

PART ONE

Refounding the State

The Emergence of Indigenous Nationalism in Bolivia

Social Movements and the MAS State

As the preceding Introduction makes clear, Evo Morales's administration has gained an international reputation for upholding indigenous rights and making decolonization the central framework for the "process of change." Perhaps nothing symbolized this intention better than the format of his inauguration as the first indigenous president of Bolivia in January 2006, which took place in two very different venues. On January 21, he participated in a popular ceremony at Tiwanaku, a pre-Inca site near La Paz, where, after walking barefoot over coca leaves, he was blessed by Andean religious leaders and recognized as their Apumallku, or highest authority. To the thousands of admirers shivering in the freezing *altiplano* morning, he declared that "a new millennium has arrived for the original peoples [*pueblos originarios*] of the world" (*La Razón* 2006a).

The next day, his official inauguration took place in the Congress building in Plaza Murillo in La Paz. He began with a moment of silence for the "martyrs of liberation," such as indigenous insurrectionists of the colonial period, intellectuals and priests killed during the dictatorship, coca growers fallen in the struggles over drug eradication, and urban activists killed during the struggles against neoliberalism.¹ Then he described his plans for a new Bolivia, saying that he planned a "cultural democratic revolution" that would be a continuation of the struggle of anti-colonial insurgency leader Túpac Katari to restore Tahuantinsuyo (the Inca empire), of Simón Bolívar to found a *patria grande*, and of Che Guevara to establish "a new world in equality." Five hundred years of resistance by indigenous peoples, blacks, and the popular sectors was enough, he said. Now began the next five hundred years, in which indigenous Bolivians and workers could end the injustice they had suffered as Aymaras, Quechuas, and Guaraní (which he compared to

South African apartheid). In conclusion, quoting the spokesman of Mexico's Zapatista Army of National Liberation, Subcomandante Marcos, Morales promised to "rule by obeying" the Bolivian people (Morales 2006).

In this rainbow of revolutionary representations, Morales committed his *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS; Movement towards Socialism) party and the new government to fight against neoliberalism and for indigenous cultural and political rights, national and territorial sovereignty, human rights, workers' rights, and socialism. This chapter analyzes the emergence of the MAS and its efforts to articulate three very different lines of struggle—for indigenous rights, economic justice, and popular democracy. In the process, the formerly dispossessed and excluded of Bolivia formed an alliance that enabled them to take state power and then defeat the various opposition groups, particularly the elite from the lowlands.

I begin by briefly tracing efforts at social reform from Bolivia's 1952 revolution until 1985, a period in which activism generally took the form of either Marxist-oriented struggles for labor rights or indigenous demands for recognition. Subsequently, during the 1990s, the *cocaleros* and the MAS inherited the mantle of the labor struggles of the neoliberal era, and labor activists of various tendencies came together under the MAS's banner, creating tensions in the Morales government. The MAS made productive use of these tensions, tacking back and forth between strategies focusing on mass activism and parliamentary politics. As a result, it managed to unite its heterogeneous constituencies around a core agenda that could be called "indigenous nationalism." Although this fragile alliance was subject to significant contestation, it provided a strong basis for Morales's popularity among the country's rural poor and urban indigenous populations, his main constituency. To use Rancière's terminology, the MAS used contestations over race and class to construct an emancipatory "politics" (Rancière 1999).

Subsequent chapters will show how the MAS state utilized the discourses of indigeneity and decolonization to consolidate power and put into place a national development plan. Like any form of nation-building, it excluded certain groups and categories in the process of creating ideal national subjects. In the final chapters, I argue that once the MAS consolidated its power, concern for indigenous rights gave way to an agenda focused on economic development, and emancipatory politics gave way to policing.

MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN BOLIVIA: A BRIEF HISTORY

Two facts about Bolivia are important to this history. First, Bolivia's population is and has always been predominantly indigenous. According to the 2001 census, nearly 62 percent of its people claimed to be native speakers of an indigenous language (INE 2003; World Bank 2005). While the meaning of the term "indigenous" is under debate, as described in the Introduction, there can be no doubt that it is

a central category around which a large sector of Bolivians have organized and made political and cultural claims in the past few decades (see Albro 2005; Canessa 2006). Second, the two main historic sources of production and income have been peasant agricultural workers and miners exploiting subsurface resources, notably silver during the colonial period and tin during the modern era. (In contemporary Bolivia, two important new sources have emerged: revenues from natural gas and remittances from migrants abroad.) My framing of these facts—the first from the perspective of race/ethnicity and the second from a political economy focus on class—and their interrelations—reflect the two ways Bolivian movements for social change have been organized in the country's recent history.

