their analyses of census data (particularly examining the increase in the number of those who identify themselves as indigenous).¹¹ In addition to these authors' works, Nancy Postero's analyses of neoliberalism, multiculturalism, and the ongoing Bolivian transformation greatly influenced this study. Postero argues that neoliberal multicultural reforms in Bolivia had unintended consequences—highlighting new avenues for indigenous people to challenge and implement change during the neoliberal period.

An important aspect that I examine throughout this work is the transformation of social movements. I contend, however, that this transformation is not a new social movement; instead, I try deviate from New Social Movement theory, which tries to explain this transformation, and demonstrate that the “newness” was a central part of its discourse. New Social Movement theory as best exemplified through the work of Sonia Alvarez and Arturo Escobar sheds light on a trend within social movements that took hold following the decline of the Left throughout. This vacated space allowed

¹¹ See Albo (1987) and Cusicanqui (2008)

new issues to take precedence within social movements, such as gender rights, environmental issues, and indigenous rights.

Through an analysis of secondary texts about social movements, Bolivian history, neoliberalism, and an examination of primary sources including newspapers, government documents, and interviews, I will demonstrate how indigenous movements played an important role in galvanizing various historically marginalized sectors severely affected by the imposition of neoliberal policies. In addition, my understanding of an indigenous consciousness and the alternative model in Bolivia is influenced by my travel and my informal interviews with people in La Paz, El Alto, and Sucre. Indigenous social movements linked ancestry and cultural identity (underscoring the historical oppression of indigenous people at the hands of a criollo/mestizo elite) with a discourse against neoliberalism and imperialism. Indigenous people thus saw the privatization of their natural resources as an attack on their economic well being, and their ancestral rights. These movements brought together broad sectors of the population not only reeling from the economic shift, but also wary about the direction of their country. This union brought about impressive victories against neoliberal reforms such as the privatization of natural resources, the eradication of the coca leaf, and the sale of natural gas to foreign interests. These acts facilitated the election of the first indigenous president in the country's history. It is important to reiterate, however, that identity never replaced the saliency of class. On the contrary, issues of class (the nationalization of the state's resources, the redistribution of wealth, and the development of the state itself) drove the challenge against neoliberal policies. Central to the demands of the movements was the overall

improvement of life for the majority. This alternative model is one that recognizes the shortcomings of the 1952 Revolution and intends to renew a revolution through structural change. The dramatic change following the introduction of neoliberal policies thus provided an ideal climate in which indigenous movements and social movements in general could aspire to long lasting change. This allowed Evo Morales and MAS to emerge as a viable alternative to the status quo. Morales's election exemplified the alternative at work: indigenous people redefining their cultural, political, and social identities and their role in reshaping the mestizo/European model for nation building and development. The social and political movements during the neoliberal moment brought to light not only the influence of an indigenous alternative model that challenged these pervasive policies through mass mobilizations, but also its success in uniting people across class and cultural boundaries. Drawing upon Nancy Fraiser's work, this discourse represents both a politics of distribution (one that recognizes gross inequalities and actively seeks to redistribute wealth) and a politics of recognition (one that recognizes the various indigenous cultures and views Bolivia's national identity as plural).¹² It is through this discourse that indigenous people are at the forefront of breaking the chains of domination and recreating a society on their own terms.

The thesis is organized in three chapters, each addressing the transformation of social movements in Bolivia. Chapter 1 outlines neoliberalism (the historical context of my argument), the theory, its history in Latin America, and the social movements

¹² Nancy Fraiser, "Heterosexism, Misrecognition, and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler." *Social Text* 52/53 (1997): 286

that surge during this period, in particular New Social Movements. Chapter 2 analyzes the historical transformation of social movements in Bolivia, the transcendental image of Amaru and Katari, and the emergence of an ethnic/political discourse. Chapter 3 examines the neoliberal moment in Bolivia and challenges to neoliberalism. This chapter follows the movements that propelled Evo Morales to the presidency and ushered in an era of change. In this format, I will show that the transformation of social movements was integral for pressuring the neoliberal state and presenting Bolivians with an opportunity to recreate their state.

Chapter 1

Analyzing Neoliberalism

Indigenous social movements in Bolivia not only demonstrated the continuation of a leftward trend in Latin America, but also the evolution of social movements. The start of the 21st century began with important national mobilizations decrying the fallacies of neoliberalism and the historic oppression of indigenous people. One such mobilization was against the privatization of water in 2000 in Cochabamba, known as the Water War, which helped jump-start a national movement against neoliberalism. The defeat of the privatization measure galvanized the populace and set the stage for further movements throughout the country, voicing a wide range of demands. It was a temporary victory, however, for social movements in the 21st century. Coming into the 2002 elections, which came at the heels of the Water War, candidates attempted to acknowledge the changing political climate and portray a sense of change. In a very tight race, the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) candidate, Evo Morales, came from within two percentages of becoming president.¹³ As James Petras states, “A social movement of peasants and indigenous peoples came within an inch (1.4 per cent) of wresting control of the political power that eluded them for 500 years.”¹⁴ Although the elections did not produce a candidate for change (bringing ex-president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada for another term), the slim margin of victory represented the coming clash between an emerging indigenous movement looking to transform the state (through an alternative model) and a mestizo/elite group seeking to maintain the status quo.

¹³ Petras, 191.

¹⁴ Petras, 191.

Once in office and despite the pressure from these mobilizations, Sánchez de Lozada pursued the neoliberal project in Bolivia by deepening privatization, particularly of natural resources, and cutting social spending. His promotion of the neoliberal project, however, was met with great resistance, enraging vast sectors of society desperately seeking change from not only the neoliberal model, but also from the structural oppression of a failed system. Through national protests, blockades, and confrontations, these social movements displayed two distinct characteristics: they were revolutionary and indigenous. The social movements pressed the government with debilitating protests, isolating the capital. The ease with which these movements “took a city,” however, rarely resulted in a power grab—differing from traditional views of a revolution. Moreover, the central actors leading the charge for change characterized their struggle within an ethnic/class lens. The start of the 21st century witnessed the increasing use of indigenism as a basis for organization. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui demonstrates this fact by highlighting the results of the 2001 census, according to which indigenous people represented more than 62 percent of the population—a dramatic increase from previous years. However, the transformative aspect of the social movements in Bolivia was due not only to their ethnic make-up, but also to the ability of indigenous people to create a consciousness based on class and ethnicity. The mixture of class and identity in the discourse of these movements also created temporary alliances between different sectors of society (connecting issues of struggle). From miners to campesinos to the middle class, these groups articulated their discontent with both neoliberalism (a growing trend throughout Latin America) and the failures of previous presidents to lift Bolivia from the depths of

poverty. Social movements brought the neoliberal state to its knees and created a climate that would facilitate the rise of the country's first indigenous president, Evo Morales. His election marked a turning point not only in struggle against neoliberalism (and to a greater extent U.S./European imperialism), but also in creating lasting revolutionary change (going beyond the 1952 revolution).

Within this process of transformation in Bolivia—one centered on the growth of an indigenous consciousness—was the evolution of social movements and the avenues for resistance within the neoliberal period. The movements of the 21st century fused a discourse of class and ethnicity differing from the “old Left,” which used the saliency of class to organize while ignoring race and culture. The mass mobilizations that brought an end to the neoliberal period and the election of the country's first indigenous president, however, were not instantaneous nor were they direct products of neoliberalism itself. The growth of an indigenous consciousness, through the incorporation of indigenous identity in the popular discourse of resistance, facilitated the development of a national movement connecting indigenous struggle (historically based) with the inequality of neoliberalism (a renewed effort to oppress not just indigenous people).

The Origins of Neoliberal Theory and Its Practice in Latin America

In general, social movements throughout Latin America dramatically changed following the imposition of neoliberal policies and the transition to democracy during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Understanding the neoliberal project in this context is crucial for grasping how these policies provided indigenous people greater rights

while increasing inequality. At the heart of neoliberalism was the return of the market as the driving force for economies. David Harvey best sums up this economic, political, and social theory by noting that “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.”¹⁵ The elections of Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. as well the “successful” Chilean experiment created inroads for neoliberal policies to take hold, and facilitated a new wave of economic and political conservatism. Reagan in the U.S. and Thatcher in the UK pursued economic policies aimed at bringing about a re-emphasis of the market while also constructing the platform for “bigger” capitalism.¹⁶ Their free-market reforms broke down state structures that inhibited the flow of capital. Policies such as decreased state spending on social initiatives, privatization of state-owned resources and companies, and labor reforms all played an important role in opening up national economies to the global markets. Neoliberalism effectively reversed many of the measures designed to bring about greater equality (although unevenly). As James Petras notes, “the neoconservative counterrevolution in Latin America, Europe, and the US was predicated on a perceived need to put an end to and reverse a process of economic and political development associated with the welfare state in the North and development

¹⁵ Harvey, 2.

¹⁶ It is important to note that each leader went about creating the climate for the passage of neoliberal policies in different ways.

in the South.”¹⁷ In Latin America, economic and political restructuring under neoliberalism took the form of creating a “good business climate.”¹⁸ In order to create this climate, institutions that resisted these policies were readily replaced through either force or coercion. U.S. supported military coups in Latin America provide a clear example of this ideal. Once in place, authoritarian regimes systematically eliminated oppositional groups (labor unions, leftist organizations, and political parties) in an attempt to de-politicize the region. David Harvey notes that force became the primary method in order to create consent for neoliberal policies.¹⁹ Moreover, the use of force within the neoliberal project brings to light the contradictions between democracy and neoliberalism. Such contradictions within the model include the active role of the state in creating a “good business climate,” individualism versus the longing for a collective existence, the role of authoritarianism and authoritarian measures in democracies, the illusion of competition, and the disintegration of social solidarity in the face of increasing commodification.²⁰ In addition a pattern emerges illustrating the process of neoliberalism including, shock²¹ (resulting from both military coups and the introduction of these policies usually by force), organizing and coping with these reforms, and contestation and a search for new solutions.²² These phases highlight, specifically, the Bolivian neoliberal project

¹⁷ James Petras, *Social Movements and State Power*, 180.

¹⁸ Harvey, 70.

¹⁹ Harvey, 40.

²⁰ Harvey, 79-80.

²¹ See Naomi Klein’s work, *The Shock Doctrine*, for an analysis of institutional systems (i.e. IMF and World Bank) and states that implement economic policies during times of shock.

²² Although this is a generalization of Latin America as whole, it is important to note that some countries are still trying to cope with and organize against these policies while Chile and to some extent Brazil and Mexico are examples of neoliberalism still running its course.

where contradictions abound and people work within the neoliberal context to create alternatives.

Economic decisions prioritized the market as the vehicle to not only lift the state out of the global recession of the late 1970s and into the 1990s, but also enrich wealthy nations. This logic, later known as the Washington Consensus, conceded that with greater competition and little interference from the state (only to monitor or create pathways for competition), development and progress could be achieved. Shortly thereafter, the IMF and World Bank echoed the Washington Consensus logic as the next step in development and progress. The result was an international process where this model would come to define and dominate a period.

Another facet of the development and growth of neoliberalism within Latin America was the spread of participatory democracies and with it the enactment of multi-cultural initiatives. The push for deregulation facilitated the disintegration of the corporatist state and brought forth a new strategy to incorporate (and in many cases, co-opt) previously ignored sectors of the population. Multiculturalism in the context of neoliberalism brought about changes region-wide, recognizing and advancing the political rights of indigenous and Afro-Latin Americans. In this context, the historically marginalized people of Latin America became part of a drive for participatory democracy, actively participating in local elections and in dialogues regarding local funds. These multi-cultural projects, however, also took on the role of reshaping these populations to fit the mold of the neoliberal person. As Charles Hale observes in Guatemala's drive for multiculturalism, the neoliberal state incorporated indigenous people under the state's terms, creating a dichotomy of accepted and not

accepted forms indigenism.²³ Multi-cultural discourse allowed new actors (those previously excluded from the national decision-making process) to be part of the neoliberal regime; yet these new spaces of articulation were part of the drive to build consent for structural adjustment policies. The extension of voting rights and local autonomy, in many respects, masked the actual power of population as whole. Despite the attempts of the neoliberal project to transform the political and social arena (through consent and force), it was in this precise moment that social movements found cleavages to create change in Latin America.

Neoliberalism in Bolivia

In Bolivia, neoliberalism was multi-faceted, bringing about a dramatic shift in both the economy and society. The return to democracy in the 1980s with the election of Paz Estenssoro (ironically the central figure in the Bolivian Revolution of 1952) ushered in a period of transition, one intended to implement neoliberal policies. The first step of the Bolivian neoliberal experience was the destruction of the 1952 Revolution's social and economic policies—a sort of shock therapy to stimulate the economy. With the support of the IMF and World Bank, and under the guidance of Finance Minister Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, the democratic government of Estenssoro eliminated national subsidies, began the process of privatization of natural resources (opening up Bolivian markets for foreign investment), and undermined the power of labor unions—taking repressive actions against them, a central part in

²³ Charles Hale, “*Rethinking Indigenous Politics in the Era of the ‘Indio Permitido,’*” NACLA Report on the Americas, Vol. 38 (2004).

creating a “good business climate.” By the end of Estensorro’s term, the only remains of the revolution was Estensorro himself. The election of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in the 1990s intensified the process. He devalued the currency, further reduced tariffs thereby facilitating the import of foreign goods and direct investment, eliminated government subsidies and regulations, and cut in social programs and overall government spending.²⁴ The implementation of these policies dramatically worsened the social and economic conditions in Bolivia, making one of the poorest countries in the region poorer.

