

**CAN A STATE DECOLONIZE ITSELF?
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF BOLIVIA'S STATE-LED
DECOLONIZATION PROCESS**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how state involvement has affected Bolivia's decolonization process. By comparing interviews on decolonization with various indigenous organizations and with the state's Vice Ministry of Decolonization, this study demonstrates how the Bolivian state claims to support and promote decolonization while at the same time radically reinterpreting the meaning of decolonization towards a direction that aligns with broader state interests. While many indigenous organizations link their demands for decolonization to the process of establishing indigenous self-determination and autonomy, the state promotes a "nationalist" version of decolonization which supports centralized state authority over indigenous territories and focuses primarily on the need to revalorize indigenous culture. The study's central conclusions demonstrate how the state is an unlikely actor to effectively promote decolonization and how global theories on decolonization have, in part, enabled Bolivia's current discursive struggle over the meaning of decolonization to emerge between the state and indigenous organizations.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

- AIOC** – *Autonomía Indígena Originario Campesino*. Translated as Indigenous Originary Peasant Autonomy.
- ASEP** – *Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez*. The name of the new 2010 “decolonial” education law. It is named after the founders of the first indigenous school in Bolivia in 1931.
- CIDOB** – *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia*. Translated as the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia.
- COMAMAQ** – *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu*. Translated as the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu. An important *Originario* indigenous organization.
- CSCIB** – *Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia*. Translated as the Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia. An important *Interculturales* indigenous organization.
- CSUTCB** – *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*. Translated as the United Syndicalist Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia. An important *Campesino* indigenous organization.
- LMAD** – *Ley Marco de Autonomías*. Translated as the Framework Law for Autonomies. The law that establishes the framework of indigenous autonomy in Bolivia.
- MAS** – *Movimiento al Socialismo*. Translated as Movement Towards Socialism. The political party of Evo Morales which has been in power in Bolivia since 2005.
- MNR** – *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*. Translated as the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement. The political party of Bolivia’s 1952 revolution.
- TCO** – *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen*. Translated as Lands of Communal Origin.
*Note: Following the 2009 constitution, TCOs were converted to become TIOCs, however, many people still use the term TCO. Therefore the terms TIOC and TCO are often used interchangeably.
- TIOC** – *Territorio Indígena Originario Campesino*. Translated as Indigenous Originary Peasant Territory. *Note: Following the 2009 constitution, TCOs were converted to become TIOCs, however, many people still use the term TCO. Therefore the terms TIOC and TCO are often used interchangeably.
- VMD** – *Vice-ministerio de descolonización*. Translated as the Vice-ministry of Decolonization.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to research project

Over eight years have passed since the historic 2005 election of Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president. Although indigenous peoples make up a very significant proportion of the population in Bolivia (see Appendix A), they have long been marginalized by the state.¹ The years preceding Morales' election were defined by massive protest and mobilization by indigenous social movements against the previous neoliberal governments and Morales' presidency was widely seen as a victory for the indigenous peoples of Bolivia. Following the election, the Morales administration announced many ambitious goals, one of the most prominent of them a promise to "decolonize" Bolivia and "refound it as a 'twenty-first-century intercultural, plurinational, socialist state'" (Kohl & Bresnahan, 2010, p.5). The central aim of this study is to explore the concept of "decolonization" as it appears both globally and within Bolivian social movements, and then examine closely how the Bolivian state is working towards the goal of "decolonization."

What will be demonstrated in this thesis is how the state is capable of converting the process of decolonization into projects that further solidify state control and even marginalize many of the same indigenous communities that demanded decolonization in the first place. The current decolonization of the state reimagines fundamental elements of the original demands for decolonization and promotes indigeneity in a new light, where indigenous values provide the symbolic and moral foundation for a strong centralized state. In this way, the state's discourse of decolonization now used to support a nationalist agenda that affirms state control over the extraction of natural resources in indigenous territories. Therefore, even though there is a strong state discourse in praise of decolonization and indigenous cultures and even though some indigenous groups stand to benefit from this political direction, the decolonization of the state does not address what

¹ According to the 2012 census only 44% of the population self-identifies as "indigenous," however, this is a controversial topic because the 2001 census indicated 64% self-identified as indigenous. Some have theorized as to why there is such a discrepancy and an important explaining factor could be that the methods and questions used for each census were different (Albó, 2013). Regardless, indigenous peoples make up a significant portion of Bolivia's population. For more detailed information on Bolivia's indigenous population see Appendix A.

for many is the fundamental purpose of decolonization: self-determination for indigenous peoples and greater shared decision making vis-à-vis the state.

In one sense, formal decolonization already occurred in Latin America in the early 1800s with the wars of liberation against Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule. However, the subjugation and marginalization of indigenous peoples in many Latin American countries (including Bolivia) persisted and often intensified in periods following the end of colonial rule (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010; Quijano, 2000). Indeed, indigenous peoples in Bolivia have continued to battle for freedom, rights and proper representation vis-à-vis the state even until today. References to the idea of “decolonization” by Bolivian indigenous social movements can be seen at least as far back as the 1970s, and looking outside Bolivia, the concept of decolonization has developed from first signifying the process of colonial powers leaving their former colonies (either peacefully or following a war for independence) towards becoming an important theoretical concept found in many academic circles. Decolonization relates closely to post-colonial studies and subaltern studies and also a new group of likeminded Latin American scholars have been termed as “decolonial” theorists (Grosfoguel, 2011). As will be seen, these recent theoretical understandings of decolonization center more on the revalorization indigenous cultures, languages and practice. In this context, encroaching globalization and the dominance of Western knowledge production are commonly targeted as the major “colonial” threats to be resisted.

Since the election of Morales in Bolivia in 2005, the concept of decolonization has been widely discussed and, as mentioned, even incorporated into official state discourse and policy. Since Morales’ election his political party has relied heavily upon a discourse and rhetoric that centres on indigenous identity (Canessa, 2012b), affording Morales and his party both political support and legitimacy among indigenous bases, at least until recently. The state’s use of the concept of “decolonization” can be seen as a part of this new hegemonic discourse of indigeneity. Decolonization is now a guiding principle in many of Bolivia’s public policies. For instance, Article 9 of the 2009 constitution states that decolonization is one of the “essential purposes and functions of the State” and the government has set up a Vice-Ministry of Decolonization and unit for decolonization within the Ministry of Justice. Furthermore, the 2010 education reform

law “Avelina Siñani-Elizardo Pérez” (ASEP) claims to incorporate principles of decolonization and to promote a “decolonial education” program that will foster the creation of Bolivia’s Plurinational State.