Beginning in the 1930s, Bolivia's miners were the most important civil society protagonists, organizing for workers' rights and fighting repression by the mining companies. As they formed federations across the country and allied with other labor organizations such as factory workers, they established the union, or *sindicato*, as the primary form of political and economic resistance. Organized armed miners were instrumental in the MNR party's victory in the revolution of 1952, and the Central Obrero Boliviano (COB; Bolivian Workers Central) governed the country jointly with the MNR for the first few years after the revolution. As a result, unions became the primary legitimate form of accessing political rights, which were negotiated and struggled for through a collective union-driven process (García Linera et al. 2004: 42). The unions' relations to the state necessarily changed over time as control over the state shifted from left to right, sometimes working with the state, and sometimes against it, as during their historic protests against the military dictatorships. What is important, however, is the way the *sindicato* model fused citizenship and labor rights, through a unifying discourse focusing on the historical and national value of labor (44). Moreover, the miners stood in for all Bolivians, because their struggles often went beyond their own material interests to demands for democracy and human rights. It is also worth noting that popular movements chose the union as the privileged form of organizing over political parties, which were seen as controlled by the elite (Stefanoni 2003). This line of organizing was deeply influenced by a Marxist analysis of history, based in an ideology which privileged industrial modernization and state control of the ownership and distribution of resources (García Linera 2010). This sector was known for its radical consciousness and militant struggles, the legacy of which continues in contemporary organizing (J. Webber 2007).

The other important sector of the labor movement was made up of *campesinos*, the mostly indigenous peasant farmers of the highlands. In the 1940s, radical *sindicatos campesinos* began organizing against the latifundia system, taking over large haciendas, and demanding the return of their collective lands, echoing indigenous demands since the colonial period (Rivera Cusicanqui 1983; Gordillo 2000). Campesinos also supported the MNR at the time of the revolution, and were rewarded with a number of important reforms in the new postrevolutionary state: universal suffrage, rural education programs, and most important, an

agrarian reform that gave out land to thousands of campesinos. The MNR program was paired with a new discourse of campesino identity: indigenouness was submerged in a class-based identity and mediated by a patron state through client unions. The national federation of sindicatos campesinos, the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB; United Confederation of Peasant Workers of Bolivia), allied with the COB as representatives of the masses. Yet throughout its history, the CSUTCB reflected a continuous tension between leftist worker-based ideologies and a more ethnically based set of demands that recognized the indigenous nature of most of its members. In many areas of the highlands, as Xavier Albó has noted, the *sindicato* took on many of the features of the traditional Andean sociopolitical organization, the *ayllu*, blending the boundary between Indian and peasant (Albó 2000).

Labor and the state had made class the dominant form of expression of social identity, but there were also activists making renewed claims based on indigenouness. The most important of these were the young urban Ayamara intellectuals of the Katarista movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s who embraced anti-colonial heroes like Túpac Katari and his spouse Bartolina Sisa and organized around the demand for bilingual education and other cultural aspirations (Hurtado 1986; Rivera Cusicanqui 1983). As the movement developed, it argued that the problems of indigenous peoples must be viewed through the “theory of the two eyes”—pointing out that indigenous peoples were doubly oppressed as an exploited class and as a dominated ethnic group (Sanjinés 2004). The Kataristas’ important Tiwanaku Manifesto (1973), which declared indigenous people to be “economically exploited and culturally and politically oppressed,” set the stage for demands we now characterize as multiculturalism.² This was in essence a “reinvention of Indianness . . . as a subject of emancipation . . . and a political project” (García Linera 2008). The Kataristas were also influential in the campesino movement, pushing the CSUTCB to gradually become more and more “indigenized.” They eventually split into two groups. One, headed by Victor Hugo Cárdenas, worked in a limited and ultimately unsuccessful way within the political system to push for reforms. Cárdenas later served as vice president under Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, where he headed efforts to institutionalize state-led multiculturalism. The other group opted for a more exclusionary radical path of Aymara nationalism, and formed a guerrilla army led by Felipe Quispe (el Mallku). Álvaro García Linera, the current vice president, was a member of this latter group.