While the economic program broke down the 1952 reforms, the socio-cultural project sought to institutionalize a form of participatory democracy that centered on indigenous people and recognition of their rights. As Petras notes, the Bolivian neoliberal model emphasized popular participation as an important component of restructuring democracy and bringing about local development. In this context, NGOs were pivotal in the bridging the gaps between the grassroots, the state, and foreign aid organizations.²⁵ Along with the increased presence of NGOs, which implemented a westernized bureaucratic decision making process to local communities, the decentralization process intended in bring greater autonomy to the municipalities.²⁶ In addition, the inclusion of indigenous people was also an important step in what amounted to a ’52-like attempt at incorporating vast portions of the populations. The passage of multicultural reforms (empowering this historically marginalized sector)

²⁴ James Petras, 182.

²⁵ Petras, 208.

²⁶ Nancy Postero, *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 2007), 154. Postero also notes that within this context, this process values neoliberal types of decision making such as efficiency, administrative abilities, and mastery of bureaucratic language.

and Sánchez de Lozada's selection of Víctor Hugo Cárdenas (a former founder of the Katarista movement) as his vice-president made apparent the growing interconnectedness between neoliberalism and indigenous-centered reform. These reforms sought to redefine the relationship between the state and the population, and to demobilize groups perceived as a threat to the implementation of neoliberalism.

The start of the 21st century, however, brought about greater resistance against these policies. The decade following the implementation of neoliberalism created a dire situation. Social movements not only challenged the validity of these measures, but also challenged the state's grip on democratic power. Major mobilizations throughout the country demanded the reversal of the neoliberal process and championed a new alternative to neoliberalism and in general the capitalist system. These challenges were widespread, creating the sensation that there was a broader movement for change in Bolivia, one centering on an indigenous consciousness. The alternative model advanced by these movements rejected neoliberalism, and linked indigenous struggle with the transformation of the state.

Challenging New Social Movement Theory

In the wake of social and political upheavals during the 2000s, the alternative model for change prevailed in capturing support throughout the country and propelled Evo Morales to the presidency. The social and political movements during the neoliberal moment brought to light not only the influence of an indigenous alternative model that challenged these pervasive policies through mass mobilizations, but also its success in uniting people across class and cultural boundaries. It is through this

discourse that indigenous people are at the forefront of breaking the chains of domination and recreating a society on their own terms. Government policies that extended citizenship rights to indigenous people altered the relationship between the state and civil society, and greater organizational autonomy at the municipal level played an important part in the development of these movements.²⁷ It is important to note, however, that this was not a sudden transformation nor was it merely an outcome of the failures of neoliberalism. Although these movements came about during a growing challenge to neoliberal policies throughout Latin America, they are not strictly a neoliberal phenomenon. As Deborah Yashar points out, Bolivian indigenous movements “were still responding to the impact of changing citizenship regimes, political associational spaces extended by democratization, and existing networks.”²⁸ Moreover, Bolivia has a rich history of social movements important in challenging the state; from the miners to the agricultural sector to the *cocaleros* social movements, many sectors developed new ways of articulating their demands as marginalized citizens. In this context, contestation neither came about through worsening social conditions nor the shift in economic ideology. Rather, these movements emerged during an ideological and institutional crossroads for the state.

An important aspect in the election of Morales in 2005 and with it the implementation of an alternative model was the transformation of social movements. The declining influence of the Left coupled with the implementation of neoliberal reforms (and with it a particular type of democracy), created an arena for new actors to

²⁷ Postero, *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 2007). Postero describes the unintended consequences of neoliberalism

²⁸ Deborah Yashar, 153-154.

press for issues previously ignored or eclipsed within a class struggle. The neoliberal moment highlights both the radical changes of the state and the successful adaptation of social movements to contest these changes. These movements applied pressure to the state throughout Latin America, many calling for the repeal of neoliberal policies. It is within this moment that indigenous people not only became visible, but also symbolized and inspired renewed hope for change. The centrality of their position in attempting to usher in change gave a sense that their demands were new and different. Although indigenous movements made apparent their oppressive condition and reintroduced identity as central to building a more inclusive state, many of the salient issues espoused by these movements were similar to those that were integral in class-based movements only a decade earlier. So, did indigenous movements emerge as part of a growing trend of new movements responding to new factors or were these movements part of a re-emergence of traditional class-based movements (a “new” Left)?

The emergence of indigenous movements in Latin America as important actors for change also brought about new interpretations in analyzing their struggle. In particular, new social movement theory advances the idea that new actors and issues are the key for Latin American social movements; scholars along this line emphasized both neoliberalism and the “newness” of social movements during this period. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez provide the clearest analysis for New Social Movement theory; they posited that social movements do not restrict themselves to traditional political activities, such as those linked to parties and state institutions. Rather they challenge our most entrenched ways of understanding political practice and its relation

to culture, economy, society, and nature.²⁹ New Social Movement theory is a byproduct of not only post-modernism, but also post-Marxism views, a reflection of the neoliberal period, where analyses of new actors with new demands replaced structuralist views. In this context, movements highlighting the environment, gender and sexual orientation, and ethnicity captured the essence of new actors articulating demands that were once under the umbrella of a broader class struggle. As Escobar and Alvarez state, “In the new situation, a multiplicity of social actors establish their presence and spheres of autonomy in a fragmented social and political space.”³⁰ New Social Movement theorists posit the creation of “new identities” through means outside of economic and political realms; they emphasize the cultural and non-political realms. The return to democracy in Latin America and Eastern Europe coupled with the implementation of neoliberal policies that broke down the welfare state brought about new demands from new actors who no longer viewed their struggle within a singular cause (class), but through autonomy (outside the state) and through race and culture. The changing relationship between the state and civil society created a space to articulate these demands. NGOs played (and continue to play) a pivotal role in providing assistance to movements as their demands went beyond the boundaries of the state. Where before social movements concentrated their efforts to pressure the state within its borders, new social movements present a much more global character. For example, from the Zapatistas to the environmental movement these Latin American movements used transnational networks in order to take their struggle

²⁹ Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America*, 7.

³⁰ Escobar and Alvarez, 3.

beyond the confines of the state. In other cases, new social movements received support (both financial and strategic support) from nongovernmental organizations—putting pressure on the state nationally and globally. These transnational tools, a change that went along with the process of globalization, made these movements appear new. In general, new social movements tended to devalue the influence of structural analyses; however, the theory fails to capture the true struggle within social movements.

In regards to Bolivia, the emergence of indigenous people became fundamental to the national challenge of the state's neoliberal policies, bringing to light its relationship with new social movements. The use of cultural and ethnic identities challenged traditional understandings of not only politics and economics, but also culture, society, and nature; identity driven movements in turn were a major facet of developing social movement theory. Yet, the notion of “new” movements implies that these movements, particularly indigenous movements, are spontaneous—overshadowing, in most cases, their historical trajectory as social movements. Many of these movements reveal, however, that their demands were not new; they were similar if not the same as those espoused in earlier eras. Bolivian indigenous social movements in their important and successful battles against the privatization of water and the sale of gas to the U.S. and Mexico through Chilean ports reveal how connecting indigenous identity to demands of class can be salient. Although social movement theory attempts to explain the emergence of identity-based and driven movements, what is clear is the transformative process that took place, one that was concurrent with the implementation of neoliberalism and the decline of Left/class-

based movements. In this light, the Bolivian case exemplifies this transformative process—clearly demonstrating that indigenous movements were not spontaneous rather had a historical trajectory. Furthermore, indigenous movements capitalized on established networks, the void of an oppositional voice (with the decline of influence of both labor and Leftist movements), and a growth of indigenous consciousnesses that became more apparent during the state’s push for multiculturalism. Indigenous movements that led to the election of Evo Morales shows the need to combine new social movement theory with a structural approach as it not only brings to light the grievances of subaltern groups, but also the conflicting interests of these groups. It is important to note, however, that a structural approach fails to connect the individual within the structure, focusing rather on the groups affected by the structure. As Eckstein notes on the approach’s usage in studying social movements, “It [historical structural approach] can only account for the conditions prompt that groups of people, in the aggregate, to act as they do.”³¹ As I will show through my analysis of Bolivian social movements, identity did not and does not drive these movements but rather reinforces them. The notion of “newness,” stemming from the resurgence of indigenous people as social actors, does little to explain the nuanced character of these movements. The election of Evo Morales symbolizes this very point, as he became the first indigenous president elected in the history of Bolivia with the support of not only indigenous movements, but also vast sectors of the working and middle classes. This election helps bring to light how social movements have changed over time to contest the changing political, social, and economic landscapes.

³¹ Eckstein, 56.

Chapter 2

Analysis of Political and Social History

The transformation that took place in Bolivia, however, stand apart from the recent trend in Latin America where anti-neoliberal movements were central in the resurgence of Leftist governments. Bolivian social movements demonstrate that neoliberalism was not the central organizing feature but rather part of an ongoing pursuit for change. Bolivia's long history of social movements, from the rebellions of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari during the colonial period to the 1952 Revolution, played an important role in shaping the wave of mobilizations throughout the country at the start of the 21st century. The legends of Amaru and Katari were integral in the forming of an indigenous consciousness while the 1952 Revolution represented an opportunity to create change in a neo-colonial state. Furthermore, the vanguard of the 1952 Revolution brought about significant social and political changes. Yet, the shortcomings of the new government coupled with a military coup d'état, ushering t later left the promise of revolutionary change hanging in the air. Using this history of resistance, social movements combined a discourse of cultural and ethnic identity and class that mobilized vast sectors of society against the neoliberal government. This discourse became an integral aspect in the development of an alternative model, one that attempts to bridge these histories of resistance.

From Amaru and Katari to the Revolution of 1952

Indigenous rebellions in the Andean region were common features during Spanish colonial rule, yet none compared to the magnitude and actual threat that was

led by Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari in the 18th century.³² The Great Rebellion of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari later evolves into an integral aspect in the alternative model and the growth of an indigenous consciousness not only of its location (what is now Bolivia), but also for its broad appeal to others frustrated with colonial rule.³³ It was the revival and recycling of the imaginings of indigenous rebellions and insurrections of the colonial past that helped redefine indigeness in the 21st century. The invasion and destruction of the Inca Empire by Spanish conquistadors and the subsequent two centuries of colonialism left a people and culture in tatters. The rebellions of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari in 1780-1782 (prior to independence) presented a transcendent challenge to break with the colonial model. These battles established an indigenous identity in the face of Spanish colonialism; they fought for both indigenous freedom and the revival of the Inca Empire. Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari's led an uprising not only of many who were descendents of the fallen Inca Empire, but also for those longing to break with Spanish rule. Both Amaru and Katari appealed to the mythology and memory of the Inca Empire by taking up names that exemplify their linkage to the Inca ruling class. As Herbert Klein notes, however, indigenous rebellions were common in the Andean region under Spanish colonialism, both in the rural and urban areas, as abuses, violent oppression, and unfair taxation were factors.³⁴

³² Stern argues, "Serious insurrectionary threat emerged in the highlands well *before* the 1770s and 1780s," p. 30. This brings to light that Amaru and Katari's insurrection was not spontaneous rather part of an ongoing colonial struggle.

³³ It is important to note that although these rebellions were seemingly simultaneous they were not united rebellions. As Campbell observes both Amaru and Katari were

³⁴ Klein, 73-74 in Brief History of Bolivia.

Then what set the rebellion of Amaru and Katari apart from these common occurrences and how did they achieve mythic status? Unlike other uprisings, Klein explains, this was a massive indigenous-led rebellion encompassing thousands of rebel troops reaching vast areas of Spanish colonial territory. “It was a multi-class, multi-caste, and extremely well-led revolt that ultimately had as its aim the establishment of an autonomous region under control of the local classes to the exclusion of all Spaniards. It was in short an independence movement.”³⁵ Where previous contestations were within a local context—fighting the local caciques—this rebellion encompassed a large-scale challenge to Spanish rule. The central idea within the uprising was the revival of the Inca Empire—tying this struggle to the return of the Inca through its cosmology and myth.³⁶ The outbreak of riots and other insurrectionary movements in the provinces of central and southern Peru, and the La Paz region of what is now Bolivia caused a major crisis in colonial rule.³⁷ The Spanish, however, overcame these uprisings through reinforcement and co-opting local indigenous communities. Nonetheless, the Age of Andean Insurrection set the stage for subsequent independence in the Andean region, and in the case of Bolivia, these battles lived on in the collective memory forming critical components to later forms of resistance.

³⁵ Klein, 74.

³⁶ Leon G. Campbell, p. 118. Campbell notes that Katari and Amaru aligned their names according to the Inkarrí myth, which described the abandonment of their world for the outside worlds of Spanish America, and their triumphant return that would allow them to change the world. He also notes, that their names in Aymara and Quechua, respectively, both refer to serpents, which represent the underground that the Spanish had placed the Indians. Jan Szemiński also demonstrates how the Amaru and Katari tied this Inca cosmology p. 166-191.