However, one problem with the current politicization of the concept of “decolonization” is that the term lacks precision, which has enabled it to be used for a variety of different political agendas. One of the central purposes of this thesis is to sort through the various perspectives on decolonization and make sense of what the government and different actors in Bolivia mean when they speak of decolonization. For instance, how does the conception of decolonization articulated by the state compare with understandings of decolonization found among indigenous organizations? Also, another important factor that must be considered is the unique involvement of the Bolivian state in the decolonization process and rhetoric. How is Bolivia’s process of decolonization affected by the prominent role played by the state? Considering how historical processes of decolonization were instances of revolt against the governing colonial powers, the top-down nature of the Bolivian state’s efforts to decolonize is a novel phenomenon. Furthermore, because the state-system originated in Europe, it can be viewed as a colonial creation and structure itself. As such, the very prospect of the state leading a process of decolonization may appear to some as contradictory (Author’s interview with a prominent Bolivian scholar, 2013 October 9, La Paz; Author’s interview with a prominent Bolivian scholar, 2013 October 24, La Paz).

This thesis engages with the various theories of decolonization and closely examines how the state is working towards decolonization. The thesis is based on primary research conducted in Bolivia as well as an examination of literature written on decolonization both globally and in Bolivia. Additionally, as a critical lens to help analyze the role and function of the state in the process, a number of critical theories of the state will be used. In particular, I will draw on the work of James Scott, and Michel Foucault, which examine in different ways how the state can function as an instrument of control. I will also draw on the theories of Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas on how the state’s autonomy is limited by its connections to capitalist production. Finally, many different theorists who write and explore concepts related to the idea of decolonization

will be drawn upon to reflect on the process of decolonization that the Bolivian state claims to promote.

1.2 Rationale, Research Questions and Objectives

The main purpose of this thesis is to analyze state-led efforts to decolonize Bolivia. While many states struggle with a history of colonialism and the idea of decolonization is discussed globally, few if any other governments have adopted the project of decolonization with such vigor in their rhetoric and policies. Outside of Bolivia, decolonization has become an important academic concept, but it is usually discussed only in theoretical terms, often referring to struggles against Western dominance in the global economy, academia or areas of cultural production. Currently, the concept of “decolonization” is not commonly used in relation to specific government policies and practices. On the other hand, when decolonization has been analyzed in practical situations it has generally been linked to contexts where groups are struggling against the state, such as the wars for independence from colonial rule in Africa and Asia that occurred mostly in the 1960s and 1970s. In the contemporary context, indigenous peoples in many parts of the world employ a discourse of decolonization in their efforts to fight discrimination and marginalization. However, what is novel about the case of Bolivia is that the state itself has adopted this discourse of decolonization and aims to implement a process of decolonization through government laws and policies.

The novelty of Bolivia’s state-led decolonization efforts ultimately begs the central question of my thesis: Can a state decolonize itself? However, since state involvement in this process could either be seen as a benefit or a limitation, I have worded this central research question more precisely as follows:

- To what extent and in what ways is Bolivia’s process of decolonization influenced by its state-led nature?

To help answer this central question, a number sub-questions will be considered.

- What does ‘decolonization’ mean in theory?
- How is the concept of decolonization used by the actors associated with the government’s decolonization policies in Bolivia?

- To what extent is there a discrepancy between the government's conceptions and practices of decolonization and other understandings of decolonization that may exist on the ground in Bolivia?
- To what extent is there a discrepancy between state discourse on decolonization and state actions to actually promote decolonization?

The goal of this study is to further the understanding of the decolonization process in Bolivia by analyzing in particular the current the role of the state. While this study aims to offer a new perspective on the current trajectories of Bolivian politics with regards to decolonization, it also asks important questions regarding the theoretical concept of decolonization and its relationship to the state. I hope that this new layer of research will contribute meaningfully to areas of study that engage with the concept of decolonization.

1.3 Methodology

I conducted primary research in the form of 19 semi-structured interviews in Bolivia from October 9th until November 30th, 2013, and again from January 14th until February 5th, 2014. Interviews were held with a variety of persons connected to Bolivia's decolonization process. First, four government officials working in the Vice Ministry of Decolonization (VMD) (or with past experience working in the VMD) were interviewed. Also, persons working in important indigenous civil society organizations, workers' unions, and NGOs were interviewed. Specifically, three persons with connections to the *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu – CONAMAQ)² were interviewed, as well as one important representative from the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia – CIDOB), the *Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia* (the Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia – CSCIB) and the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (United Syndicalist Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia – CSUTCB). In addition, one person working with the Bolivian NGO *Fundación Tierra*, located in La Paz, was interviewed. Finally, eight Bolivian academics, scholars or public figures with

² Recently, for complex political reasons that will be later explored, CONAMAQ and CIDOB have each split into two branches, with one branch supporting the government and the other branch distancing itself from government and working autonomously. My interviews were with the autonomous branches of both CONAMAQ and CIDOB.

important knowledge and perspectives on Bolivia's decolonization process were interviewed as well as one North America scholar that studies Bolivian politics.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish, except for one interview in English, and were normally held in the office of the person being interviewed or else in a convenient location, such as a café or restaurant, according to the preference of the interviewee. Following a semi-structured format, participants were asked a variety of specific questions relating to decolonization in Bolivia and an open conversation followed in order to ask any further follow-up questions or clarifications. I also collected a significant amount of secondary research material from Bolivian academic publishers, local news media, and relevant NGOs and civil society organizations. This material which is often unavailable outside of Bolivia significantly aided the research process and added to my bibliography of secondary research for the project.

1.4 Limitations

The research for this thesis took place the cities of La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz, Bolivia. While I lived in Bolivia for most almost a year in 2013 and 2014, I still consider this a short time to become connected with Bolivia's complex political landscape. However, many persons interviewed were very kind and welcoming, allowing me to have in depth interviews after relatively brief introductions. I am aware that my identity as a foreigner no doubt influenced the relationships that I formed and the context of my research, perhaps at times making it more difficult to move beyond superficial or rhetorical explanations and responses. However, being able to converse in Spanish without a translator helped to provide a more natural environment for discussion. While 19 interviews only provide small number of opinions, I believe that I was able to gather an appropriate cross-section of people for interviews who represent important perspectives on Bolivia's decolonization process. Also secondary research provides additional important information for my overall study.

1.5 Thesis Structure and Outline

This thesis is divided into 7 Chapters. Chapter 2 will examine and explain some important theories that will be engaged with throughout the paper. Since I focus on the state-led nature of Bolivia's decolonization process, critical theories on the state will be

explained at the start and then an overview of some important global perspectives of decolonization will be provided. Chapter 3 will provide a brief literature review on perspectives of decolonization in Bolivia and explain the need for the current study. Chapter 4 will provide a short historical context for current discussions on decolonization while Chapter 5 will further explain the contemporary context for the discussion of decolonization in Bolivia. In Chapter 6 I examine the views of decolonization found in the VMD and compare these interviews with those I had in some of Bolivia's important indigenous social organizations. Finally, in Chapter 7 I critically analyse the results from my interviews in order to draw final conclusions and implications that follow from the study.