THE NEOLIBERAL ERA: THE RISE OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This tension between race and class continued through the 1970s and 1980s until 1985, when what we might call the neoliberal era began in Bolivia. Bolivia returned

to democracy in 1982 with the end of the military dictatorship and by 1985, the new elected government, again led by the MNR party, began to institute the aggressive economic reforms that were the conditions of loans from the IMF and the World Bank. Central to this “New Economic Policy” was the closing and privatizing of the tin mines, whose profit margins had fallen during the preceding years as world tin prices collapsed. This meant the firing, or *relocalización*, of thousands of miners, which amounted to the effective silencing of the most combative segment of civil society. This was combined with a liberalization of trade and a deregulation of labor laws to allow industries to be competitive on the global market, further weakening the position of unions. While unions and merchant associations continue to be a fundamental form of organizing, especially among campesinos and workers in the urban informal markets (see Lazar 2008), the neoliberal era dealt a harsh blow to the power of *sindicatos*.

This had several important consequences. “Relocated” miners migrated to cities like El Alto, where they became involved in urban political struggles, or, most importantly, to the tropical Chapare area of Cochabamba, where they began to grow coca and to organize in what became Bolivia’s most important new social movement, the *cocaleros*, or coca growers’ union. In essence, this was what several scholars refer to as an *irradiación*, or outward radiation, of the old workers’ ideology to new forms under new conjunctures (García Linera 2003; Stefanoni 2003). The historian James Dunkerly characterizes this new formation as a deindustrialization that reversed the “normal” historical evolution. He argues that “modern” wagedworkers were thrown back into social circuits associated with other historical epochs, combining a legacy of proletarian organizations, a new enforced engagement with agriculture, and market rationalities (Dunkerly 2007: 40). If the old discourse of worker citizenship was based on labor, the new discourse of cocalero solidarity was based on a strong anti-imperialism stance and an increasing recognition of the importance of ethnic demands (*reivindicaciones*). The cocaleros came of age in a low-intensity war on drugs led by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, whose drug eradication efforts linked the cocaleros and their leader, Evo Morales, to “narco-terrorism.” The cocaleros fought back with a repertoire based on traditional union strategies—blockades, demonstrations, and hunger strikes—combined with new claims that the coca leaf was sacred according to Andean *cosmovisión* (worldview). This latter claim worked especially well in the international sphere, where cocaleros jumped on the bandwagon of the international indigenous movement (see Albrow 2005). The drug wars of the 1990s cost many cocaleros’ lives, but their movement gained strength, emerging as a renewed and recontextualized organization firmly opposed to U.S. imperialism and neoliberal economic policies.

The second important process that Bolivia saw in the 1990s was the rise of the national indigenous movement, led largely by groups from the eastern lowlands, or *Oriente*, whose lands were being invaded by loggers, cattle ranchers, and

colonizers from the highlands. Influenced by the growing international indigenous movement, and supported by NGOs, anthropologists, and progressive Jesuits, indigenous groups began organizing in the 1980s. By 1990, they had formed a national organization called the Confederación Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (CIDOB; Indigenous Federation of Eastern Bolivia), which began articulating new demands for indigenous recognition and for collective landownership, which was expressed under the rubric of *territorio* (territory). This new social movement was very different from both the *sindicato* model and the Katarista demands that linked race with class. Instead, it relied on identity politics, in which culture and ethnic difference were the most salient basis for rights, and did not make any radical challenges to capitalism. The lack of a class component made it particularly amenable to being incorporated into the neoliberal government's new forms of governance, which others and I have termed neoliberal multiculturalism (see Hale 2002, 2004; Postero 2007a). In the mid 1990s, the Sánchez de Lozada government deepened the economic restructurings of the 1980s, while at the same time pairing them with a series of reforms that explicitly recognized indigenous demands. These multicultural reforms included an agrarian reform that allowed for collective titling of indigenous territories, the establishment of intercultural, bilingual education, and the Law of Popular Participation, a form of decentralization that recognized indigenous groups and their leaders as actors in municipal development decisions. I have argued that this form of state-led multiculturalism had important symbolic effects in that it created a powerful discourse of indigenous citizenship. Nevertheless, my research showed that Bolivia's neoliberal multiculturalism was more effective as a politics of recognition than as a politics of redistribution. It did not substantially alter the structural inequalities facing indigenous peoples. Rather, it was a top-down effort by the neoliberal state to incorporate indigenous peoples into the national project as responsible, docile neoliberal subjects (Postero 2007a). As the events since 2000 have shown, however, this was not the result.