³⁷ Stern notes the crisis of authority included the central districts of Huarochirí, Tarma, and Jauja, which overlooked Lima. He argues that although this crisis was comparable to that of the French in relation to the Haitian rebellion, Spanish colonial overcame it through a variety of factors, p. 72.

Through Inca cosmology and myth, their insurrectionary movement brought together a large number of followers longing for an end of Spanish colonialism and a return to a neo-Inca Empire. In this context, the independence movement, as Klein characterized it, was the first manifestation of an indigenous consciousness. This consciousness became the foundation (albeit in a different manifestation) for post-colonial and neoliberal movements within Bolivia. As Alberto Flores Galindo notes, “The idea of the return of the Inca must have been engraved in the collective memory of the eighteenth century: it represented the historical consciousness of the conquered populations.”³⁸

While these movements did not succeed in uprooting Spanish colonial rule, it did create a “space” for an independence movement to succeed. The vanguard of the independence of Bolivia (like many throughout Latin America) comprised oligarchic class—made up of criollos—that sought to eliminate Spanish rule in order to fulfill their economic and political goals. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui explains, the *criollo* oligarchy set out to create a society based on their image bringing about a dichotomy between the civilized and the barbaric that continued the dominant racist discourse of the colonial past.³⁹ The establishment of Bolivia did not end the hierarchical system inherited through colonialism; rather it strengthened it and the traditional elites’ hold on the nation-state.⁴⁰ This foundation made certain that the colonial model would persist in Bolivia long after the Spaniards. Succeeding regimes (from caudillo rule to

³⁸ Alberto Flores Galindo, *In Search of an Inca*, p. 202.

³⁹ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos: Luchas del Campesinado Aymara y Qhechwa de Bolivia, 1900-1980* (La Paz: CSUTCB/HISBOL, 1984), 17.

⁴⁰ Klein describes the trend within 20th century historians “to point out the persistence of traditional elites under republican disguises and to stress the continuity of social and political institutions until well into the nineteenth century,” 102.

republican rule) further strengthened and expanded the hacienda system, silver and tin mine extraction, and the continued destruction of indigenous communities.⁴¹ The continuation of the colonial system in the guise of an independent republic highlighted the need for indigenous people to create change on their own terms. Although largely an indigenous country, Bolivian society remained and continues to remain segregated, keeping alive the remnants of colonialism through a caste-like class structure.⁴² Despite their failings, the rebellions of Katari, and Amaru, remained a crucial part of a growing and developing indigenous consciousness that became central in other struggles for transformation.⁴³

The consolidation of the Bolivian nation-state proved to be a trying and tumultuous project. At the beginning of the 20th century, the neo-colonial system that persisted following the independence movement was in terminal crisis. The Liberal government's last stand to uphold its legitimacy was a disastrous defeat in the Chaco War where more than 250,000 men died and the country lost a large part of its territory.⁴⁴ The defeat dealt a severe blow to the criollo elite and by extension the Bolivian government, which concerned itself with preserving an outdated system of rule. Klein notes that following the dreadful defeat during the Chaco War, the nationalization of the mines and the growth of a class consciousness was firmly implanted in the poor majority of society (particularly within the indigenous

⁴¹ Herbert S. Klein, *A Concise History of Bolivia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 156.

⁴² Its population is divided into four major ethnic groups, Quechua (28 percent), Aymara (19 percent), *mestizo* (30 percent), and European/White (12 percent). *Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas* (INE) as cited in, Country Profile: Bolivia, The Economist Intelligence Unit (New York, 2007), 17. It is important to note that census data is very speculative as these percentages represent a history of racism and class opportunism.

⁴³ Rivera Cusicanqui (47). She also describes how rebel leaders and indigenous unions used the myth and legend of Katari and Amaru as part of their ideological base

⁴⁴ James Dunkerly, 225.

majority).⁴⁵ At the forefront of the contestation was the radical mining sector, which challenged the state's liberal project and demanded changes. Since the 1920s, the miners' union developed into influential as a mobilizing force and pressured the state through debilitating strikes. In December 1942, the failing state faced further complications when the military fired into a crowd of striking miners in Catavi, injuring and killing several miners striking the Patiño Company.⁴⁶ The Catavi Massacre not only enraged miners seeking some of the profits that had enriched foreign multinationals, but also galvanized a nation. In addition, it allowed the opposition party, Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), to take advantage of the growing unpopularity of the government and seek out the miners as part of their base. Victor Paz Estenssoro explained that the massacre "brought MNR into contact with the miners on a considerable scale, but it also brought them in touch with members of the armed forces who had a social point of view."⁴⁷ The changing political climate (with the growing opposition) played a major role in the burgeoning movement during the 1940s up until the 1952 Revolution. James Dunkerley observes, however, that "The economic stalemate at the end of 1951 may well not be deemed a 'cause' of the Bolivian revolution, but it was a decided mess within which the status quo was unraveling as fast as its opponents were consolidating."⁴⁸ This "mess" created the foundation for the MNR (*Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*) to

⁴⁵ Klein, 185. He also notes that the failure in the Chaco War allowed the Left to grow in influence both within and out of the mining sector.

⁴⁶ Alexander, 45.

⁴⁷ As quoted in Robert Alexander, 47.

⁴⁸ Dunkerley, 241. Dunkerley demonstrates the both the rise and fall of tin prices, and its affect on the Bolivian

come to power with the support of social movements, particularly the miners, and vast parts of Bolivian society.

In the face of these challenges, the neo-colonial state spiraled into crisis not only losing its legitimacy, but also succumbing to military coups throughout the period leading up to 1952.⁴⁹ The reorganization of the dominant parties along with the growing influence of the Left allowed competing groups, specifically the MNR to gain the moral and ideological backing of the populace. The MNR took advantage of these conditions and built a broad-based coalition from both the progressive middle-class and the labor sector, in order to take power Bolivia's first major social and political upheaval to do away with the colonial model.⁵⁰ As Javier Sanjinés states, "For most Bolivians, the 1952 'nationalist' Revolution, with its historic, multiethnic, multiclass alliance of militant mineworkers and peasants led by progressive middle-class leaders, represents Bolivia's most important experiment in modern nation building."⁵¹ With the election of Víctor Paz Estensoro in 1952, the revolution ushered in an era that marked a decisive turn towards greater government involvement in the state's economy.

The MNR attempted to implement a national program that redistributed the wealth and land, and extended services to the rural areas.⁵² The major measures included extending suffrage rights to indigenous people, land reform, expanding public education, and nationalizing the silver and tin mines. The most profound changes took place in the reorganization of the economy and the integration of

⁴⁹ Klein, 198.

⁵⁰ Klein, 200.

⁵¹ Javier C Sanjinés, *Mestizaje Upside-Down* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 154.

⁵² Klein, 210. He also notes that in 1950, Bolivia was still a predominantly rural country yet the rate of urbanization was increasing—almost doubling since the turn of the 20th century. In addition, the rural make-up of the country allowed for great inequalities.

indigenous people into this national project. The economic plan laid out by the MNR sought to nationalize the tin mines, solve the agrarian problem, and increase investment in the petroleum industry.⁵³ The nationalization of the tin mines was a nod to the strong miners' union that carried the MNR to power and called for the nationalization of the mines as a path to curb foreign imperialism.⁵⁴ The MNR's nationalization process, however, was different than what the miners demanded. President Paz Estenssoro described the process as one where the multinational corporations would receive fair compensation, but would not withdraw their capital from Bolivia.⁵⁵ This route highlighted the MNR's centrist leanings by taking a softer stance towards the multinationals in an attempt to calm foreign investors' anxieties. Similarly, solving the agrarian problem was one of the main priorities of the incoming government. Prior to the revolution about seven thousand proprietors controlled more than 95 percent of the arable land, with less than one percent of that land cultivated.⁵⁶ This latifundio production model was pervasive and a symbolic holdover of the colonial past. In an interview with the New York Times, President Paz Estenssoro acknowledged that breaking the power of the big tin companies as well as carrying out agrarian reform and agricultural improvement projects took precedence.⁵⁷ As the Ministry of Peasant Affairs described, "The agrarian reform does not implicate a disregard of the right to property; rather, the new agricultural system will develop after the autonomous indigenous community model in order to accomplish

⁵³ El Diario, Monday, July 21, 1952.

⁵⁴ Alexander, 76.

⁵⁵ Sam Pope Brewer, New York Times, June 28, 1952 accessed from Proquest on April 14, 2008.

⁵⁶ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Opremidos pero no vencidos*, 76.

⁵⁷ Sam Pope Brewer, New York Times

cooperativism.”⁵⁸ The state’s plan was to redistribute land by legalizing occupied land that had no claim to ownership, breaking down the latifundios and expropriating the uncultivated land, and promoting expansion in the remote areas of the Andes and Amazon.⁵⁹

An integral component in the agrarian reform was the incorporation of indigenous people into the state—intertwining the reform with a new corporatist model. “The agrarian reform like the education reform will develop in the fields and allow for the reincorporation of the Indian into civilian life as an active member of society,” proclaimed the Ministry of Peasant Affairs.⁶⁰ In addition to the extension of suffrage rights to all Bolivian citizens, the agrarian reform became the main vehicle for creating a new “Bolivian citizen.” The agrarian problems that President Paz Estenssoro described required much more than redistributing land and attempting to break power of the large landowners. The national project set out by the MNR brought hope not only to a nation in crisis, but also to indigenous people who viewed the revolution as an end to their colonial past. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui observes, the government’s active courtship of indigenous people in the countryside destroyed the marginalization and seeming exile of indigenous people, which characterized their existence under oligarchic society.⁶¹ Through the stated inclusion of indigenous people into the agrarian project, the MNR sought to conform indigenous identity to the national project by eliminating the cultural labels and replacing them with the more salient term, “*campesino*.” As Deborah Yashar points out, “The land reform policy

⁵⁸ El Diario, Saturday, August 2, 1952, my translation.

⁵⁹ World Bank 1996b, vol. 2: 161-2 as cited in Yashar, 158.

⁶⁰ El Diario, Saturday, August 2, 1952, my translation.

⁶¹ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 111.

coincided with an effort to create corporatist modes of interest intermediation—part of which included the institutionalization of peasant unions that were formed in decades prior to the MNR governments.”⁶² In this context, the agrarian reform facilitated the development of nationalism that aligned citizenship identity class-based terms. Under the banner of nationalism, indigenous people in the rural areas would no longer view themselves as a different cultural entity but rather part of the nation.⁶³ The birth of the *campesino* class was tied to the mutation of the state as a corporatist body. In turn, the result of this incorporation would dramatically alter the reality of indigenous people—breaking the long-standing colonial relationship in the rural areas. The revolution’s reforms, however, fell short in transforming Bolivia as deep divisions within the MNR and the growing conservativeness of the party brought about its demise. In 1964, the introduction of military rule officially ended the revolution.

Although the 1952 Revolution was a monumental occasion in Bolivian history, its reforms were not sweeping enough to create lasting change. The goals of the revolution were to bring about full independence in a country where much of the population lived under colonial conditions. The dismantling of these conditions through a variety of reforms (from the extension of universal suffrage rights to agrarian and educational reforms) ushered in an era of progress and development. Nonetheless, the MNR sought to use the eruption of nationalism prior to and following the revolution to redefine Bolivian citizenship—centered on class identity. The redefinition process, however, did not mold itself from the popular movements that

⁶² Deborah Yashar, 159.

⁶³ Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson, 80.

brought about the revolution; rather, the MNR's conservative tendencies renewed an exclusionary relationship that existed in Bolivia well before the revolution. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui notes that the MNR's drive for nationalism called for the acceptance of criollo values, language, and mentality; this project not only excluded the acceptance of multiple cultures and languages, but also reinforced elite domination.⁶⁴ The corporatist state that emerged following the revolution adopted measures to ensure their power would grow through the incorporation of vast sectors of the population, particularly through agrarian and educational reforms.⁶⁵ Breaking down traditional forms of community organizing and trying to transform them into agrarian unions allowed the state to exert hegemonic control in an area dominated by an old elite. The use of class identification had the effect of bringing the countryside closer to the state, but continued the marginalization of vast sectors of the population.

At the core of the MNR's leadership was a conservative group that resisted radical changes proposed by the base (miners, campesinos, and indigenous groups) and changes that were to be expected of a revolution. At times, the MNR reacted to pressure from the miners and the armed campesinos—reluctantly agreeing to “cogovernment” and redistribution reforms respectively—while at other times the protracted pace of reform made apparent the party's sheer unwillingness to implement more radical measures.⁶⁶ Furthermore, President Paz Estenssoro actively sought to portray the revolution as nothing more than moderate through its compensation of the “big three” (the largest mining companies) and its to nationalize all of the foreign-

⁶⁴ Rivera Cusicanqui, 75. She also notes that the MNR's primary strategy to “campesinize” the rural community was through co-optation

⁶⁵ Yashar, 159.