CHAPTER TWO: CRITICAL THEORY OF THE STATE AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZATION

The central purpose of this thesis is to examine how the Bolivian state is working towards its alleged goal of decolonization and to explain and theorize how state involvement affects the process of decolonization. However, in order to begin this discussion, a theoretical framework for analyzing the state must be established as well as theoretical background for the concept of decolonization. Therefore, this chapter is divided into two sections. First, I will briefly explain a number of critical theories on the state, which will be later used to analyze Bolivia's state-led decolonization process. Second, I will give an overview of some important global perspectives on decolonization in order to demonstrate how the concept of decolonization has developed over time and how it has come to be used in global literature.

To start, the theories of James Scott and Michel Foucault on state power and administration will be examined as well as the theoretical debate between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas on the relation of the state to the forces of capitalist production. Each of these theorists provides a unique and important lens which will later be used in analyzing the processes occurring Bolivia's state-led decolonization process. The latter half of the chapter examines the work of many writers and outlines key understandings of the concept of decolonization. Important issues and debates surrounding 'decolonization' will be explained and it will also be illustrated how the concept of decolonization has developed over time.

2.1 Critical Theories of the State

The works of James Scott and Michel Foucault examine different aspects of state power and administration that relates in importance ways to Bolivia's decolonization process. James Scott's theories on the development of central state administration and Michel Foucault's theories on "governmentality," which examine the growth and spread of state administration, are important because the central goal of this study is to investigate the process of decolonization in Bolivia as it comes to be administered and implemented through state policies and ministries. Michel Foucault's theories on knowledge/power and discourse are importance to consider since the concept of

decolonization is heavily politicized in Bolivia and part of larger discourse of indigeneity that garners President Morales and the MAS party significant political legitimacy (Canessa, 2012b). After, the debate between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas on the relative autonomy of the state from capitalist production highlights ways in which the state can be restrained and incapable of revolutionary action due to its ties to capitalist production. Since decolonization often implies a radical political transformation, understanding the ways in which the state may be restrained and limited in its autonomy is relevant for our discussion. Scott (1998) demonstrates how the growth of state administration can hamper and disrupt the natural life of societies. Throughout history, many societies that were functioning through complex and seemingly unintelligible local systems (from the point of view of the outside planner) were required to change and simplify their structures in order to facilitate state planners and bureaucratic managers. He calls this the process of making societies “legible” for state bureaucrats and, in general, the process involves restructuring and standardizing local systems according to a logic that facilitates goals of the state, such as increased management and productivity or simplifying taxation. Scott (1998) looks in detail at a number of large-scale state projects to reorganize the life of communities, such as China’s disastrous Great Leap Forward or Soviet Russia’s collectivization project, which had horrific and unexpected outcomes. However, he also explains the more ordinary processes of early modern European statecraft, where bureaucratic control expanded over internal territories, and a number of more recent development schemes in the “third world” where state planning and administration restructured and re-organized societies. While increased state administration at times brought benefits for the population, it almost always changed and ruptured previously existing systems and instituted new restrictions and requirements that were felt in the community. For example, in order to satisfy the needs of simplifying state administration members of local communities were suddenly informed that they required a “property deed,” which was previously a foreign concept (Scott, 1998, p.63). Also, once made “legible,” communities became easier to control, manipulate and reorganize according to state plans and agendas.

What Scott’s (1998) analysis highlights is that increased state administration can also be seen as an “internally colonizing” process (p.81). While small communities

existing outside of the state structure can choose to organize themselves according to systems that favour local practices and values, when brought further under the control of the state a new and different logic of bureaucratic management is introduced. This can both infringe upon the functioning of former systems and also create standards that must be met to satisfy the state administrator, as local systems must be made “legible.” When considering the process of decolonization in Bolivia, it must be considered whether certain aspects of decolonization run contrary to the process of increased state administration. If this is the case, then and a high level of state involvement in the process of decolonization may bring these contradictions to the fore.

Michel Foucault’s writings have had an immeasurable influence in many areas of study; however, for our purposes here we will look at how he explains the linkages between power, discourse and knowledge, as well as his concept of governmentality. Foucault’s theories center on a unique understanding of power which focuses on its productive nature and its relationship to knowledge and discourse. Central to Foucault’s conception of power is the way in which discourse and power “...produce[s] reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1995, p.194). Power is seen to have tremendous influence on the production of knowledge. As Sara Mills (2003) states, “...rather than knowledge being the pure search after ‘truth,’ in fact, power operates in that processing of information which results in something being [or not being] labeled as a ‘fact’” (p.72). Power runs through the process of knowledge production in a society and is further constructed through public discourse which both reflects and further ingrains dominant ways of knowing. This understanding of power/knowledge is also very important for many theories of decolonization that will be examined towards the end of this chapter.

Because power is continually reinforced through public discourse and knowledge production, power can only be understood relationally. Rather than conceiving of power as a sort of commodity that can be localized in single position, Foucault emphasizes the way that power is supported by a complex web of relations that both produces and relies on the subjectivities it creates. Foucault states, “There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association” (1980: 93). Furthermore, because power depends on the

existence of supporting discourses that are accepted as truth, it “is employed and exercised through a net-like organization...individuals...are always in the positions of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power...The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle” (1980: 98). The importance of this idea for the study of Bolivia’s process of decolonization is that it highlights the ways in which power runs through discourse and is supported by it. A question that will be asked when later examining Bolivia’s decolonization process is: How is power working through the politicization of “decolonization” in Bolivia and privileging some understandings of decolonization over others?

Foucault’s concept of governmentality refers to the tactics governments use to set in place institutions and apparatuses of security, discipline and management towards their own population as a means of control (Foucault, 1991). Governmentality is central to the discussion of this study in the sense that, as Foucault (1991) claims, “[governmentality] is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not...” (p.103). It could be possible that the institutionalization of the decolonization process itself is explainable as an exercise of governmentality and control, since decolonization is now being re-located within the jurisdiction of the state. The theory of governmentality, which is critical of the expanding influence and management of the state, will be a crucial lens for interpreting the government’s role in the process of decolonization.

While the preceding critical theories of the state focused on state power, bureaucratization and administration, the following theories examine how the state itself is bound and limited by the forces of capitalist production. The extent to which the state is bound to capitalist forces and to ensuring the means of capitalist production may place restrictions on the capability of the state to truly decolonize itself. As a theoretical framework to explore this possibility, the classic debate on the ‘relative autonomy of the state from capital’ between Ralph Miliband (1972) and Nicos Poulantzas (1972) will be examined briefly here and engaged with later during analysis.

First, it should be explained that Poulantzas and Miliband were in agreement regarding an important idea: the autonomy of the state is limited by its function of ensuring the means of capitalist production. This means that the range of possible actions

that the state can perform is narrowed by the need to sustain a political situation that reproduces and ensures capitalist production. Where the two theorists differ is how they explain the nature of this limitation of the state's autonomy. While Poulantzas favors a structuralist view of the problem, Miliband emphasizes the role of agency. Poulantzas (1972) argues that ensuring capitalist production is an important structural purpose of the state itself; however, Miliband (1972) explains this function of the state by examining the social ties that are found between the bourgeois capitalists and the political elite. For my study it is relevant to ask: to what extent does the Bolivian state's function of ensuring the means of capitalist production influence the current decolonization process?