THE MAS PHENOMENON: A NEW PLEBIAN BOLIVIA

The failure of the multicultural reforms to substantially alter the endemic racism that marks Bolivian society or to curb the power of the elite-led political parties had a surprising result. In the mid 1990s, indigenous organizations began to put up candidates from their own political parties, the most successful of which was the MAS, headed by the cocalero leader Evo Morales. The MAS took shape in the mid-1990s in the congresses of the Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (ASP; Assembly for the Sovereignty of the People), a loose federation of campesino and cocalero unions. The ASP formed what was called the Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (IPSP; Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the People) and borrowed the name and legal identity of an existing political party, the

Movimiento al Socialismo, or MAS, from the Falange Socialista Boliviana, originally a far-right party.³ So, from the beginning, while this group intended to intervene in electoral politics, they did so through a very different form of organization that reflected both the syndical logic and the heterogeneity of its constituency. As Morales often reminded people, the MAS-IPSP is not a traditional party, but the political instrument of the social movements that form its base. And that base is eclectic—campesinos, the landless movement, leftist lawyers, women's groups, some lowland indigenous leaders, and assorted Trotskyites. That means that the MAS does not have a defined ideological base, but, as the anthropologist Robert Albro has pointed out, relies instead on "tactical flexibility, . . . extra-political sources of legitimacy, successful cross-sector alliances, emphasis on 'works' over 'ideas,' and the use of Andean cultural frames" (Albro 2006: 420).

An influential group of Bolivian scholars called the Comuna Group, which included Vice President García Linera, argued—compellingly, I think—that this sort of fragmented "multitude" is the form working-class demands took in Bolivia at the turn of the twenty-first century. Following the insights of the Bolivian political scientist René Zavaleta Mercado (1986), they argue that Bolivia is a *formación abigarrada*, a motley or multicolored formation, in which several very different forms of social and economic relations coexist in an unequal and disarticulated way. They suggest that in the past, as traditional structures of production gave way to modernity, unions represented one means by which subalterns struggled for inclusion and social protection. With the demise of the union under neoliberalism and post-Fordism, however, a new form of plebian organization evolved, in which preexisting forms of organization such as guilds and peasant organizations, "rooted in local spaces and concerns," played a greater role, bringing collective demands and forms of knowledge to the fore. In their view, Bolivia's new "multitude" formations are not as rigid as previous union-style formations, but rather bring together people and groups in "affiliational relationships" and "assembly style democracy." In contrast to traditional forms of association, which control and mobilize their members, they suggest, these forms maintain their power through moral authority, relying on participants' conviction in the cause. This is the new *plebeya*, or plebian Bolivia (García Linera 2004; see also Gutiérrez et al. 2002; Tapia 2002; Dunkerly 2007: 38–40).⁴

In fact, local forms of organizing have proved essential to the transformations in Bolivia that this book describes, as well as to the many disagreements that followed. From 2000 to 2003, resistance to the effects of neoliberalism grew across the country, resulting in an outpouring of demonstrations, beginning with the "water war" in Cochabamba, where residents protested the privatization of water resources, and culminating in the now famous "gas war" of 2003, when President Sánchez de Lozada was forced to resign after six weeks of demonstrations against a proposed plan to transport natural gas from Bolivia's Oriente across Chile and

to the United States (see Postero 2007a). The union leader Oscar Olivera was the head of the *Coordinadora en Defensa del Agua y de la Vida* (Coalition in Defense of Water and Life) that organized the 2000 Water War. In 2012, he told me that the water war had planted two important seeds in Bolivian society. First, he said it drew attention to the neoliberal economic model that perpetuated the colonial and neo-colonial pattern of territorial occupation and expropriation. The water war not only broke with that model, it did so by putting forth a simple idea based on indigenous understandings, “that water was a living being, and a resource for life.” Second, it began a profound rethinking of who gets to make these important decisions. The protestors said, for this first time, “we want to decide.” This was the beginning of what he considers a “new form of popular power based fundamentally in new forms of organization that had nothing to do with traditional union organizing,” instead recuperating ancestral communitarian practices. This “reconstitution of the social fabric,” he told me, was essential for the coming together of the MAS, and eventually for Morales’s election (personal communication, August 2012).