⁶⁶ Klein 214.

owned mines. The conservative turn of the revolution coupled with the declining state of the economy (particularly the global decline of the price of tin), set the stage for a coup d'état in 1964, ending Bolivia's revolution.⁶⁷ Subsequent military dictatorships displaced the hopes of continuing the progress that was promised under the revolution. The "military-peasant pact," which continued and accelerated the rate of land distributions in the countryside, gave the dictatorship a strong base of support (broadening the patron-client ties in rural areas).⁶⁸ Hylton Forrest and Sinclair Thomson observed, "The Barrientos regime then worked assiduously to strengthen the conservative alliance between peasants and the post-revolutionary state that would last into the Banzer period of the 1970s." Although indigenous communities were officially recognized and incorporated into the state following the revolution, many did not benefit from its reforms. The Revolution of 1952 was a momentous occasion for workers, the middle-class, indigenous people, and campesinos in Bolivia as it ended the lingering colonial power relationship. The new state that emerged following 1952, however, created state structures of oppression—replacing colonial structures—that continued the marginalization of Bolivia's popular sectors. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui explains, "The country of Indians governed by Lords would disappear with the revolution. The lords would turn into democrats and bourgeoisie and the Indians citizens, integrated into an independent and egalitarian sovereign state...The Indian would also disappear in the process of mestizaje, Hispanization of language,

⁶⁷ James Dunkerley demonstrates how the mining situation was problematic before the move to nationalize the "big three"

⁶⁸ Deborah J. Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 164-165.

migration, and the parceling out of the communities.”⁶⁹ The Revolution of 1952 built a foundation for subsequent progressive movements, one that centered on the development of Bolivia’s class struggle. Much like the rebellions of Amaru and Katari, 1952 became a point of departure, highlighting the relative success of the working class and the expansion of class consciousness, yet the outcome left many Bolivians wary of revolutionary nationalism based on Eurocentric ideas of *mestizaje*.

The Emergence of the Kataristas and the Awakening of an Indigenous Consciousness

The Kataristas in the 1970s best articulated the concept of an indigenous-leftist ideology. A new generation of indigenous leaders and organizers emerged from the revolution’s reforms and increased urbanization throughout Bolivia. Reviving the memory of Amaru and Katari, this new generation, armed with greater rights than ever before, was far more critical of not only the revolution, but also of the state’s inability to break with the colonial past. Increased educational opportunities, a product of educational reforms during the revolution, facilitated the growth of an Andean indigenous intellectual class. In search of an ideology that expressed their frustrations, this burgeoning group of intellectuals merged class struggles with indigenous culture (suppressed during the revolution in favor of class identifications). Emerging as a resistant movement during the years of military dictatorship, the Kataristas had no ties to the MNR or the older left that brought about the 1952 revolution. In this context, many organizers openly condemned both the oppressive military regime and the

⁶⁹ Rivera Cusicanqui as quoted in Albo, 382.

failures of the MNR that led to dictatorship. Aiding this growing indigenous and class consciousness in the 1970s was the increased migration from the failed mining zones and the countryside to the capital and its surrounding areas—bringing a greater number and proportion of indigenous people to these areas. This brought two distinct groups together (both coopted by the MNR during the revolution)—campesinos and urban unionists—creating a collective struggle under a class and indigenous consciousness. Furthermore, in these urban settings, Aymara intellectuals were at the center of communication networks that allowed the dissemination of ideas throughout the region, bridging the gap between the rural and urban areas.⁷⁰ The new movement focused on reclaiming, reaffirming, and defending indigenous identity and culture.⁷¹ These links between the colonial rebellion of Katari and the failed 1952 revolution strengthened the Katarista movement's idea of a people and a state entrenched in the colonial past. The growth of this movement became an important component in bringing cultural identity to the forefront.

Katarismo was an umbrella name that identified several movements and organizations. It was not until the publication of the *Manifiesto de Tiwanaku* that the movement became a solidified front.⁷² The *manifiesto*, signed by several organizations, synthesized the ideology of the burgeoning movement. The *manifiesto* emphasized the historical exploitation of indigenous people at the hands of the Spanish and now the Bolivian state. Viewing the state as inherently racist and biased,

⁷⁰ Sanjinés, 154. Xavier Albo also depicts the importance of communication networks, such as Radio Menedez and Radio Progressivo, were in spreading the ideas of the group around the Andean region, 395.

⁷¹ Rivera Cusicanqui, 130.

⁷² Rivera Cusicanqui, 132.

Katarista ideology rejected the notion of westernized views of *mestizaje*; they perceived the successive forms of modernity (from liberalism to conservatism to nationalism) as an imposition on a once autonomous nation.⁷³ For the *Kataristas*, the solution to Bolivia's endemic problems was to be achieved through a strong autonomous *campesino* movement. It brought to light that campesino class and Aymara and Quechua ethnic consciousness were complementary.⁷⁴ This was vital in building a movement and creating a foundation based on an indigenous-centered Left alternative to traditional political parties and Leftist politics. Furthermore, the *manifiesto* highlighted that a break from the Left was the only viable alternative to create change. The document made clear that parties or organizations from the Left never accepted the plight of the indigenous-*campesino*.⁷⁵ *Katarismo* challenged not only the nationalist model, but also provided indigenous people with a new framework in which to view their struggle (through indigenous culture and class). Integral to their discourse was the critique of top-down development models that excluded indigenous people (the majority of the population) and capitalism as the pillars of exploitation. The *Katarista* movement was the first influential movement within Bolivia that used a discourse that connected the history of colonial indigenous struggle with a view of class struggle. As Xavier Albó illustrates, the *Katarista* movement was the awakening of not only an indigenous consciousness, but also of a sleeping giant.⁷⁶

Commencing as a grass-roots movement among university students in and around La Paz, *Katarismo* grew beyond its base in the university and within the youth

⁷³ Sanjinés, 151.

⁷⁴ Hylton and Thomson, 87.

⁷⁵ Rivera Cusicanqui, 133.

⁷⁶ Albo, 395.

population and developed into a larger movement that brought indigenous identity to the forefront. The movement eventually split into two distinct factions—the *Indianistas* and the *Kataristas*—each stressing the group’s class or ethnic identity. The *Indianistas* promoted the growth of an Indian movement that advocated for Indian rights. As Yashar notes, they viewed Indian oppression and subordination in terms of racism; they were in favor of a greater indigenous presence within the state in order to create change.⁷⁷ Organized primarily through the MITKA (Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari), this movement had less of a campesino base and openly rejected alliances with a criollo-left that also perpetuated this racism. To them, the Left did not provide any solutions to the systematic racism underlying the state.⁷⁸ Indianistas contended that racism was integral to the oppression and discrimination the majority of the population felt. As Xavier Albó explains, “Their thesis was centered on the idea that the root of all problems was the Spanish conquest of the Andean ‘Indian’ peoples, and that it was therefore totally useless to ally themselves with any party made up by the successors of those invaders.”⁷⁹ In this context, their radicalism stemmed from viewing the plight of the campesino not only in terms of land, but also as part of an overall criollo/mestizo homogenizing cultural project.⁸⁰ MITKA focused both on the continued organization of the campesino within Bolivia while also creating networks

⁷⁷ Yashar, 168.

⁷⁸ Rivera Cusicanqui, 152.

⁷⁹ Xavier Albo, “From MNRistas to Kataristas to Katari,” in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, 18th to 20th Century*, ed. Steve J. Stern (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 401.

⁸⁰ The emphasis of the campesino within the radical fraction of the Katarista movement stems from the battle for land since Spanish colonialism to agrarian reform measures. In this context, land is key in not only recovering lost territory, but also creating an indigenous state.

throughout Latin America with other indigenous struggles.⁸¹ Yashar notes, however, that the Indianistas did not gain wide support due to their urban focus and their failure to build strong transcommunity networks.⁸² Similarly, Albó illustrates how difficult it was for the MITKA to consolidate as a party and compete with the “big parties.”⁸³ Although they had difficulties in creating a wider reach for their thesis, their discourse created the foundation for future movements and leaders to stress the position of indigenous people within the state.⁸⁴ The *Indianistas* highlighted the existing racism within the state and pointed to this as a key factor in the isolation and subordination of indigenous people. Their discourse also was an important aspect in the movements that derailed the neoliberal project in the 21st century.

The *Kataristas*, the other faction of this movement, viewed indigenous struggle in terms of an ongoing class struggle. Organized through the political party MRTK (*Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaj Katari*), the Kataristas viewed colonialism as the origin of indigenous oppression, yet independence in 1825 created an internal colonialism, which continued to exist beyond the 1952 revolution. They did not concede that indigenous struggle was solely a racial or class issue rather they wanted to bring to light the complex reality of ethnic and class exclusion.⁸⁵ Víctor Hugo Cárdenas’s (one of the founding members of the MRTK and the *Katarista* movement) “Theory of Both Eyes” sums up the MRTK’s emphasis on class and indigenous struggle. This theory conceptualizes the mixture of both leftist ideas (in this case a

⁸¹ Rivera Cusicanqui, 153.

⁸² Yashar, 169.

⁸³ Albó, 401.

⁸⁴ Their discourse became the center piece for leaders such as Felipe Quispe to call for the creation of a separate Ayamara, See *Tiempos de Rebelion*.

⁸⁵ Cardenas (1989) 383 as quoted in Yashar, 170.

Marxist approach to class struggle) and the history of indigenous oppression at the hands of the colonial rulers and the nation-state. It challenges the notions of modernity and the imposition of western ideas of capitalism. Cárdenas and the MRTK pursued change by working with traditional political parties.⁸⁶ Unlike the *Indianistas*, the *Kataristas* emphasized a class analysis and were open to class alliances particularly with the traditional Left.⁸⁷ The *Kataristas* played a pivotal role in shaping a class consciousness rooted in indigenous identity.

The emergence of the Katarista movement was an important moment in the development of indigenous and class movements—it was a moment when class and identity complemented each other. Both factions of the movement challenged the failures of independence to end the colonial model and the failures of the 1952 Revolution, and recognized the state's role in excluding indigenous people. Using the memory of the colonial rebellions of Katari, these movements advocated for indigenous people to take an active role in bringing about the promised transformation. The divergent faction of the movement highlighted the split between the lack of consensus on creating an alternative model—a separatist model or one within the state's parameters. These divergent ideas persisted and manifested themselves through Felipe Quispe and Evo Morales.⁸⁸ While the latter built a broad-based coalition through the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) party that would eventual take him to the presidency, former sustained and continues to sustain the

⁸⁶ Sanjines, 160.

⁸⁷ Albo, 402.

⁸⁸ Quispe, known as El Mallku meaning prince or condor, was a member of the MITKA—Katarista political party—currently secretary of the Confederación Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) and founder of political organization Movimiento Indio Pachakuti (MIP).

Indianista discourse (actively calling for the eradication of all western ideas, philosophies, and hierarchies).⁸⁹ As Quispe states, “Only through mobilizations can we retake political power. Our program calls for us to regain political power, and fight for our land because we want to own our land.”⁹⁰ Nonetheless, this interaction between identity and class would provide a foundation for future movements, specifically anti-neoliberal movements in the 21st century that used a discourse of class struggle rooted in indigenous culture.

⁸⁹ Quispe 1990, 32 as cited in Sanjines, 164. Quispe maintained that those who called for change without proclaiming for the liquidation of the oppressive state were *Q'aras*, or those thinking with foreign heads. Felipe Quispe, “Organización y Proyecto Político de la Rebelión Indígena Aymara-Quechua,” in *Tiempos de Rebelión*, ed. Alvaro García, Raquel Gutiérrez, Raúl Prada, Felipe Quispe, and Luis Tapia (La Paz: Muela del Diablo Editores, 2001), 169.

⁹⁰ Felipe Quispe, “La Lucha de los Ayllus Kataristas Hoy,” in *Movimiento Indígena en América Latina: Resistencia y Proyecto Alternativo*, ed. Fabiola Escárzaga and Raquel Gutiérrez (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2005), 75.

Chapter 3

Neoliberalism and the Neoliberal Moment in Bolivia

The neoliberal experience is not only an important moment within Bolivia's history, it also marks the emergence of an alternative model that attempted to resolve the failures of the past and move beyond elite control. This period also brought about institutional changes that created a forum for indigenous people to articulate their demands as citizens and relate their resistance to historical indigenous rebellions.

Where the 1952 Revolution and the Katarista movements conceived of discourses that connected indigenous colonial struggle to the present struggle, mass mobilizations in 2000s challenged both neoliberalism and a state stuck in the colonial past.

The introduction of neoliberalism as the prevailing economic model came about following the decline of the Keynesian economic model, and the welfare state during the 1970s and 1980s. The move towards neoliberalism also coincided with a wave of conservatism manifesting itself through the elections of Reagan in the U.S. and Thatcher in the U.K. These key figures not only created the climate to bring about neoliberalism in their respective countries, but also used their influence to persuade other countries to follow suit. In Latin America, the economic downturn that characterized this period saw the important gains of decades earlier disappear—along with the hopes for development. Through institutions like the IMF and World Bank, (backed by the U.S), which extended credit to countries that followed prescribed packages of economic policies, neoliberal ideology spread throughout Latin America as the next step in development and the cure for stagnating economies. The prescription for these economic ills, according to the IMF and World Bank, was a

return to the market and the withdrawal of the state in matters of development. This prevailing doctrine regarded these steps as fundamental not only for reducing debt, but also for bringing a greater equality to poorer nations through a trickle-down effect. As David Harvey explains, “Privatization and deregulation combined with competition, it is claimed, eliminate bureaucratic red tape, increase efficiency and productivity, improve quality, and reduce costs, both directly to the consumer through cheaper commodities and services and indirectly through reduction of tax burden.”⁹¹ These measures took the form of pushing for the selloff of state-owned enterprises, removing labor protections and attacking labor unions, and cutting public spending.⁹² Along with these reforms, neo-liberal policies advocated for states to immerse themselves into the global market—giving the global market and capital precedence over the state. In this context, states were pushed to take the initiative to reduce restrictions on the movement of capital and goods on the global market, including breaking down trade barriers and protections. These economic preconditions set the stage for a dramatic reversal of social and economic gains in Latin America. In addition, structural adjustment programs combined strategies both to open up economies and social structures. As the Bolivian case will demonstrate, the reconfiguration of the state also included a social project that brought avenues for contestation.