2.2 Global Perspectives on Decolonization

In this section we will examine important global perspectives on decolonization. This section will provide an overview of key theorists that discuss themes relating to decolonization. By examining these writers, important challenges and issues connected the process of decolonization will be drawn out, and this will be a useful basis of understanding for later examining the challenges and efforts of Bolivia's decolonization process. Moreover, it will be shown how the concept of decolonization expanded from originally being linked with processes of "formal decolonization" towards expanding into broader areas. The adoption of the term decolonization by Post-colonial studies and Subaltern studies has placed decolonization in a more theoretical realm, where decolonization often refers to processes of liberation from other forms of colonial domination than the direct imperial rule of a colony. When the Latin American 'decolonial scholars' are examined at the end, it will be seen how decolonization can now refer to efforts of reviving indigenous ways of life and resisting Eurocentrism and Western bias in academia and systems of knowledge production. The problems of current discussions on decolonization often center on the challenges of revalorizing "traditional" or "indigenous" cultures in the modern context that is dominated by global Western hegemony. As will be shown later, this broadening of the term of decolonization has important effects on Bolivia's process of decolonization.

It should be noted that, since the fields of post-colonial studies and subaltern studies are vast, the following is only a small overview of a very large body of literature. Yet, the scholars selected for this literature review are prominent and influential thinkers

who cover issues that relate closely to the dynamics of decolonization in Bolivia. Furthermore, the authors chosen display a spectrum of different themes and dimensions relating to decolonization, demonstrating the broadness of decolonization and how the concept has developed and come to be used in different ways. The final group of Latin American “decolonial scholars” were chosen due to their current influence in Bolivia.

The works of Frantz Fanon are foundational for studies of decolonization. A fervent supporter of Algeria’s war for independence from France, Fanon’s point of reference in his writings was the ‘formal’ processes of decolonization in Algeria from French rule. For Fanon (2004), the colonial context is defined by compartmentalization, where identities are reduced into a simple and opposed dichotomy. For example, while many different African nations and peoples existed, in the colonial context “the whites were used to putting all the “Negroes” in the same basket” (Fanon, 2004, p.153) and colonial identities simplified relations into a basic dichotomy of Whites/Blacks or the “colonizers” and the “colonized”. According to Fanon (2004), decolonization is the violent rupture that seeks to reverse and invert this basic relation so that “the last shall be first” (p.2). He states that “...decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. At whatever level we study it...decolonization is simply the replacing of a certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” (p.1). While Fanon is often considered controversial for his unabashed support of violence in contexts of anti-colonial struggle (Bhabha, 2004), his writings have had a profound influence on many scholars and he masterfully explains the political and psychological challenges of decolonization and nation building.

Some of his most interesting work is on the challenge of newly independent states building a national consciousness and national culture. The struggle for decolonization is seen to further engrain the sense of the colonial compartmentalization of identities and unify disparate indigenous groups against the common colonial enemy (Fanon, 2004). However, Fanon (2004) reminds us of how often after this struggle “The national front that drove back colonialism falls apart...” and “...crumbles into regionalisms” (p.106). Also, he states, “National Consciousness...will be in any case only an empty shell...the faults that we find in it are quite sufficient explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for race, and the tribe is preferred to the state” (p.97). The challenge for states to maintain unity,

cooperation and direction in the wake of decolonization is a central theme and concern for Fanon.

One major pitfall that Fanon addresses is the emergence of a “national bourgeoisie” and “intellectuals” who often interfere and corrupt the process of change and nation building following decolonization. He (2004) calls them the “Spoiled children of yesterday’s colonialism” (p.12) and explains how the bourgeoisie “...utilizes the aggressiveness of its class to grab the jobs previously held by foreigners” (p.103) and how “For the bourgeoisie, nationalization signifies very precisely the transfer into indigenous hands of privileges inherited from the colonial period” (p.100). Rather than working towards benefitting the nation as a whole, in many cases, the bourgeoisie resort to profiteering and narrow goals of personal gain or the privileging of particular tribe or region.

In light of the challenges that face newly independent states, Fanon (2004) speaks of the importance of “politicizing the masses” and emphasizes the need for citizens themselves to take up agency in pressing for revolutionary change. He states that,

To politicize the masses is not and cannot be to make a political speech. It means driving home to the masses that everything depends on them, that if we stagnate the fault is theirs, and that if we progress, they too are responsible...In order to achieve such things...we must, as we have already mentioned, decentralize to the utmost. The flow of ideas from the upper echelons to the rank and file and vice versa must be an unwavering principle... (p.138)

For Fanon, decolonization and the subsequent process of nation building must be driven by an active people and population who work to keep the government and leaders in check. Also, ideas and solutions involve the participation of the people. He states, “Nobody has a monopoly on truth, neither the leader nor the militant. The search for truth in local situations is the responsibility of the community” (2004: 139). Therefore, successful decolonization involves a continuing process of the masses pressing for revolutionary change and working towards increased participation and inclusion for all, “to make the experience of the nation, the experience of every citizen” (2004: 140).

Since its publication, the work of Fanon has influenced countless writers and activists. His understanding of the dichotomous and compartmentalized nature of colonial identities is something that many other authors have expanded upon. Also, his

work on the challenges of building a national consciousness are particularly relevant in today's context as many states, including Bolivia, struggle to create a sense of national unity while also valorizing the many different cultures and nations of which they are comprised. The issues he raises are essential to understanding processes of decolonization and will be relevant in later chapters that analyze Bolivia's process of decolonization.

While Fanon wrote in reference to 'formal decolonization' processes against imperial control, many subsequent writers began to examine the post-colonial context by looking at the ongoing effects of colonialism. Here we start to see the concept of decolonization come to be used in different ways. Edward Said is often seen as the father of postcolonial studies and is famous for his seminal work *Orientalism*. Drawing from a Foucauldian perspective on discourse and power relations, Said (1978) explains the socially constructed nature of the "Orient." Similar to the dichotomy of identities seen in Fanon's work, Said explains how the Orient and the Occident are divided into an inferior/superior relationship; however, Said (1978; 1997) explains how this relationship is continually reconstructed and sustained through public discourse. By Western hegemonic media, literature and avenues of knowledge consistently construing and representing 'the Orient' as a monolithic, mysterious and inferior entity, the "orient" becomes a tangible social construct. This construct of the Orient affects social relations, perceptions, understandings and ultimately sustains racism and the inferior status of "the orient." This process is mainly achieved and sustained through power relations influencing the production of knowledge. Since the West maintains a position of power and controls dominant sources of knowledge production and discourse (literature, entertainment, academia, media), stereotypes are continually observed, repeated and further ingrained (Said, 1978, 1997).