With this fragmented “plebian” organization in place, MAS candidates began to win local elections in 1995, especially in the Chapare, and by 1997, six MAS candidates won seats in Congress, including Morales. The MAS articulated a fairly radical discourse at that point, reflecting the combined anti-government sentiments of its wide base. In 2002, Morales ran for the presidency, coming within a few points of Sánchez de Lozada, who became president through a pact between parties. From that point, the MAS began to change strategies, moving from the position of outsider social movement to that of a vocal opposition party inside the parliamentary process. Many on the left feel that the MAS lost its revolutionary potential at that point, arguing that it changed into “a reformist party bent on winning elections through the courting of the middle class” (J. Webber 2007; see also Petras 2008). There is some evidence for this position. Neither Morales nor the MAS were actively involved in either the gas war or the water war, both of which arose from local grassroots organizing. As Jeffrey Webber has forcefully argued, Morales supported a constitutional exit from the crisis in 2003, and then formed a temporary alliance with Sánchez de Lozada’s successor, Carlos Mesa, who continued many neoliberal policies until he was forced to resign by popular demonstrations in May–June of 2005 (J. Webber 2006; see also Petras 2008). This pact with Mesa was deeply contested by labor, peasant movements, and the water war *Coordinadora* (Olivera, personal communication, August 2012). Webber suggests that Morales and the MAS then took advantage of this historic shift in the structure of social forces to win the 2005 presidential campaign, incorporating the language of indigenous liberation of the popular struggles, but abandoning the revolutionary project at its heart (J. Webber 2006).

Was this reformism or savvy politicking? I agree with Webber that Morales backed away from a revolutionary position in 2005, but I am convinced that part

of the reason Bolivia did not spin completely out of control in 2005 was precisely because Morales and the MAS existed as an official political party with sufficient legitimacy to hold out the promise of a liberal but transformed state. This paved the way for the peaceful takeover of the state by the MAS and their efforts to implement what many see as a transformative agenda. Nevertheless, Webber's argument draws attention to the deep tensions between a revolutionary aim to decolonize the state and society and overturn neoliberalism, on the one hand, and the liberal state-building project the MAS chose to accomplish this agenda, on the other. This tension is at the heart of the political struggles I analyze in the following chapters, and we see a distinct shift over the decade of MAS rule. In the early days, indigenous activists held more power in the MAS alliance and were able to push forward policies intended to decolonize the state and institute indigenous rights, while in later years, as I document in the second half of this book, these gave way to a development agenda focused on resource exploitation and centralized state power.

THE MAS GOVERNMENT: AN UNSTABLE CONFEDERATION?

In his 2005 presidential campaign, Morales laid out the elements of the “revolutionary” agenda. Articulating concerns of class and race, he claimed to represent the Bolivian people (*el pueblo boliviano*), which was both poor and indigenous: his party's motto was “Somos pueblo, somos MAS” (We are the people, we are MAS [more]). He did this by focusing on three things. First, he promised to make the Bolivian state truly participatory, by allowing the social movements, most of whom represented indigenous Bolivians, to be the base of his new government. Second, he argued that neoliberalism was a fundamental cause of the shared suffering of Bolivians, and promised to reverse it. Finally, he promoted a national sovereignty free from the strictures U.S. imperialism and neoliberal capitalism had imposed. National dignity would allow Bolivians the right to grow the sacred coca leaf of their ancestors and to take control of their natural resources. Taken together, this platform amounts to what Stefanoni calls an indigenous nationalism (Stefanoni 2006a).

It is one thing to propose such an ambitious agenda, and quite another to put it into practice. First, it is important to point out that despite the desires for independence from global capitalism and imperialism, Bolivia must also respond to a global context where powerful interests place limits on change and development. This is not to excuse the Morales administration, but merely to highlight that decisions and directions are not always set domestically. As such, Morales and his team must negotiate a complex international sphere, making pragmatic decisions to maximize the income and opportunities they can provide for the country. As I explain in greater depth in chapters 4 and 5, Bolivia's economy relies on selling its

natural resources, especially hydrocarbons, on the global market, and this “path dependency” makes radical changes very difficult.

Moreover, this radical agenda had to be implemented by a state administered by a very diverse MAS coalition. The “indigenous state,” it turns out, was never just that. Instead, as the Argentinian scholar and journalist Pablo Stefanoni has argued, the MAS was an “unstable confederation of ideological factions” (Stefanoni 2006a). The Bolivian political scientist Roberto Laserna suggested that from the start, it was made up of “three tendencies with projects that are not necessarily coincidental or harmonious, united by the personal leadership of Evo Morales” (Laserna 2010). The groups Laserna identified were: an *indigenista* group, a socialist group, and a populist group. I think the lines between these categories were more blurred than Laserna suggested, but his analysis provides a helpful way to see how the historical forms I have just traced came together in the first Morales administration. I identify these as a way to see the complexities of the so-called indigenous state, recognizing that they are abstract categories that do not map perfectly onto individuals. Also, as time passed, there were substantial ruptures, since many early supporters of the MAS agenda departed, expressing deep dissent and disappointment at the way the MAS state developed.