Bolivia’s neoliberal experience was one of the earliest in Latin America, one that closely aligned with the restructuring in the U.S. and the U.K. The end of military rule in 1982 ushered in an era of democratic transition marked by an economic crisis

⁹¹ Harvey, 65.

⁹² Jim Schultz, *Deadly Consequences: The International Monetary Fund and Bolivia’s “Black February,”* 10.

and fractious divisions within the old Left, leaving the country vulnerable to a conservative takeover. The economic crisis inherited by the first civilian government was part of a larger global crisis that saw the production of minerals dramatically drop. The mismanagement of the economy under the military junta, the drop in tin production and exports, a severe decline in agricultural exports, and an escalating debt prior to the global crash, made it extremely difficult for the transitional government of Hernan Silas to enact progressive changes (changes pushed by the national mobilizations that brought him to power).⁹³ As economic and social conditions worsened, Silas (facing mounting pressure from both the left and right) called early elections in 1984, when Paz Estenssoro returned to the presidency. As Hylton Forrest and Sinclair Thomson explain, “In a dramatic reversal of the 1952 national revolution, Paz Estenssoro now set out to dismantle the dependent state capitalism he had helped erect during his first term.”⁹⁴ Under Estenssoro and his minister of economics, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, Bolivia began its experiment with neoliberalism. In order to curb growing debt and hyperinflation, Sánchez de Lozada (under the guidance of Jeffery Sachs) prescribed an economic policy that included a devaluation of the currency, liberalization of trade regulations, the elimination of government subsidies, closure and privatization of mines, and a reduction in public expenditures and employment.⁹⁵ This shock treatment prescribed by Sánchez de Lozada had the intended goal of maintaining tight control on the money supply (in order to curb inflation) and eradicating fiscal deficit in order to open up the credit line from the

⁹³ James Dunkerley demonstrates how the Silas government confounded the crisis by having policies that con (126-128)

⁹⁴ Forrest and Thomson, 95.

⁹⁵ Petras, 183.

IMF and World Bank.⁹⁶ The economic shock treatment also called for the Estenssoro government to shift from a statist capitalism model by seeking to break down state institutions, specifically the state-controlled mines. In addition, it became important for the state to transform and combat the influence of labor organizations.⁹⁷ The closing and privatization of mines and the emphasis of hydrocarbons as the primary export had an adverse affect on the population. As a result, more than 20,000 miners were displaced, many migrating to major cities and the countryside, while the influence of labor unions continued its precipitous decline.⁹⁸ The policies, however, faced resistance, yet the continued attack on organized labor and the waning legitimacy Left did not deter the move towards neoliberalism.

The implementation of neoliberalism in Bolivia was a gradual process in the 1980s, but in the 1990s, the drive to further the reaches of these reforms turned into a frenetic pace during the presidency of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. The economic package proposed by Sánchez de Lozada, heavily influenced by the IMF and World Bank, continued and expanded upon Estenssoro's economic policies, with of the devaluation of currency (pegging the nation's currency to the dollar), reduction of social spending in an effort to bring down the state's deficit, paying the external debt, overhauling the tax system to allow for greater investment, and privatizing state-owned industries and other deregulatory measures. Moreover, the Law of

⁹⁶ James Dunkerley notes that bringing down the fiscal deficit was not at the urging of the IMF and other foreign lending institutions as the Estenssoro government did not seek external support until two years later, 149.

⁹⁷ Harvey notes Reagan's landmark victory against the air traffic controllers union 1981 that was integral in constructing consent. Similarly, Thatcher's success in feeding off national resentment for trade unions, 54-57.

⁹⁸ Forrest and Thomson, 95. Klein also describes the decline of the FSTMB and other unions' political and economic role in Bolivian society, 245. The decline of the "old Left" as well as the internal migration of miners was vital for the development of indigenous movements in the 21st century.

Capitalization continued with the privatization of the national mining company as well as the oil, gas, airline, railway, and telephone companies.⁹⁹ Structural adjustment policies led to the closure of several mines in Bolivia, facilitating the rapid rise of unemployment along with the systematic decline of unions. The further decline of unions and of the Left eliminated a traditional space for mobilization—creating a vacuum for other actors to challenge neoliberalism. Urbanization, a process that started in earnest during the 1952 Revolution, rapidly increased during this time with such cities as El Alto, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, and La Paz at the center of this growth.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, in 1990 (nearly a decade into the neoliberal project) Bolivia's urban population constituted 53 percent of the total population while in 2004 the urban population constituted 63 percent of the total population.¹⁰¹ The ramifications of increased urbanization created a strain on a state that could not provide sufficient services let alone employment opportunities. These conditions set the stage for urban movements and peasant movements in the countryside to take the lead in articulating and mobilizing the populations against the neoliberal government. Important features of Sánchez de Lozada's restructuring program were the reconfiguration of the state's relationship with its citizens and the expansion of citizenship.

Unlike Estenssoro's policies (reforms that pursued creating an economic climate suitable for the implementation of neoliberalism), however, Sánchez de

⁹⁹ Petras, 185. It is important to note that Xavier Albo explains that this law also had a social function, one that went along with Sánchez de Lozada's balance between social and economic restructuring, 26.

¹⁰⁰ Postero, 126.

¹⁰¹ United Nations Statistics Division: Demographic Statistics
[http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=area\(Bolivia\)+1985-2005+datamart\(POP,PopDiv\)&d=POP&f=tableCode:1;countryCode:68;refYear:1990,1991,1992,1993,1994,1995,1996,1997,1998,1999,2000,2001,2002,2003,2004,2005](http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=area(Bolivia)+1985-2005+datamart(POP,PopDiv)&d=POP&f=tableCode:1;countryCode:68;refYear:1990,1991,1992,1993,1994,1995,1996,1997,1998,1999,2000,2001,2002,2003,2004,2005)

Lozada sought to include a social project. With the growth of indigenous movements from the lowlands advocating recognition under the new regime, Sánchez de Lozada passed a series of reforms that went along with deregulating the state and advancing participatory democratic institutions. Fundamental to this process was the 1994 constitutional amendment that declared Bolivia a multi-ethnic nation during Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's first term as president. The amendment, along with Sánchez de Lozada's appointment of Víctor Hugo Cárdenas as vice president, began an overall process to create indigenous citizens. As Xavier Albó notes, the major components of Sánchez de Lozada's *Plan de Todos*—an emphasis on the community as the native form of organization, the broadening of pluralist democracy discourse, and intercultural and bilingual education reform—contrasted with the previous government's direction.¹⁰² The *Plan* was fundamental in laying the foundation for future reforms that brought indigenous people greater autonomy and rights within the state. It is important to note that a crucial step in the implementation of the neoliberal cultural project was the breakdown of the elitist and corporatist style of democracy in Bolivia.¹⁰³ The passage of La Ley INRA (the INRA law) and Ley de Participación Popular (LLP, Law of Popular Participation), was vital to breaking down the corporatist model. These laws attempted to create a new definition of citizenship and established spaces for democratic participation. The INRA law recognized the collective land titling of indigenous territories while the LLP enacted a form of

¹⁰² Albó, *And from Kataristas to MNRistas*, 71.

¹⁰³ Postero, 124.

participatory democracy by bringing greater control to the municipalities.¹⁰⁴ This cultural project constructed a new definition of citizenship and advanced the notion of multiculturalism—one that opened up democratic spaces to indigenous people. Yet, Postero states, “indigenous culture was recognized by the state but channeled into Western, liberal forms of citizenship that did not significantly alter the status quo.”¹⁰⁵ Although these laws were part of Sánchez de Lozada’s neoliberal reforms (and by no means radical), their actual results differed from their intended purpose. Bolivia is a prime example of how neo-liberal policies created a duality within civil and political society that allowed people to challenge the existence of neoliberalism and to change the way in which people experience it. As Xavier Albó notes, the Popular Participation became an integral instrument that brought indigenous people into power at the local level.¹⁰⁶ The law reconfigured the state in a way that gave indigenous people more autonomy at the local level and recognized indigenous social organizations and their collective identities.¹⁰⁷ The inclusion of marginalized sectors allowed indigenous people to articulate their demands as citizens of the state. Despite these attempts, indigenous people used these rights to articulate their demands as citizens and to continue their struggle against the state.¹⁰⁸ They used a discourse that mixed a language of class struggle within a new context of citizenship rights. In addition,

¹⁰⁴ Postero, 52. Postero also explains that the INRA Law was a result of the pressure by indigenous groups while the LLP was an initiative led by regional elites (adopted by most indigenous groups) looking to move away from centralized control.

¹⁰⁵ Nancy Postero, “Andean Utopias in Evo Morales’ Bolivia,” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 2, No. 1, (2007), 4.

¹⁰⁶ Albo, 27. He also notes that in the December 1995 municipal elections more than 500 peasants and indigenous people were elected as municipal councilors or mayors. This year also marked the emergence of the MAS.

¹⁰⁷ Postero, 128-129.

¹⁰⁸ Postero, 225.

indigenous identity and struggle in the neoliberal context once again invoked the images of Katari and Wilka and the revolts against colonialism. The latter became a vital component in the creation of an indigenous alternative as it brought together notions (not articulated in the past) of creating change within the constitutional model. These new ways of articulating demands became prominent in the mobilization against the privatization of water in Cochabamba valley in 2000. In an attempt to transform the relationship with the state and usher in an era of multiculturalism—one that broke down corporatist institutions and gave relative autonomy and power at the municipal level—neoliberalism under Sánchez de Lozada provided tools for contestation.

Challenges to Neoliberalism and the Emergence of an Alternative Model

With almost two decades of neoliberal restructuring, the start of the 21st century brought about events that demonstrated the unintended outcome of the drive for multicultural reforms, and highlights the development of an alternative model. The first major mobilization in Bolivia of this sort came in the valley of Cochabamba where a grassroots movement attempted to prevent *Aguas del Tunari*, a consortium of foreign-owned enterprises, from privatizing their water wells. As Oscar Olivera, one of the leading members of the community group leading the challenge, recalls, “In 1999 and 2000—after privatizing many industries, most significantly the mines—the transnationals, the World Bank, and the government mafias attempted to take away

our water. They sought to turn this vital source into a business.”¹⁰⁹ The privatization measure not only allowed Aguas del Tunari to control this precious natural resource, but also to dramatically raise the community’s water bills—making it seemingly impossible for families to access and afford water. In response, the inhabitants of the region formed an organization, the *Coordinadora*, that would combat the Aguas del Tunari initiatives. As Olivera describe it, “The formation of the *Coordinadora* responded to a political vacuum, uniting peasant, environmental groups, teachers, and blue-and white-collar workers in the manufacturing sector.” He goes on to say, “The *Coordinadora* emerged from the ordinary inhabitants of town and country who, from an elemental sense of need to defend such basic rights as access to water, called upon the whole population to join in the struggle.”¹¹⁰ The group conducted various actions throughout the valley, including destabilizing roadblocks. It was not long until the whole country joined the struggle to halt the privatization of water. Their efforts paid off as the *Coordinadora* negotiated not only the departure of Aguas del Tunari, but also the modification of the water law.¹¹¹ As Olivera states, “They [the people] soon realized that the act of coming out of their homes and neighborhoods to occupy the streets was, at its core, a fight to improve their conditions of life. And they realized these improvements could not come under the current social and political system.”¹¹²

The Water War opened up spaces for greater collective action against neoliberalism, and galvanized the populace to act. Moreover, much of the discourse

¹⁰⁹ Oscar Olivera and Tom Lewis, *¡Cochabamba! Water War in Bolivia* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004), 7.

¹¹⁰ Olivera, 28.

¹¹¹ Olivera, 45.

¹¹² Olivera, 48.

centered on water's sacred meaning to the communities. The Coordinadora's challenge went beyond portraying their struggle within a class context by appealing to an indigenous consciousness—one centered on the historic oppression and class-consciousness. As Nancy Postero notes, “The farmers were mostly Quechua-speaking Indians who perceived their rights as inherited through customary law.”¹¹³ This appeal united class and indigenism in two ways: against neoliberalism and under the banner of 500 years of indigenous struggle; it was the formation and development of an indigenous consciousness that manifested itself in challenging neoliberalism, and ushering an era of change. The *Coordinadora* exemplified the growing change in organizing against neoliberalism; unlike the past when labor unions were the protagonists in organizing, it became a space that included people from all aspects of Bolivian society. As Oscar Olivera explains, “the *Coordinadora* became a place where humble and simple people—ordinary working people—proved that by organizing and by creating solidarity and mutual trust, people can lose their sense of fear and give real content to democracy.”¹¹⁴ The Water War transcended traditional notions of struggle by incorporating their demands in terms of natural and indigenous rights; as mentioned above, they viewed water as a sacred entity tied to their indigenous culture. The Water War was the precursor for other mobilizations against neoliberalism.