Said's theories in *Orientalism* build on the ideas of Foucault and the constitutive nature of power and discourse. As stereotypes are observed and reproduced in dominant discourse they become internalized and come to constitute identities and subjectivities. According to Said, the Orientalist mindset is so ingrained that it is, in fact, part of the West's own self-identity. The "West" or the "Occident" (which also becomes constructed and experienced as a monolithic entity) views the Orient as the "other" from which it draws distinction from in defining itself (Said 1997; 1978).

Much of what Said describes in “Orientalism” can arguably be seen in Bolivia as indigenous peoples often continue to be labeled and represented negatively as “Indios” (or Indians). While there are many indigenous cultures and peoples in Bolivia, for centuries they have been clumped together under the derogatory term “Indio” and still suffer from racism and the effects of negative stereotyping. For example, the internalization of this discourse can cause indigenous persons to feel inferior and to hide or even reject the indigenous elements of their identity. Therefore, a central challenge for decolonization today is to confront these negative stereotypes and racist perceptions. For example, Rosaleen Howard (2010) examines the symbolic significance of Morales’ election as president and his actions in revalorizing the identity of indigenous peoples in Bolivia. She claims that, despite attempts of many in the media to discredit and label Morales as a radical or as incompetent, Morales has succeeded in challenging the dominant discourses of Bolivia; at the time she wrote in 2010, she considered Morales to be an example of the “subaltern speaking” (Howard, 2010, p.194).

The presence of an indigenous person in a position of power, acting as president in Bolivia, can be seen as ‘decolonial’ as it challenges the colonial stereotypes that would represent indigenous persons as inferior subjects. Accordingly, the revalorization of indigenous practices, traditions and languages, which were once classified as “inferior,” is also widely recognized as ‘decolonial.’ For instance, African writer Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1994) stresses how “decolonizing the mind” involves reviving the use of traditional languages in order to create a genuine African culture that is free from the culture of the colonizer. Here we see an example of how decolonization has come to be connected to struggles against global Eurocentrism. Rather than focusing on political freedom, Wa Thiong’o’s concept of ‘decolonizing the mind’ focuses on literature, theatre, fiction and poetry, emphasizing the importance of recuperating indigenous African languages and culture in order to resist global imperialism. Thiong’o (1994) states, “...the biggest weapon...unleashed by imperialism is the culture bomb. The effect of the culture bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environments, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves” (p.3). He also states, “Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values which we

come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world” (p.15). Therefore, for Thiong’o, recuperating African languages is essential in restoring and revalorizing African indigenous identities and resisting current forms of imperialism and neo-colonialism that continue to operate largely due to a sustained cultural hegemony of European former colonial powers. As will be seen, the cultural and linguistic aspect of decolonization is very visible in Bolivia’s context. Reviving and revalorizing indigenous identities is often viewed as synonymous with the decolonization process and the language component of decolonization is also seen in many of Bolivia ‘decolonial’ projects, such as in the 2010 education law (discussed in chapter three).

However, while reviving indigenous cultures and identities has come to be recognized as a central component to decolonization, there are some who are critical of the pitfalls that can occur in this process. In some cases, efforts to revalorize ‘indigenous culture’ can further propagate essentialist representations of indigeneity and fossilize indigenous cultures in the past, as ancient and static societies (Povinelli, 2001; Bhabha, 1994). Seeking to understand the process of revalorizing indigenous traditions and practices in the modern context brings us towards the theoretical discussions about ‘cultural hybridity’ and ‘alternative modernities,’ both of which, as will be seen, relate closely to understanding Bolivia’s current decolonization process.

Homi K. Bhabha is perhaps the most famous postcolonial cultural theorist to emphasize the concept of “hybridity.” Bhabha (1994) states that thinking in terms of hybridity is a way to “...elude the politics of polarity...” (p.39) between, for example, “modern” and “traditional” cultures. Bhabha also highlights the dangers of representing cultures as “pure,” originary or primordial. As discussed earlier, the colonial context is marked by simplistic dichotomies, such as “the west/the orient” or “modern/primitive.” However, an important challenge is moving beyond these polemics that are created by essentialist and colonial perspectives. Weighing in on the discussion, Bhabha (1994) stresses “...the importance of the ‘hybrid’ moment of change. Here the transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translations, of elements that are *neither the One...nor the Other...but something else besides* which contests the terms and territories of both. This does not necessarily involve the formation of a new synthesis, but a negotiation between them *in medias res...*” (p.9). For Bhabha, there are serious

theoretical problems and also danger in considering identities and cultures as fixed, static or 'pure.' First of all, a strict conception and desire for a 'pure' culture can lead to atrocities and violence, such as the case of Serbian nationalism (Bhabha, 1994, p.5). But also, the notion of hybridity emphasizes the fluidity of cultures and how cultural purity is, in fact, a representational myth; rather, cultures are in constant motion and cultural development occurs through the negotiation of opposing identities.

By taking this perspective, Bhabha (1994) demonstrates how colonized peoples were not mere passive subjects under colonial control, but rather, in many instances, had the agency to appropriate, in new ways, elements of the "other" in the constant reconstruction of culture. By giving agency to colonial subjects in the past, Bhabha demonstrates how colonized and indigenous peoples are not part of static "traditional cultures" but have always been cultural producers. And, by emphasizing the hybrid nature of culture Bhabha seeks to provide a theoretical perspective on how indigenous cultures can interact and negotiate with modernity in the present. While Bhabha's writings are very theoretical, they offer important insight into the fluidity and complexity of cultural development and warn against the dangers of thinking in terms of "pure" cultures. Keeping this in mind will be important when examining Bolivia's context.

While the concept of cultural hybridity is one approach to dealing with the relationship between traditional cultures and modernity, some other writers address the situation by speaking of "alternative modernities." Here, instead of acting to reject "modernity" on the grounds that it is a colonial encroachment, Dilip Gaonkar (2001) states that "To think in terms of "alternative modernities" is to admit that modernity is inescapable..."(p.1) and that "...in the face of modernity one does not turn inward, one does not retreat; one moves sideways, one moves forward. All of this is creative adaptations" (p.22). The idea of "alternative modernities" suggests searching for creative ways to incorporate elements of modernity pragmatically in other cultural settings. In tackling this issue, both Gaonkar (2001) and Charles Taylor (2001) claim that various sets of convergences and divergences occur as "creative adaptations" are made by cultures negotiating the terms under which "modern" practices are adopted. While economic globalization and the spread of modern institutions and practices causes many convergences, and some interpret this as a trend towards global homogenization, theories

of alterative modernities would stress how at the same time cultures retain the ability to incorporate these institutions and processes in unique ways, making space for continued divergences and culturally diverse forms of modernity. Taylor (2001) challenges the notion that modernity is a particularly “Western” process, and rather imagines the modern situation as a global phenomenon to which cultures are increasing transitioning toward. He suggests that “...successful transition involves a people finding resources in their traditional culture which, modified and transposed, will enable them to take on the new practices” (p.183). Here, the goal should not be to reject modernity but rather to find culturally relevant ways to embrace the modern situation, which would lead to “alternative modernities,” in the plural sense (Taylor, 2001). Since ‘decolonization’ has come to involve revalorizing indigenous identity and cultures in a modern context, these theories on ‘hybridity’ and ‘alternative modernities’ are important for discussion and analysis.