The first group we can identify is the *indigenista* group, led by the minister of the exterior, the Aymara intellectual David Choquehuanca. This group, which had most visibility internationally, saw the government’s main role as decolonizing Bolivian society and bringing about the “cultural and democratic revolution” Morales spoke of in his inauguration. It carried the demands and ideas of the Katarista movement of the 1970s, pushing for indigenous rights and recognition, and was active in what Laserna calls the “symbolic spaces, providing symbols and references to the discourse of the president, and projecting a highly charged international image of the government” (Laserna 2010: 40, my translation). Choquehuanca and the first MAS minister of education, the Aymara sociologist Félix Patzi, utilized idealized versions of Andean culture to project an indigenous image onto the government’s economic projects, arguing that Bolivia’s indigenous peoples have solutions to the ills caused by Western capitalism (see Postero 2007b). This group used the media, especially a network of government-funded community radios, to elaborate this “symbolic and cultural discourse.” The *indigenistas* were also very important during the Constituent Assembly (CA), where popularly elected—and mostly indigenous—delegates gathered to rewrite the constitution. The influence of this tendency can also be seen in Morales’s appearances in international fora, such as his 2008 declaration at the United Nations that the best way to resolve the global climate change crisis was to end capitalism and to adopt a more harmonious, indigenous, relation to the earth (*El Deber* 2008a). Choquehuanca remains in his position as of this writing (2016), but Patzi served only until 2007. He gained further notoriety in 2010, when after an arrest

for drunk driving, he relied on indigenous justice codes, paying his debt to society by making adobe bricks by hand. He formed a new political party and in 2015 was elected the governor of the department of La Paz, handing the MAS a resounding defeat in what some called an “Aymara rebellion” (Molina 2015). Some suggest he might be a viable presidential candidate in a post-Evo era.

A second sector Laserna identified is that led by President Morales. This populist group emphasized the strong role of popular sector social movements, especially the *sindicatos campesinos* (peasant unions), and *juntas vecinales* (urban neighborhood associations). This group urged a radical transformation of Bolivian politics, reversing the traditional hold the political elite had on public decision-making. This tendency is the glue that bound the party together originally, and had a strong presence both in the MAS party and in the Congress. Laserna says this group was “not defined by its political orientation of ideology, but rather by its method: *el basismo* (populism, or grassroots politics). Its fundamental principle, which the president repeats with frequency, is that ‘la voz del pueblo es la voz de dios’ (the voice of the people is the voice of God)” (Laserna 2010). The strength of this sector was in its ability to mobilize its constituency and take over the streets. Morales certainly benefited from his populist image as an indigenous man of humble origins with years of service to the movement. Morales actively cultivates this image, continuing to attend union congresses and popular meetings throughout his presidency, renovating the charismatic face-to-face links he has with the public (Stefanoni 2006a: 40). As a result, he could call upon the base to quickly take to the streets to support him when challenged. During the conflicted months of the Constituent Assembly in 2006–7, MAS supporters from across the country mobilized to Sucre, offering the right-wing opposition a clear sign of Morales’s popular support.

Of course, here we see how Laserna’s categorizations are blurred in practice. Morales has had such strong support from his bases largely because of the ways he and the government have used indigenous history and bodies in political performance, borrowing heavily from indigenous social movement tactics and strategies. As Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl (2013) note, the robust rural oral history traditions in Bolivia facilitate cross-generational transmission of past injustices, transforming storytelling, commemorations, and rituals into critical sites for political mobilization. Morales has been particularly adept at these sorts of performances. For every critical legislative reform, Morales rallies support through spectacular events mobilizing indigenous history and tales of oppression and injustice. For instance, when Morales passed the New Agrarian Reform law in 2006, he organized social movement activists in the city of Peñas, the site of the brutal death of the eighteenth-century anti-colonial Aymara rebel Túpac Katari. Addressing thousands of peasant farmers, he declared: “I stand before you today . . . at the site where Julian Túpac Katari, one of the few literate Indian slaves,



FIGURE 4. President Evo Morales at an “Andean” ceremony at Tiwanaku in 2015 celebrating his 2014 reelection. Credit: U.S. Embassy in La Paz, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.