The presidential election of 2002 came on the heels of successful mobilizations against the privatization of water and a growing national resistance to neoliberalism. This election was a pivotal moment as the neoliberal project was at a

¹¹³ Postero, “Andean Utopias in Evo Morales's Bolivia,” 5.

¹¹⁴ Olivera, 29.

crossroads within the country and throughout Latin America. Presidential hopefuls campaigned on populist platforms calling for increased employment opportunities, a reduction in the nation's pervasive poverty, and continuing the democratization of the country.¹¹⁵ Among the candidates was Evo Morales, the leader of the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo), and Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, the former president and primary architect of neoliberal reforms in Bolivia. These two symbolized the internal clash to move beyond neoliberalism (represented by Morales and his MAS party) and to continue the neoliberal project (represented by Sánchez de Lozada and the MNR). With the help of U.S. based campaign strategists, Sánchez de Lozada returned to the presidency for a second term with a plan to further the neoliberal policies he vigorously pursued during his first term. These policies included extending multicultural citizenship rights to indigenous people, levying an income tax on the majority of the working class, increasing privatization, and the proposing a gas plan that would allow his administration to sell natural gas through Chilean ports and to consumers in Mexico and the United States. Unlike his first term where neoliberalism was the unquestioned dominant ideology, the political climate had dramatically changed during his second term (as evidenced through his slight victory over Morales). The successful movements against the privatization of water in Cochabamba coupled with the ever-growing presence of the *cocaleros* and Evo Morales left Sánchez de Lozada in a precarious position if he chose to continue with his neoliberal

¹¹⁵ For an in-depth look at this crucial presidential race see *Our Brand is Crisis*, a documentary that follows Sánchez de Lozada's bid for a second presidential term.

reforms. It this insistence on continuing the neoliberal project, however, that ultimately doomed his presidency.

Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's second term as president was volatile, nothing like his first term in the 1990s when he began to develop (with little resistance) Bolivia's neoliberal path. The major difference between his first and second term became apparent early on when he consented to the IMF's demands to reduce the deficit by raising revenue through a 12.5 percent salary tax on the working class. The proposed salary tax sparked protests throughout the country uniting the working class against the measure; these manifestations soon turned violent following the government's attempt to suppress these movements.¹¹⁶ Following weeks of confrontation between government troops and protestors, the government finally reneged on the tax plan in order to bring about peace. As Schultz explains, however, the announcement to annul the tax plan did little to deter the mobilizations against Sánchez de Lózada; "The headquarters of the two major political parties in Sánchez de Lózada's government were sacked and burned."¹¹⁷ The escalation of protests prompted both Sánchez de Lózada and Vice President Mesa to leave the capital and seek secure locations. As the president and vice president both left, the army moved in attempt to settle the situation; the outcome, however, resulted in several civilians dead.¹¹⁸ The national protests that erupted and the deaths of civilians, known as *febrero negro* (Black February), demonstrated both the government's use of force as

¹¹⁶ Sandra Jordan, "Bolivia Descends into Chaos After Police Join Strikers," *The Observer*, February 16, 2003.

¹¹⁷ Schultz, 26.

¹¹⁸ Schultz, 26. As Sacha Llorenti, President of Bolivia's National Permanent Assembly on Human Rights, notes "On the thirteenth not a single police officer was killed, not a single soldier. All of the victims were civilians, a product of the government's repress," (as quoted in Schultz).

means to uphold consent for the neoliberal project, and the resistance and the growing demand for change. These mobilizations ushered in a revolutionary period moment, one that continued the politicization and radicalization of the population. Moreover, the clash, which brought about a coalition that cut across ethnic and class lines, set the stage for more challenges to Sánchez de Lózada's neoliberal project. It became apparent that Sánchez de Lózada's neoliberal plan was not the solution to Bolivia's endemic problems. Although *febrero negro* dealt a severe blow to the his administration, the final blow came a few months later when the unpopular measure to export gas to Mexico and the U.S. (through Chile) brought thousands of protesters to the streets. The failed promises of social progress and development (terms used to make the neoliberal project enticing) empowered this new radical sector of social movements to initiate a new process of change—one centered on the needs of the majority of the population.

The heightened politicization among the population following the Sánchez de Lózada administration's attempt to raise an income tax on the majority of the working class continued the intense confrontation and rejection of Sánchez de Lózada. The Gas War of 2003, was an important event that made it clear throughout the country that indigenous people (through articulations of class and ethnicity) were the primary agents for change. As Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson point out, the Gas War, unlike the other confrontations, had its roots within the Aymara community—expressing an overwhelmingly indigenous presence.¹¹⁹ They demonstrate that

¹¹⁹ See Hylton and Thomson, *Revolutionary Horizons*, and “The Roots of the Rebellion: Insurgent Bolivia.”

community organizations in El Alto spearheaded the movement for the defense of the gas—a movement that brought a coalition between vast sectors of the population and transcended any conventional notion of “Aymaraness” let alone indigenoussness. In this sense, an indigenous consciousness erupted in the mobilizations for the defense of gas, one that incorporated rural/urban struggles, worker struggles, and a conception of radical indigenoussness. Moreover, the historical significance of defending a natural resource from the exploitation of foreign corporations also played a vital role in uniting movements from around the nation.

The discovery of large natural gas fields within Bolivia represented the potential for rapid development; today, the known gas reserves total more than fifty-two trillion cubic feet, one of the largest known reserves in the world.¹²⁰ This potential became greater within the global market as the prices of gas doubled over the last six years.¹²¹ It is important to note that oil and gas had been a central part of the state’s development plan (replacing silver and tin as the primary producer since the 1980s). The development of gas as Bolivia’s primary industry was a critical part of not only restructuring the economy, but also stripping power away from the miner unions. Furthermore, Schultz demonstrates that, “From 1985-1996, public revenue from the national oil and gas industry averaged more than \$399 million per year, forty percent of all the funds coming into the national treasury.”¹²² One of Sánchez de Lózada’s

¹²⁰ *Associated Press*, “Some Facts About Bolivia’s Gas and Oil Industry,” October 18, 2003 and The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile: Bolivia 2004*, acquired from http://portal.eiu.com/report_dl.asp?issue_id=1837358983&mode=pdf

¹²¹ Luoma and Gordon, 2.

¹²² Schultz, 16. He also notes how the privatization plan was central both to Sanchez de Lozada and the IMF’s plan. As he states, “Privatization of the oil and gas sector was part of the IMF and World Bank

projects upon during his first term was tap this important source through an exportation plan that entailed the sale of gas to the U.S. In his second term, Sánchez de Lózada wanted to continue where he left off—completing the development of these gas reserves and increasing the privatization process in these industries or as he termed it, “capitalization.” Under the plan, the oil and gas industries would develop into private-public consortiums that would benefit both the public and private sector; yet as Luoma and Gordon indicate, “capitalization” was more destructive as it handed over most of its profitable industries to the control of private (foreign) firms.¹²³ The proposed plan entailed natural gas-export through the extension of a pipeline from Bolivia to Chile in order to export gas (using Chilean ports) to Mexico and the United States.

The series of protests throughout the country that rejected the project was part of an overall movement that demanded a new path for Bolivia. The protestors not only denounced the plan as part of Sánchez de Lózada’s overall neoliberal project, but also through a historical context. The historical animosity between Bolivia and Chile dates back to the War of the Pacific of 1879 where the former lost its access to the sea to the latter—many Bolivians point to this moment as a major deterrent in their economic growth.¹²⁴ Moreover, the many saw the exportation as part of a lineal history of exploitation of natural resources. The initial demonstrations that overtly denounced the project, however, developed into larger national demonstrations, which displayed a

master plan for Bolivia, which called for ‘privatizing all remaining public enterprises,’” leading to the reduction of Bolivian shares to 18 percent.

¹²³ Luoma and Gordon, “Turning Gas into Development in Bolivia,”

¹²⁴ Gonzalo Beaza, “Bolivian Pipeline Project Fuels Protests,” *United Press International*, October 6, 2003.

wider discontent about Bolivia's pervasive social ills. Pablo Stefanoni and Hervé Do

Alto state that,

The exportation of the gas project—in a country where the majority of the population is impoverished—brought to light an economic history familiar to many Bolivians that recounted the sufferings of a society related to the pillaging of limited natural resources. Today, the sea of impoverished people, surrounded by the gravestones of miners—reminders of the past, stand together to denounce that “black history” of Bolivia's oligarchy. It is no coincidence that the recovery of natural resources is at the center of popular mobilizations within the last five years.¹²⁵

Moreover, Evo Morales followed this changing dynamic within the mobilizations against the exportation of the gas by stating that the country should first recover the hydrocarbons from the hands of transnationals before exporting it.¹²⁶ As he stated in an interview, “The people have demanded that the government return natural gas and fossil fuels to the Bolivians. This would entail the revision of some laws, the annulment of decrees and, in particular, the revocation of contracts with the transnational oil companies.”¹²⁷ As mentioned, the protests were not just about the exportation plan rather about a larger demand to transform the structure of the state. In the same interview Evo Morales noted, “There are demands for altering the country's economic model and the president's resignation.”¹²⁸ With prolonged protests, violent government suppression, and his government increasingly deteriorating, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lózada finally succumbed to both internal and external pressure and

¹²⁵ Pablo Stefanoni and Hervé Do Alto, *Evo Morales de la coca al Palacio: Una oportunidad para la izquierda indígena*. (Bolivia: Malatesta, 2006), 81. My translation.

¹²⁶ “Bolivia: President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada's Concessions Fail to Stop Protests,” *Notisur*, October 17, 2003.

¹²⁷ Diego Cevallos, “Opposition Movement Rejects Government's Plan to Sell Natural Gas; Natural Gas is our Hope, Our Future,” International Press Service (IPS) Latin America, October 22, 2003.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

resigned on October 17, 2003. Interim President, Carlos Mesa, not only called for an immediate referendum of the gas project, but also called for a constituent assembly—acquiescing to demands of the popular mobilization. These events point to a radicalizing process within the populace, emanating particularly from the Andean region, brought vast sectors together using a class and identity discourse. The resignation of Sanchez de Lozada and the installation of Carlos Mesa as president, however, did not deter the demands of social movements for a transformation within Bolivia. As Felipe Quispe stated in regards to Mesa's concessions, "In any case we are going to continue with the blockades... We are not going to be with the executing, we are always going to be in opposition."¹²⁹ The pressure to abandon neoliberalism and bring about the demands for nationalization and a constituent assembly (among the demands) also forced Mesa out of office. It was not until 2005, with the victory of Evo Morales, that change would finally be realized.

The national insurrectional movements of September-October 2003 provided the clearest example of a national consciousness based on the collective memory of indigenous struggle and the rejection of neoliberalism as the newest form of oppression. The defense of gas, much more profoundly than the Water War, created an agenda that focused on bringing about justice and transformation to a nation mired with a history of imposed models of development. While positing their denouncements with of neoliberalism as another form of oppression (one that is historically linked with mestizo domination), Social movements demanded also

¹²⁹ Larry Rother, "Bolivia's New Leader Takes Over a Chaotic and Angry Nation," New York Times, October 19, 2003.

demanded the development of a Bolivian democracy that went through the people with rewriting the constitution through a constituent assembly and altering the economic model (through nationalization) among other demands. Furthermore, they articulated their demands using this discourse that in turn united a wide spectrum of society social movements from around the country, the basis for the mobilization was an indigenous consciousness rooted in the historical exploitation from foreign companies and countries. This transformative process shaped the direction of social movements against neoliberalism, resulting in Sánchez de Lózada's resignation, but also the direction of an alternative model that builds upon the discourse of historical exploitation. This revolutionary moment opened up the space for an alternative model to rebuild Bolivian democracy (incidentally within a democratic setting).

In analyzing this indigenous consciousness and the creation of an alternative that drove these popular mobilizations, it is important understand how Evo Morales (and the MAS) was able to use this platform to win the presidency, and locate his role and influence in building this consciousness. As the leader of the influential *cocaleros* (the strong coca growers' union from the valley of Cochabamba) Morales represents the levels of historical oppression and failed models in Bolivia. Having both Quechua and Aymara roots, Morales was a causality of mining privatization and closures, which led to a large internal migration to the valleys. This economic shift away from mining as the source brought many displaced miners in contact with the cultivation of coca as means to survive.¹³⁰ Participating in the cultivation of coca, Morales and the

¹³⁰ Jesse Gaskell notes that the cultivation and sale of (through legal and illegal markets) coca in the 1990s represented 12.9 percent of Bolivia's GNP.

cocaleros gained notoriety through their ongoing fight against the eradication of coca. Despite this fact, in the face of repeated U.S. intervention, the coca growers invoked a discourse that linked the coca leaf's importance to indigenous culture and tradition with a discourse of anti-imperialism (in this case the U.S.'s "War on Drugs"). The historical significance of the coca leaf dates back to pre-Columbian times and remains an integral aspect in rituals and medicines.¹³¹ The *cocaleros* view the coca leaf as an inherent part of not only indigenous culture, but also their history as the original people of Bolivia, calling the leaf *la hoja sagrada*, the sacred leaf.¹³² In this context, Morales was an instrumental figure in both mobilizing the *cocaleros*, and being able to transcend this fight beyond coca—framing their struggle in terms of class and identity. Defending against the eradication of coca leaf, thus, meant defending national sovereignty and dignity in the face of U.S. imperialism.¹³³ As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui explains, "Beyond the world of the producers, coca has also become a symbol of ethnic and national pride for the majority of the Bolivian population."¹³⁴ The growth of an indigenous consciousness played a central role in bringing wide support from the around the country as their struggle was a struggle of national sovereignty. In this light, this consciousness not only combats the remnants of colonialism and neoliberal policies, but also the pervasive presence of imperialism (in this case the presence of the U.S.).