Finally, the work of Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo will be reviewed. These writers are often grouped together as they share many common perspectives and are termed by some as Latin America’s leading ‘decolonial’ scholars (Grosfoguel, 2010; Interview with Author, 2014 January 29, Cochabamba) Being from Latin America and publishing much of their work in Spanish, these writers are often cited by Bolivian academics and public figures who speak of decolonization (Choque Canqui, 2011; Jiménez Quispe 2014). Also, I was recommended to read each of these scholars in a number of my interviews – which is itself an important indication of how understandings of decolonization in Bolivia have formed. Some who are critical specifically target Mignolo, Dussel and Quijano as having too much influence in shaping the discourse and ideas of decolonization in Bolivia (i.e. Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012; Portugal, 2011).

Anibal Quijano’s writings on the development of today’s modern/colonial capitalist global world-system are an important place to begin the discussion. Quijano (2000) locates the colonization of the Americas as the starting point for the development of the current modern/colonial world-system. He states, “...the colonization of America, its immediate consequences in the global market, and the formation of a new model of global power are a truly tremendous historical change...they affect not only Europe but

the entire globe” (p.534) According to Quijano (2000), colonialism, modernity and capitalism are all seen as having been mutually constitutive processes in the development of a new global system of power. The colonial labour system helped initiate the development of global capitalism as, for the first time, labour was “deliberately established and organized to produce commodities for the world market” (Quijano, 2000, p.535). However, following colonialism’s racial social classification system, the indigenous of America, as well as African slaves, were considered to be a part of “pre-capitalist” and “pre-modern” societies and therefore did not have the privilege of working as wage laborers in this global system, a right generally reserved for those of European origin. “...In this way, both race and the division of labor remained structurally linked and mutually reinforcing...” (Quijano, 2000, p.536). Europe rose as the center of this new colonial/modern world-system which has for centuries organized labour relations according to racial classifications and has brought forth the expansion of global markets and global capitalism. According to Walter Mignolo (2002), who explains Quijano, the “coloniality of power” is the driving force which allowed Europe become “modern” and a global hegemonic force. Also, the coloniality of power is alive and well in the current structure of globalization and works as a strategy of control and domination that can run through various institutional schemas yet bears the core features of classifying people according to a racial hierarchy.

This coloniality of power also extends into the realm of knowledge production, producing a hierarchical structure regarding the validity of different cultures. Acting as the center of the global market since the colonization of the Americas, Europe has controlled a hegemonic position of power that has allowed it to spread its Eurocentric view of modernity globally. Quijano (2000) argues that “Europe’s hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony” (p.540). From its position of global hegemonic dominance, Europe was able to spread its Eurocentric version of modernity, which places Europe as the main protagonist of modernity and the sole bearer of rationality and locates other societies on a linear path of development where the “non-European/pre-European...in time will be Europeanized or modernized” (Quijano, 2000, p.556). Eurocentric knowledge continues to pervade the

minds and perspectives of those globally and undermines colonized cultures and their knowledge. Quijano (2000) laments how many Latin American scholars and revolutionaries typically refer to Marx and or dominant Western thinkers to understand problems of their own society and claims that “it is time to learn to free ourselves from the Eurocentric mirror where our image is always, necessarily, distorted” (p.574).

Enrique Dussel shares and builds on much of Quijano’s work. He is most notable for his philosophy of liberation and ideas regarding decolonization and the emergence of “transmodern” cultures. While keeping a very similar perspective regarding the development of the capitalist modern/colonial world system, Dussel (2006) aims to separate European hegemony from its singular claim to ‘modernity’ and to look for cultural richness found in the “exteriority” of modernity. While Europe has functioned as the center of the world market and for centuries has sought to exclude, negate and scorn the cultures of the colonized peoples, these cultures have not been eradicated and must now be decolonized and revived. Dussel (2006) states,

The tendency to disparage those cultures, however, has allowed them to survive in silence, in the shadows, simultaneously scorned by their own modernized and westernized elites. That negated “exterior,” that alterity... indicates the existence of an unsuspected cultural richness... That cultural exteriority is not merely a substantive, uncontaminated, and eternal “identity.” It has been evolving in the face of Modernity itself... the strict concept of the “*trans*-modern” attempts to indicate the radical novelty of the irruption – as if from nothing – from the transformative exteriority of that which is always Distinct, those universal cultures in the process of development which assume the challenges of Modernity, and even European/North American Post-modernity, but which respond *from another place, another location.* (p.18)

Dussel seeks to dislodge the hegemony of European/North American culture by searching for cultural richness at the “exterior” of modernity, or the cultures which have been negated and undermined by centuries of colonialism.

In order for this “transmodern” project to occur, Dussel (2006) recommends a strategy: first of all, a “self-valorization” of one’s own culture needs to occur. This step is crucial as colonialism and the global nature of Eurocentric knowledge production has for centuries undermined indigenous and non-European cultures, making them out to be inferior. Second, “...traditional values ignored by Modernity should be a point of departure for an internal critique” (Dussel, 2006, p.25), meaning that there should be a

critical examination of the culture from those within the culture themselves. Third, further critical examination should come from those on the “borderlands,” who are within the culture yet also possess “biculturality” and exposure to modern cultures or another culture. Dussel (2006) states, “This represents the strategy for the growth and creativity of a renovated culture, which is not merely decolonized, but is moreover entirely new” (p.26). The hope of Dussel is to put forward a challenge against modernity which, rather than rising from Europe itself (as with post-modernity), comes from the richness of cultures forgotten or hereto undermined and existing at the exteriority of modernity.