FIGURE 5. Depiction of the anti-colonial leader Túpac Katari at the 2015 celebration at Tiwanaku. Credit: David G. Silvers–Cancillería del Ecuador. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>.

was *descuartizado* [quartered]. . . . We are here to liberate our country, and Katari is the principal reference point for the indigenous struggles in Bolivia and a constant reminder of the obligation to decolonize Bolivia" (*La República* 2006).

He has repeatedly used the venue of Tiwanaku to cement his indigenous pedigree, building on his 2006 inauguration. In 2015, he held yet another "ancestral" ceremony there to mark his victory in the 2104 elections. This time, the walls of the archaeological site were covered with a massive representation of Túpac Katari, Bolivia's most famous indigenous anti-colonial rebel (see Figures 4 and 5).

Through these symbolic and performative events, Morales creates new "figurations," to use Donna Haraway's terms, "potent fictions" that draw the public into a redemptive narrative (Haraway 2004: 243). He embodies the spirit of Katari as the leader of a movement liberating the country from a colonialist and racist history. Here we see the hegemonic redemption story of the new state, which promises to put the evil of colonialism in the past and lead the way to a future of justice (see Meister 2011). "Gathering up" past and contemporary struggles over land and territory, Morales makes his national project of decolonization seem universal and uncontested. He also incorporates stories of social movement struggle into his own person, becoming a figure who represents all Bolivians, and especially all indigenous peoples. After Morales's 2014 election, enormous billboards announced "Yo soy Evo/Nosotros somos Evo" (I am Evo/We are Evo).

Laserna's third tendency consisted of leftists, led by Vice President Álvaro García Linera. This group saw the role of the government as reversing the neoliberal years, and forging a state that takes a strong protagonist role in the economy, especially "recuperating natural resources as a basis of accumulation for national industrialization." This group included both old-style Marxists who urged a transition to socialism and technocrats who wanted to rework the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) strategies of the 1950s and 1960s (Laserna 2010). García Linera was outspoken about the need to overturn neoliberalism. In a 2007 speech, he argued that neoliberalism "signifies a process of fragmentation—structural disintegration—of support networks, solidarity, and popular mobilization." It reduces and deforms the state, setting out to destroy the "notion of the state as collective or commonwealth, in order to impose a type of corporate ideology calling for appropriation and squandering of collective wealth." The new socialist Bolivia, he argued, must work to overcome this fragmentation, re-socialize collective wealth privatized over the past few decades, and empower the state with economic, cultural, and political strength so that it can "provide a protective shield for the social movements, an international armor for growth of the social struggles" (García Linera 2007). The left/socialist tendency controlled government economic policy and administration, as well as a large part of the MAS's representation in the Senate, and oversaw the 2006 nationalization of the natural gas industry and the telecommunications sector.⁵ In later years, this wing grew in strength, and leftist

technocrats held leading positions: Carlos Romero Bonifaz served as minister of the Presidency and then of the Government, and Luis Alberto Arce Cotacora served as minister of the Treasury and then of economy and public finance. This team tends to be pragmatic about engaging with capital markets and to see extractivism as an essential platform for national development.

It is helpful to contrast Morales's performative indigeneity with the Marxist ideology of García Linera in order to appreciate the contrasting logics and strategies that co-existed within the MAS. Applying a neo-Marxist indigenist-cum-Gramscian approach to analyses of the MAS and its struggle to take power in Bolivia, García Linera has described five phases of the struggle. In the first, the contradictions in the forces of domination became visible. The second was a "revolutionary epoch" of contestation in which there was a "catastrophic draw" between two opposing blocs of power (García Linera 2010: 15). One fundamental nucleus is the indigenous movement, made up of both campesinos and urban workers. "Its economic program is centered on the internal market, taking as its axis the peasant community, urban-artisanal and micro-business activity, a revitalized role for the state as producer and industrializing force, and a central role for the indigenous majority in driving the new state" (García Linera 2006: 83). At the other pole is the "ascendant agro-export, financial, and petroleum business bloc," which favors the subordination of the state to private enterprise and the preservation, or restoration, of the old political system. This political polarity is further structured, he suggested, by three underlying cleavages: "ethno-cultural (indigenous/whites-*q'aras-gringos*), class (workers/businessmen), and regional (Andean west/Amazonian crescent)." In this highly political field, both tendencies pushed for solutions, but neither managed to construct a bloc with a majority capable of a long-term hold on state power. García Linera saw two alternatives from the point of view of the social movements in 2006: either an insurrection for revolutionary change or "a path of gradual, institutional change by electoral means led by Evo Morales." The second, for which he advocated, would require an electoral bloc, negotiated with other leaders and movements, that would "generate a unified popular and indigenous pole with the ability to rule" and attract the consent of the middle class (84). In the third period, social movement mobilization was converted into state power. This described the first few years of the MAS government, and especially the convening of the Constituent Assembly. The fourth he called the "point of bifurcation," in which the two polarized blocs came to an irreconcilable confrontation, leading to the triumph of the popular bloc.