¹³¹ Stefanoni and do Alto, 34.

¹³² Pablo Stefanoni and Herve do Alto, *Evo Morales: de la Coca al Palacio* (Bolivia: Malatesta, 2006), 51.

¹³³ Stefanoni and do Alto, 51.

¹³⁴ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Colonialism and Ethnic Resistance in Bolivia," in *Empire and Dissent*.

The organization of the *cocaleros* (owing to their roots of organization to the unionism in the mines) allowed this movement to catapult their views to the political arena. Winning municipal elections in the late 1990s set the stage for the this movement, and particularly Evo Morales to challenge the presidency (under the MAS political party). Evo captured the frustration of the majority of the population over the approaches of a hegemonic state; he states, “We all know that there are two Bolivias. One Bolivia of ‘charlatans’ who always make promises and sign agreements that they fulfill; and the other Bolivia which is always tricked, subjugated, humiliated, and exploited.” He goes on to say, “I denounce before the Bolivian people that this is a cultural confrontation: the culture of death against us, the indigenous peoples.”¹³⁵ Morales’ critique of Bolivian society—one that is representative of the relationship of dominance between indigenous people and the ruling-mestizo classes—brings to light how an alternative model (based on the construction of new power relationships) forms part of the collective will to transform the state. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui demonstrates, indigenous parties gained important victories in municipal and national elections—further evidence of a consciousness.¹³⁶ With his near victory in 2002, Morales and the social movements that challenged the status quo in Bolivia signaled a rupture of the dominant parties’ control (and attempts for cooptation) on ruling the country. His election in 2005 symbolized the nature of this prevailing indigenous alternative discourse in Bolivia, which challenges the historic structures of the mestizo

¹³⁵ Evo Morales, the Power of the People, speech delivered at a conference entitled “En Defensa de la Humanidad,” October 24, 2003, Postero, “Articulation and Fragmentation: Indigenous Politics in Bolivia,” in *Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Latin America*, ed. Nancy Grey Postero and Leon Zamosc (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 190.

¹³⁶ Rivera Cusicanqui, “Reclaiming the Nation,” in *Dispatches from Latin America*, 178.

state and propels indigenous people to the forefront of creating change and the decision-making process. In his inauguration speech, Evo Morales spoke of the roots of an alternative stating, “The 500 years of resistance from the original people of the Americas against internal colonialism ends here...We are here to change Bolivia, to end the injustice, to halt the extraction of our natural resources.”¹³⁷ The model, thus, connects struggles against oppression, whether against imperialist policies of eradication or neoliberal reforms, to the colonial past of indigenous resistance.

The 2005 election brought Morales to the presidency and gave his party, MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo). His election was a culmination of social struggle that brought to the forefront an alternative model that mixed of indigenous memory and culture with leftist ideology. Acknowledging this, prior to his inauguration, Morales attended a spiritual ceremony at the ancient temple in *Tiwanaku*, stating that, “Today begins a new era for the original people of the world, a new life in which we search for justice and equality.”¹³⁸ Throughout his speech, Morales assured the populace that his election signaled a new era for indigenous people in Bolivia.¹³⁹ Once in office, Morales began the arduous process of transforming Bolivia—a vestige of colonialism—by appointing several indigenous and union leaders as well as former members of the Left. Despite the strong mandate and support Morales received following the election, his administration faces several hurdles. Much of Morales’ work revolves around going beyond the 1952 Revolution (in terms of building the state) and abolishing the structures of power that continually oppressed indigenous

¹³⁷ “Evo Morales es presidente de Bolivia,” *La Razón*, January 22, 2006 and “El presidente da inicio a la era indígena,” *La Razón*, January 22, 2006.

¹³⁸ “El presidente da inicio a la era indígena,” *La Razón*, January 22, 2006. My translation.

¹³⁹ “Evo Morales Sworn In as Bolivia’s First Indian President,” *Associated Press* January 22, 2006.

people (from colonial relationships to the neoliberal indio permitido). In addition, Morales and his government have the task of creating an economic model that centers on the growth of national industries, rewriting the constitution, and reversing the years of underdevelopment. The alternative model put forth, however, attempts to address these critical areas. An integral aspect in the development of Bolivia under the new administration is production of hydrocarbons. Morales and the MAS set out to implement one of the most important aspects of the alternative model, the nationalization of the valuable gas mines.

On May 1, 2006, a significant day for worker and class-based movements around the world, Morales ordered the military to seize major oil and gas refineries in Bolivia.¹⁴⁰ The seizure of the refineries symbolized the government's attempt to reduce Bolivia's historical dependence and was contrary to all neo-liberal beliefs. As Morales stated, "The time has come, the awaited day, a historic day in which Bolivia retakes absolute control of our natural resources."¹⁴¹ The spectacle of bringing in the military to create the sensation of seizing the industries from the multinational corporations, masked the actual nationalization process—the restructuring of contracts that favored the state. The nationalization decree mandated the three private-public energy firms and the two private firms that bought YPFB's refineries to sell back to the government enough shares so that YPFB became the majority owners—in a sense reactivating the state-owned gas and oil company. Furthermore, the decree mandated an additional 32 percent tax on the most productive fields, and reasserted the

¹⁴⁰ "Bolivia: President Evo Morales Nationalizes Natural Gas Resources," *Notisur*, May 12, 2006, [http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID\[0\]=26328](http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID[0]=26328)

¹⁴¹ "Bolivia: President Evo Morales Nationalizes Natural Gas Resources," *Notisur*, May 12, 2006, [http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID\[0\]=26328](http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID[0]=26328).

government's role in establishing prices and increasing the royalties.¹⁴² The renegotiation of the contracts and the greater role of state in the oil and gas industries paid (and continues to pay) large dividends. Carlos Miranda demonstrates how the new decree has nearly doubled the profits for the state, with the state bringing in nearly 980 million dollars.¹⁴³ This infusion of profits has helped the state achieve an unprecedented level of economic prosperity not seen since the heyday of mining extraction. In 2006, the surplus amounted to more than 11 percent of GDP while in 2008 bank reserves dramatically increased, totaling almost 6 billion dollars.¹⁴⁴ These increased revenues in turn allowed the Morales administration to increase public expenditures, specifically greater investments in social programs.

A prevalent danger that faces Bolivia is recreating an overreliance on a natural resource, in this case the hydrocarbon industry, as a vehicle to bring about social transformation. This reliance on a primary resource as the leading export parallels the MNR's nationalization of the tin mines shortly following the 1952 revolution; like the natural gas reserves, the tin mines represented the retrieval of sovereignty and dignity from foreign corporations and the future of Bolivia. Similarly, the development of gas has been at the heart of both the alternative model and the reactionary groups seeking to take back power. As mentioned, since the 1980s with the democratic transition, gas and oil replaced tin as not only Bolivia's primary export, but also as the its hope—an expectation to enrich the richer or lift the impoverished from the depths of poverty.

Moreover, the hope and struggle to control the future these potential profits was a

¹⁴² Luoma and Gordon, 3.

¹⁴³ Miranda, "Gas and Its Importance to the Bolivian Economy," 187.

¹⁴⁴ See Andean Group Report: Economic Overview, March 6, 2008 and Bolivia Economic- An Update, Center for Economic and Policy Research.

central aspect in the “Gas War.”¹⁴⁵ Gas as well as other natural resources became, more than ever, part of the collective identity and consciousness of the majority of the population.¹⁴⁶ As Morales stated prior to being elected, “We will not give up [the fight against the gas]. Natural gas is our hope, it is our future.”¹⁴⁷ Echoing this sentiment, Oscar Olivera notes that the profits of the gas reserves means job creation, expansion of social services, and improve the quality of life.¹⁴⁸ There is a heavy burden on developing the large gas reserves to ignite the social transformation envisioned in alternative model. This burden pins Bolivia in a vulnerable position—at the whims of the global market—where prices are volatile and relying on Western markets (similar to the fluctuations of oil). The Bolivian project, however, addresses some of these concerns with the hydrocarbon decree (as part of the nationalization) that stipulated state’s role, through YPFB, in setting prices favorable to the state. Furthermore, as an YPFB official explains, “The vision is that by 2010 we could see Bolivia as a main exporter of value-added products covering the entire South American market.”¹⁴⁹ As Carlos Miranda points out, the state continues to make strides in tapping the South American market, particularly in Brazil and Argentina, thanks to its larger reserves.¹⁵⁰ In this context, the natural gas nationalization project and MNR’s nationalization of

¹⁴⁵ Diego Cevallos, “Opposition Movement Rejects Government’s Plan to Sell Natural Gas; Natural Gas is our Hope, Our Future,” International Press Service (IPS) Latin America, October 22, 2003.

¹⁴⁶ The major upheavals that have been analyzed illustrate how various groups and leaders perceived their struggle, whether it be the Water War, the Gas War, or the cocaleros’ struggle, in terms of indigenous rights and culture. (See Nancy Postero, “Andean Utopias in Evo Morales’ Bolivia,” and *Now We Are Citizens*)

¹⁴⁷ Diego Cevallos, “Opposition Movement Rejects Government’s Plan to Sell Natural Gas; ‘Natural gas is our hope, our future,’” *IPS Latin America*, October 22, 2003.

¹⁴⁸ Oscar Olivera, “Reconquering the Collective Patrimony of the Nation: Recovering Bolivia’s Oil and Gas,” in *Counterpunch*

¹⁴⁹ As quoted in Luoma and Gordon.

¹⁵⁰ He notes that the major importers for Bolivian gas are not only Brazil and Argentina, but also

the tin mines differ; while the current administration has yet to tap the potential of the gas mines, tin production fell dramatically due to both exhausted mines and the drop in the global price for tin. Although gas represents seemingly endless possibilities for Morales' administration to implement successfully an alternative model, re-establishing a state on a finite source risks Bolivia's transformation.

Renegotiating the gas contracts (allowing YPFB to take a larger stake in the production and exportation activities) allows the state the ability to pursue ambitious social programs—reinvesting valuable revenue to eliminate malnutrition, improve literacy rates, and close the income gap. The drafting of the new constitution, however, is a key component for a state and a people to realize their hopes of ongoing social and political transformation; it symbolizes the completion of a revolutionary cycle. Much was at stake when the first Constituent Assembly convened, attempting to author a constitution that would reflect the past, present, and future of Bolivia. The importance of the Assembly clearly resonates from one of its members, an indigenous woman, as she said, “We were the precursors of the constituent assembly because we profound changes in order to live well.”¹⁵¹ The Assembly's symbolism and real source of change speaks to the agency of the people to redefine their state and their role within it. As another member explains, “With the bad name, ‘indigenous,’ they enslaved us, and with that same word must liberate ourselves.”¹⁵² Unlike the nationalization project where the natural resources brings *hope* for development, the

¹⁵¹ Franz Chavez, “Indigenous Population in the Assembly Rewriting Bolivia's Constitution; Bolivia: Not Another 500 Years of Marginalisation, Says Indigenous Leaders.” *IPS Latin America*, June 14, 2007.

¹⁵² Franz Chavez, “Indigenous Population in the Assembly Rewriting Bolivia's Constitution; Bolivia: Not Another 500 Years of Marginalisation, Says Indigenous Leaders.” *IPS Latin America*, June 14, 2007.

constitution is chance for indigenous and non-indigenous people to confront development and other national projects in their own terms. Through the constitution, national development will entail the recognition of diversity and reconfiguration of long standing social roles. Similarly, Alvaro Garcia Linera, Morales' Vice President, stated,

The Constituent Assembly is designed to create an institutional order that corresponds to the reality of who we are. Up to now, every one of the 17-18 previous constitutions has tried to copy the latest institutional fashion—French, U.S., European. And it was clear that it didn't fit us because these institutions correspond to other societies. We are indigenous and non-indigenous, we are modern and traditional, we are liberal and communitarist, we are a profoundly diverse society regionally and a hybrid in social classes. So we have to have institutions that allow us to recognize that pluralism.¹⁵³

Previous drafts, as mentioned by Garcia Linera, were not only imposed forms of governance by an elite criollo/mestizo class, but also did not include the voices of the exploited (both indigenous and non-indigenous people).¹⁵⁴ The new constitution attempts to reverse centuries of exploitation and marginalization.