Finally, Walter Mignolo’s work is primarily concerned with decolonizing the Eurocentric global production of knowledge and aims to dislodge this hegemony in order to make space for a new “loci of enunciation” to emerge and challenge the hegemonic culture of the West. Mignolo (2002) states,

Decolonizing the social sciences and philosophy means to produce, transform, and disseminate knowledge that is not dependent on the epistemology of North Atlantic modernity—the norms of the disciplines and the problems of the North Atlantic—but that, on the contrary, responds to the need of the colonial differences. Colonial expansion was also the colonial expansion of forms of knowledge, even when such knowledges were critical to colonialism from within colonialism itself (like Bartolome de las Casas) or to modernity from modernity itself (like Nietzsche). A critique of Christianity by an Islamic philosopher would be a project significantly different from Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity. (p.80)

Mignolo’s concern is that colonized cultures often develop an “epistemic dependency” where their knowledge stems from Western based social sciences and philosophy rather than developing from their own location and environment. In order to challenge this dependency Mignolo (2002) states, “...it is urgently necessary to think and produce knowledge from the colonial difference” (p.85). However, the emergence of global capitalism, which is the current ‘global design’ that is gaining dominance, is both consolidating power and acting to sideline and suppress other cultures, epistemologies and ways of life. Dissatisfied with (neo)liberal and (neo)marxist macro-narratives that originate in the West and underpin current dominant political trends and thinking, both for and against globalization, Mignolo states in an interview,

...my point is that events and political processes that attempt to counter the control of the State or of global forces are in need of macro-narratives from the perspective of coloniality. These macronarratives would enable the interpretation of processes and events in a macro-narrative (theory or cosmology) underlining

both the act of protest, the creative energy of subaltern events and processes to create a more just and equal society. (Delgado & Rolando, 2000, p.9)

In order to develop these other macro-narratives and to challenge the hegemony of Western knowledge production and global capitalism, there needs to be a revalorization of cultures that exist on the “exteriority” of modernity (similar to Dussel) or in the “border areas” (Mignolo, 2002) between modern and traditional cultures that are undermined and discounted by modern Western knowledge and epistemology.

2.3 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to first explain some important critical theories of the state and then to give an overview of global perspectives on decolonization. The work of Scott demonstrated how increased bureaucratization and state-planning can place restrictions and limit the freedom of local communities. Foucault explains the important connections between power, discourse and knowledge and with his concept of “governmentality” demonstrates the expanding control of the state in managing the lives of citizens. Finally, Miliband and Poulantzas discuss ways in which the autonomy of the state is limited by forces of capitalist production.

The latter half of the chapter gave an overview of the development of the concept of decolonization and drew out important themes that current discussions of decolonization often encompass. While originally decolonization was linked to processes of “formal decolonization,” decolonization is now often linked with much broader processes. For example, decolonization today often centers on the issue of revalorizing “indigenous” or “traditional” cultures that have been (or still are) marginalized by colonialism or neo-colonial practices. Revalorizing these identities and cultures normally involves combating racism and negative stereotypes and recuperating the use of traditional practices and languages. The concepts of “hybridity” and “alternative modernities” can aid in our understanding of how the “modern” and “traditional” elements of culture can relate in the contemporary context. However, it should be noted, not all indigenous people or groups in Bolivia accept the idea of hybridity or alternative modernities. Some call for a total rejection of modernity and view mixing and hybridizations between cultures as negative (e.g. Quispe Huanca, 2010). Finally, the Latin American ‘decolonial’ scholars tend to view modernity as part of a global world-

system which colonialism and the spread of capitalism had a hand in creating. Europe and North America continue as the hegemonic leaders of this global system and exert their power in variety of ways – from economics to controlling systems of global knowledge production – and continue to marginalize other knowledges and ways of life. Decolonization in this context refers to revalorizing indigenous identities, cultures and epistemologies in order to challenge and confront the coloniality of Western epistemological and cultural hegemony.

As will be shown, Bolivia's process of decolonization is currently wrestling with many of the challenges of decolonization described in this chapter. However, what will be later demonstrated is how different sectors emphasize different elements of decolonization. While the Bolivian state has adopted the project of decolonization, it imagines decolonization that in a way that is compatible with other state interests. The flexibility of the term decolonization, as seen above, allows the government to stress elements of decolonization that fit with its overall agenda, which includes strengthening central state authority around the themes of indigenous identity and culture while continuing to expand the exploitation of natural resources, even when they are in indigenous territories. However, the dominant conception of decolonization originally demanded by indigenous peoples, and that continues to be demanded by many indigenous organizations critical of the government (e.g. CONAMAQ, CIDOB), runs contrary to state interests and centers on the issues of political self-determination, recovering indigenous territories and increasing political representation and decision making authority vis-à-vis the state.

Many indigenous organizations and communities are frustrated and dissatisfied because the demands and expectations they had associated with the process of decolonization are not being addressed. Meanwhile, the government, along with some indigenous sectors, is promoting a new version of decolonization that fits with state interests. What this ultimately demonstrates is the ability of the state to co-opt and condition the demands of social movements, such as decolonization, and convert them into projects that further state interests and centralized control and silence the demands that are disruptive to the state agenda. This could be termed as a “colonial decolonization” since the current state trajectory of decolonization has the effect of

excluding and marginalizing many indigenous organizations and perpetuating a subaltern status of many peoples, cultures and nations.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE ON DECOLONIZATION IN BOLIVIA

This chapter briefly explains important views of Bolivia's decolonization process and demonstrates the need for the current study on the effects of the Bolivian state on the process of decolonization. As will be seen, there are many different perspectives on decolonization in Bolivia. While some present a view of decolonization that calls for a radical break with European cultural influences, others claim that decolonization should instead confront the colonial attitude that negates the "other" and creates an "inferior/superior" dichotomy. For many, the need to revalorize and recuperate indigenous culture, identity and language is a major emphasis, especially in the area of education. While the government developed a new education law in 2009 that claims to be founded on decolonizing principles, many highlight the challenges of effectively implementing this new 'decolonial education.' However, others point to the need for decolonization to expand into political, social and economic areas and are critical of the government's limited focus in the realms of education, language and culture. Some even blame post-colonial theorists for influencing the current discourse of decolonization towards a more cultural focus and numerous criticisms are leveled at the government's lack of progress in decolonizing political and economic policy areas.

This section will describe only a small portion of the many opinions and perspectives in current debates surrounding decolonization in Bolivia, but it aims to include representatives of the most important positions in the debate. As far as I am aware, there is no other study which analyzes the state's effects on decolonization.

3.1 Current Perspectives on Decolonization in Bolivia

Felipe Quispe Huanca best represents the important yet relatively small group of those who view decolonization as a radical break and complete separation from the European influenced White/*Mestizo* (*Mestizo* is the term for those who are a mixed race between indigenous and the European colonizers) culture in Bolivia. A political revolutionary since the 1970s, Quispe Huanca, also known as 'El Mallku,' is a prominent indigenous intellectual and political leader in Bolivia. He is famous for his discourse of the "two Bolivias," one for the "indios" (Indians) and one for the "*q'aras*" (Aymara for

those with white skin). More recently Quispe Huanca played a major role as the leader of the powerful *campesino*³ indigenous organization *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (Unique Syndicalist Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia – CSUTCB) in the late 1990s and early 2000s and instigated many of the revolts during Bolivia’s neoliberal era that eventually brought about the forced removal the two presidents (Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada and Carlos Mesa Gisbert) preceding Evo Morales (Quispe Huanca, 2013). Quispe Huanca (2013) has stated, “We are Aymaras, but we are not Bolivians, Bolivia is for the colonial *q’aras*. Our fight is for a nation and for our own state, without torturers or victims, without oppressors or oppressed, and living in equal conditions of life” (p.19, my translation). For Quispe Huanca, the differences between “indios” and “*q’aras*” cannot be overcome through cooperation. He claims elsewhere that *Indios* and *q’aras* are like “water and oil” and that even if they meet in heaven or in hell there would be a war between them (Quispe Huanca, 2010, p.202-203, my translation). Furthermore, he does not view mestizos or cultural mixing favorably, stating, for instance, “What happens, for example, when a donkey crosses with a horse? A mule is produced, and those are the *Mestizos*” (2010: p.200, my translation). Quispe Huanca represents an important, yet minority perspective on decolonization that wishes to return to indigenous culture and resist foreign intrusions. Quispe Huanca (2010) begrudges the use of the colonial Spanish language and Catholic religion and is very critical of Evo Morales who he criticizes for working closely with *q’aras* and mestizos, such as the Vice-president Alvaro García Linera.