A final phase, in García Linera's view, is "the emergence of creative contradictions" (2012c: 23). Here he explains the dissent against the MAS state that grew as it consolidated its power. Even people supportive of and working within the MAS became extremely critical of the way Morales and his tight inner circle made the majority of important decisions. The minister of hydrocarbons, Andrés

Soliz Rada, for instance, resigned in 2006, claiming Morales had tied his hands (Stefanoni 2006b). Raúl Prada Alcoreza, the political philosopher who served as a key MAS delegate to the Constituent Assembly, and then as the vice minister of strategic planning in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, resigned and, along with several other key intellectuals, issued a manifesto decrying MAS policy and practice (*Manifiesto 22 de Junio* 2011). Among the indigenous base, many began to feel depoliticized and locked out of the decision-making. For instance, a Guaraní leader from Santa Cruz who served as an alternate (*suplente*) MAS congressman complained to me in 2010 that he and his lowland constituencies had been ignored completely by the MAS. From his tiny alternate's office in Santa Cruz, he gestured in the direction of La Paz. "They want to control everything, to do everything according to their culture, the Andean culture," he told me. "Very little of what we hoped for as [lowland] indigenous people is being advanced, only the things that Evo wants. . . . No, Evo and his ministers have abandoned us. . . . And those ministers aren't the people who were in the streets with us. They are from the Left. . . . Even Evo's own base is silenced now, saying, 'Let those *ministros parásitos* [parasitic ministers] defend him!'"

This comment reflects the difficulties the MAS strategy produced at the popular level. On the one hand, this leader commended Morales for asserting sovereignty and nationalizing the gas and then distributing royalty money to the poor and the elderly. On the other, he clearly reflects the disappointment and anger he and many others felt as their loyalty was disregarded at the whim of the president.

CONCLUSION

The Morales/MAS government brought together a complex blend of ideologies and strategies. Sometimes these provide contradictory results, as when the "indigenist" group pushed for rural development in accordance with indigenous *cosmovisión* and the leftists in the Economics Ministry pushed for hydrocarbon exploitation and industrialization. This tension will be explored in greater depth in chapters 4 and 5, as we see how mega-development projects affect indigenous communities. This combination also explains the criticism Morales and the MAS receive from all sides. The traditional Left, especially the labor sector represented by the COB (which mounted strikes during the summer of 2008 pushing the government for a reformed pension law) argued Morales is just a reformer in league with transnational corporations. They argue that Morales's renegotiation of natural gas contracts with oil companies fell far short of nationalization. This position is echoed by leftist analysts like Jeffrey Webber and James Petras, who argue that Morales made pacts with the Right, negotiated joint ventures with oil companies, and demobilized mass movements in an effort to consolidate political power (J.Webber 2007; Petras 2008). The Right, especially the elite in the so-called Media

Luna (see chapter 2) saw Morales as reasserting an Andean centralized state power over the lowland departments, fueling their massive push for regional autonomy. They also criticized Morales as being in league with leftists such as Venezuela's Hugo Chávez and determined to destroy democracy and capitalism. Supporters of the previous president, Sánchez de Lozada (called *Gonistas*), complained that the MAS unnecessarily isolated Bolivia from the international community by its belligerent relations with the United States, and was unable to administer the state effectively. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between: the MAS coalition negotiated its contradictions by mobilizing a radical discourse of change and liberation, while continuing and benefiting from the extractivist development structures in place.

So, for the first years, tacking back and forth between populist mass activism based on indigenous vindications, on the one hand, and classic electoral politicking in the halls of the Parliament, on the other, allowed the MAS to continue institutionalizing its agenda and consolidating its power. The next chapter turns to the 2006–9 Constituent Assembly, where the tensions I have described in this chapter were played out on a grand scale in political and ideological battles between the MAS, indigenous intellectuals, and the opposition parties on the Right. This chapter has highlighted the differences between the various segments of the MAS party; the next focuses on the fundamental tension in the MAS administration about how to implement the change it promised: through a liberal nation-state or by embracing radical “popular” alternatives to it.