The Constituent Assembly's task of drafting a constitution that dealt with establishing new relationships between the state and the populace, reforming agrarian laws, and recognizing the cultural and ethnic make-up met great resistance.

Oppositional groups, centered on the "media luna" departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, and Tarija, rejected the constitution as illegal as it was passed without the

¹⁵³ "Bolivia: Assembly Approves Draft for New Constitution as Opposition Boycotts, Draft Heads to Voters," *Notisur*, December 14, 2007.

[http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID\[0\]=26870&ID\[1\]=26838&ID\[2\]=26820&ID\[3\]=26758&ID\[4\]=26662&ID\[5\]=26614](http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID[0]=26870&ID[1]=26838&ID[2]=26820&ID[3]=26758&ID[4]=26662&ID[5]=26614)

¹⁵⁴ It is interesting to note, however, that the opposition, in order to increase the pressure on Morales, were absent throughout much of the process. See "El diálogo se inicia, frena a la Asamblea, pero no la presión," *La Razón*, December 4, 2006

participation of delegates from the aforementioned departments.¹⁵⁵ Violent protests paralyzed the constitutional protests and exposed the countries deep divisions. When the constitution finally passed on December 7, 2007, the opposition rallied around the questions of autonomy. The governors of the “media luna” departments demanding that Morales’ government recognize and agree to their autonomy. These demands for autonomy are not similar to the demands indigenous groups made, rather the “media luna’s” demands are in the context of having a greater stake in enjoying the profits from the hydrocarbons (home to the majority of the natural gas reserves). Primary among their demands was the unequivocal repeal of the direct hydrocarbon tax that would allow the departments to come away with a larger share of the revenue.¹⁵⁶ Using this discourse of autonomy (the separation from the central state), the oppositional movement made apparent the glaring differences between the Andean region (the center of a flourishing indigenous consciousness) and the lowlands of the “media luna” (a region far removed the Aymara and Quechua experience). The opposition characterize themselves as forward moving and modern while they view the Andean region as backwards and holding the country back.¹⁵⁷ In this context, issues of racism surfaced as the *oriente* opposed the notion of “*todos somos indigenas*.” The national referendum that allowed the population to revoke not only the president and vice president, but also the departmental prefects affirmed the

¹⁵⁵ “Bolivia: Assembly Approves Draft for New Constitution as Opposition Boycotts, Draft Heads to Voters,” *Notisur*, December 14, 2007.

[http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID\[0\]=26870&ID\[1\]=26838&ID\[2\]=26820&ID\[3\]=26758&ID\[4\]=26662&ID\[5\]=26614](http://ladb.unm.edu/prot/search/retrieve.php3?ID[0]=26870&ID[1]=26838&ID[2]=26820&ID[3]=26758&ID[4]=26662&ID[5]=26614)

¹⁵⁶ “El Gobierno y la ‘media luna’ ponen a punto sus ofensivas,” *La Prensa*, February 14, 2008.

¹⁵⁷ See Jose Luis Roca, “Regionalism Revisited” in *Unresolved Tensions*. Roca describes the historical divergences between the two regions.

country's polarization; as La Razon's headline proclaimed, "The referendum strengthens the President and the media luna." Although the majority of country continues to believe in Morales and the MAS' project, there is no doubt that the opposition will continue to challenge the creation of this new state.

A new constitution passed the constitutional referendum on January 26, 2008, nearly two years after the constituent assembly agreed on a version.¹⁵⁸ As mentioned the Bolivian, the new constitution represents an important step to establish a new state based on the history and struggle of indigenous people. This is clear in the beginning paragraphs of the preamble that state:

The Bolivian population, an ethnic composition, from the depths of history, inspired by struggles of the past of anti-colonial indigenous rebellions, of independence, of the popular movements for liberation, of the indigenous social and labor movements, in the Water War and [Gas War] in October, in the struggle for land and territory, and with the memory of our martyrs, we construct a new state.¹⁵⁹

The constitution makes an effort to link the historical trajectory of independence and liberation (from oligarchic/elite class) with the social movements of the 21st century—linking an indigenous consciousness with the creation of the state. The preamble also declares that respect and equality are the bases for this new state through principles of sovereignty, dignity, solidarity, and harmony.¹⁶⁰ Many of the pragmatic resolutions deal with the pervasive issues of marginalization, engrained poverty, and racism. Article one declares the country's independence, sovereignty, democracy, "plurinacionalidad" while Article 5 makes the country's official language Spanish and

¹⁵⁸ "Un país dividido aprueba la nueva CPE con 58,7%," La Razon, January 26, 2009

¹⁵⁹ Nueva Constitución Política del Estado

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

all the languages of the “original indigenous/peasants nations and populations.”¹⁶¹ In regards to facilitating the structural changes of creating a new state, the constitution declares education free and an obligation (up until the University) and financed by the state; the constitution also states that educational system will be plurilingual, intra- and intercultural.

Another important feature the constitution deals with is land reform. The constitution also addresses historical sources of exploitation and underdevelopment the *latifundios* (the large landowners) and the lack of access to the sea. The document guarantees the right to private property—both individual and collective right—as long as it provides a social function (this is up to the civil society organizations, which are also new under the constitution, to decide). Article 394 describes the classification of land sizes (from individual and to business) and their uses; individual property is indivisible and is not subject to agrarian property tax. Article 394 also recognizes, protects, and guarantees communal or collective property. An important aspect in the creation of this new state is the concept of social control—an aspect that Evo Morales referred to in his speech at *Tiwanaku*. Article 242 declares that the population will participate in the political public decisions through civil society organizations. Moreover, Article 243 establishes the guideline under which social control will be enacted. These articles ensure that the population will be integral in the development of the states.

More of the pragmatic resolutions of the constitution provide universal access to health care, and recognizes the right of workers to organize and strike. Furthermore,

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

natural resources are property of the people and the state will assume the control to manage the exploration, exploitation, and industrialization of these resources.¹⁶²

Moreover, it declares its sovereign right to access to the Pacific for the development of Bolivian industries.¹⁶³ The constitution, thus, attempts to not only put an end to the neoliberal project, but also restructure society based on a politics of recognition—the inclusion of the oppressed and marginalized into the formation of state—and politics of distribution—breaking the long held divide between the rich and poor.

¹⁶² “Otros temas que incluye la nueva Constitución Política del Estado aprobada en detalle ayer en Ouro,” *La Razón*, December 10, 2007.

¹⁶³ “Otros temas que incluye la nueva Constitución Política del Estado aprobada en detalle ayer en Ouro,” *La Razón*, December 10, 2007.

Conclusion

The events at the start of the 21st century exemplify how indigenous people created a movement of resistance within the neoliberal context. The struggle against the privatization of water resources and the dramatic increase of water rates, also known as the Water War, in 2000 galvanized the countryside against neoliberalism. The defeat of the water privatization efforts not only laid the groundwork for further social and political protests aimed at the neoliberal model, but also brought to the forefront indigenous people as actors for social change. Events that followed continued the struggle against neoliberalism, yet the demands coming out of these movements emanated an indigenous identity. The struggles of the *cocaleros* and the Gas War exemplified the mixture of discourse that entailed anti-neoliberalism (with anti-imperialism) and indigenous cosmology and historical “struggle.” These movements, set the stage for Evo Morales to emerge as a clear personification of the new discourse and the alternative model. Morales united a broad spectrum of marginalized society (i.e. workers, union members, campesinos, peasants, members of the old Left, and the general poor) through a discourse of anti-imperialism, anti-neoliberalism, and a distinct form indigenous ideology—one that invoked the images and memory of past indigenous insurrections with the future liberation of indigenous people. An alternative model arose from both the battles against the state’s implementation of neoliberal policies and the prevailing discourse of anti-neoliberalism. At the heart of the model is the challenge to not only the neoliberal model, but also a challenge to the historic exclusion of indigenous people in determining the trajectory of the state. Through the implementation of an alternative

model (one that synthesized the battles against the state and focused on the people as its source for change), Bolivian's felt they would finally break the chains of colonialism.

Prior to these global political and economic shifts, social movements throughout Latin America aligned itself with both a radicalized labor and peasant class—viewing their challenges through a Marxists lens. In Bolivia, much of the social movements were primarily centered around the growing industrial centers, specifically the booming mining centers, and the rural sectors, where much of the population still lived. The common thread that weaved these movements together was both the vehement denouncement of neoliberal policies and U.S. imperialism. Despite these overt claims against neoliberalism and imperialism, the movements in Bolivia are rooted in not only the failings of the 1952 Revolution, but also the re-envisioning of an indigenous identity (re-invoking the history of indigenous rebellions—Willka and Katari). The 1952 Revolution focused on uniting the social classes in Bolivia while promising the nationalization of mines, agrarian reform, and universal suffrage.¹⁶⁴ In addition, the Revolution sought to extend membership to indigenous people through organization of peasant and campesino unions and national educations.¹⁶⁵ The revolutionary experience did not last long as the military supplanted the ruling party in 1964. The corporatist style of governance that arose from the Revolution extended the marginal experiences of indigenous people. Despite the Revolution's downfall, many of its reforms created the foundation for the *Katarista* movement, an Aymara-led

¹⁶⁴ Postero, 37-38.

¹⁶⁵ Postero, 39

movement that had great influence over future movements. The *Kataristas* blended both the images and memories of previous indigenous insurrections and rebellions with a discourse of an overall class struggle. The *Katarista* struggle in La Paz and El Alto not only helped shape further indigenous movements, but also an overall indigenous consciousness. Redefining indigenous identity galvanized many to view struggle in terms of both class and race/ethnicity; this point would prove pivotal in the mobilizations against neoliberalism.

The major aspects of the alternative model, as espoused by Morales, are the nationalization of the nation's resources (specifically the natural gas fields), creating and instituting a constituent assembly—responsible for rewriting the country's constitution—and working with other countries to try and stem the influence of the neoliberal institutions. It is important to note that these demands fit within an overall framework of traditional class struggle and the prevailing indigenous identity. For example, the nationalization of gas not only represents the state retaking their natural resources, but also continuation of natural resources recovered by indigenous people and the profits as a source for ending their historical dependence. Moreover, provisions in the constitution attempt to breakdown neoliberal economic policies and as Morales' stated, "to end injustice, the inequality and oppression that we have lived under."¹⁶⁶ Morales and MAS continue to invoke and mix identity with class struggle in an effort to uplift the one of Latin America's poorest nations. The alternative model, however, is not without resistance. One of the barrier's to the implementation of the

¹⁶⁶ BBC News, "Morales Speech Excerpts" <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4638030.stm> (accessed September 10, 2006).

model is from the department of Santa Cruz, which has vociferously denounced Morales and has called for autonomy from the state. The “Cruzeños” used the reforms of the new (yet to be ratified) constitution to call for their department’s autonomy from the state. This move towards autonomy would allow the local government to not only elect its own governors, but also allow it to take ownership over the department’s natural resources. The local authorities would have the power to renegotiate with the state the sale of resources. The autonomous movement puts at risk the alternative model, the nationalization project, and Evo Morales’ legitimacy. Morales also faces harsh criticism not only from his adversaries, but also from many of his supporters. Many questioned whether Morales moved too slowly to nationalize the natural gas fields¹⁶⁷ while others view him as not radical enough in his approach to transform Bolivia.¹⁶⁸ Despite these criticisms, however, Morales continues to move the country forward in the hopes of a complete transformation.

In addition to these challenges to the model and Morales, the success of the model is tied to the failures of the past, which repeat the cycle of oppression and dependence. There exists a monumental burden on the shoulders of Evo Morales as the population entrusts him to overturn not only 500 years of oppression, but also uplift a country entrenched in endemic poverty. The prospects for Morales to create such a change are slim, yet unlike previous attempts to transform the state, Morales has unprecedented support from within the country and outside of it. The election of Morales comes about in a period where Latin America continues its shift towards the

¹⁶⁷ See “People Demand Accelerating Progress Towards Nationalisation of Energy Resources,” *IPS Latin America*, February 9, 2007

¹⁶⁸ See Federico Fuentes, “Bolivia: Has Morales Sold Out?” *Green Left Weekly*, March 29, 2006.

Left. Election results reveal that Bolivians are not only in their attempt to rid themselves of their dependence. In this context, Morales' government has the external support (both in terms of financial support and trade support) to implement an alternative model. Despite the support, the strength and will of the people, however, will ultimately decide the fate of the model. If the conflict between the wealthier departments and the state continue, and if Morales' support wanes, the success of the alternative model becomes tenuous with the prospects of failure increasing.

This study was an attempt to portray Bolivia's latest effort of creating change within a historical context. Neither the surge of indigenous movements within the last 20 years in Bolivia nor the invocations of indigenous rebellions and insurrections in the 18th and 19th century are a new occurrence. These events, rather, are part of an ongoing process where oppressed people (in this case indigenous people) try to recapture the notions of identity and development. Through the election of Evo Morales, indigenous people in Bolivia are at the forefront of creating change. Yet this scope does not describe one of the most pervasive remnants of colonialism, racism. In order to assess the alternative model's success, further research must examine its efforts in combating discourse and practices of racism. In addition, other areas of research within this context include Guarani and other indigenous groups' association within this larger movement, and the role of women within the alternative model. These points of research will enhance not only this project, but also enhance our understanding of how transformative this alternative model is within Bolivia.

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