However, others are critical of views and approaches that essentialize and pit “indigenous” and “White/Mestizo” identities against each other. In her book on decolonization, Alison Spedding Pallet (2011), who is originally from the UK but has lived for decades in Bolivia, examines decolonization as a foreign academic concept connected to post-colonial studies and then looks at how the term is used in Bolivia. She is particularly critical of the use of essentialisms in Bolivia that radically pit “indigenous” groups against “occidental” groups. She states,

To decolonize is NOT simply putting colonialism in reverse, which is to say, to continue being “indigenous” and eternally differentiated from the “occidentals,”

³ The term “campesino” or “Peasant” refers to a particular indigenous identity and sector in Bolivia that will be explained later on.

only placing the “indigenous” above and the “occidentals” below (or totally outside)...For me, to decolonize represents the search for forms of thinking that effectively dethrone the colonial process and the categories that result from its prominent position. (2011: p.104, my translation)

For her *part, she attempts to describe a possible ‘decolonial’ approach to Andean history that focuses on the importance of teaching pre-colonial history, values and ideas in Bolivia’s education system. Along similar lines, José Luis Saavedra (2011) claims, “To oppose the elements...[like] the Virgin [Mary] is an occidental practice, an occidental way to think. If I affirm one and negate the other it is the classic occidental dichotomy, when in reality, in the Andes, in Quecha and Aymara, we think in terms of complementarity” (p.41). Here we see decolonization presented in way that aims to move beyond the colonial categories of “superior/inferior,” similar to Fanon’s (2004) description of colonialism’s “compartmentalized” world, and the Andean conception of complementarity is utilized in this direction.

For many, decolonization is especially important in the area of education and Bolivia’s 2010 education law (Avelina Siñani-Elizardo Pérez – ASEP) claims to be based on the principles of decolonization. Roberto Choque Canqui (2011) stresses the importance of revalorizing and reclaiming indigenous identities, histories, worldviews, and languages in order that persons know and feel proud of their own culture. In addressing this, an important task is to restructure the education system which has long subjugated indigenous history, heroes, values and languages. However, finding educators that are able to overcome a colonial mentality is seen as a particular challenge because most teachers have been brought up in an education system that has systematically devalued indigenous practices (Choque, 2011, p.58). Like many in Bolivia, Choque Canqui (2011) cites the work of Mignolo and Quijano to explain how coloniality still pervades state structures and devalues indigenous knowledges and practices and, similar to Thiong’o , he stresses need to recover the use of indigenous languages and knowledge of indigenous history in order to strengthen indigenous identity and cultural self-esteem.

Luz Jiménez Quispe (2014) explains Quijano’s concept of the “coloniality of power” and Mignolo’s ideas concerning “border thinking” to demonstrate how indigenous knowledges and practices have been (and continue to be) suppressed by

structures and mindsets that give preference to Western knowledge. However, she claims that ASEP was "...written through a bottom-up process based on the Indigenous vision and participation, thereby institutionalizing the decolonization that had started decades ago" (2014: p.181). She explains how "The ASEP law is based on three pillars: Decolonization, Community participation and productivity. It supports intracultural, intercultural, and multilingual education" (p.181). While the ASEP law is seen as a major improvement, since, unlike previous educational reforms, it was created through a bottom-up approach, she still raises important concerns. For example, Jiménez Quispe (2014) states that

Since Bolivia developed new policies based on decolonization, and government offices gained a large indigenous presence, a substantial change in power and racist practice was expected. The reality today does not reflect that hope, however, because Andean hegemony has been consolidating, keeping people from other cultures at a disadvantage, particularly Indigenous peoples from the Amazon region. (p.183)

According to Jiménez Quispe (2014), originally, Bolivia's indigenous movements had pushed for cultural diversity; however, currently there is a consolidation of Andean hegemony. As such, she states "...in this context, teachers are involved in multiple Indigenous discourses about what a *new* type of education means" (p.183) and she also notes how many teachers (who are the ones that will actually put education policies into practice) still support previous educational norms and approaches, which is a major challenge.

Anders Burman (2012) illuminates the complexity of decolonizing higher education by examining the departures between Western logo-centric knowledge and epistemology versus indigenous relational and experiential knowledge and epistemology. He argues that, in the end, many of the universities and projects that claim to "decolonize" the academic realm and knowledge production in Bolivia simultaneously operate in ways that sideline traditional indigenous epistemological approaches to knowledge in favor of Western logo-centric epistemologies of knowledge. The main issue here is not that indigenous peoples should never approach education with a logo-centric epistemology that resembles Western practices; rather, what is concerning is that even in projects geared towards decolonizing the education system there can be a hegemony which sidelines other epistemologies and, according to Burman, western logo-

centrism continues to take precedence over relational and experiential epistemologies that most resemble traditional Andean culture. In the end, he asks this central question,

...if indigenous epistemologies are disregarded or simply ignored in the very practice that expressly claims at doing away with the epistemological disequilibrium of the present colonial world-order – is there not a risk that the decolonization project ends up buttressing epistemological asymmetries instead of undermining and challenging them? (Burman, 2012, p.114)

Burman's point here, as well as Jimena Quispe's concern with the hegemony of Andean indigenous peoples within the government, demonstrates how even actions claiming to be 'decolonial' can take forms that marginalize some voices while giving preference and hegemony to others.

However, while education takes a central place in Bolivia's process of decolonization, decolonization is also important in other political, social and economic areas. José Luis Saavedra (2011) claims that decolonization is "much easier [in the areas of] education and culture" than, for example, the area of economics (p.52, my translation). For Saavedra, decolonization needs to bring about a restructuring of Bolivia's capitalist economy and Saavedra points to the structure of the *ayllus* and *markas* (the rural communal system of production and social life in highland Bolivia) for the principles of a new system (interestingly – another example of Andean hegemony). He states, "here we have an economic, territorial and political strength, which is the *ayllu* and we need to think about the economy from the perspective of the *ayllu*, that is decolonization...if we do not think in the *ayllu* there will be no lasting decolonization" (p.52). However, Nicole Fabricant's study (2013) challenges the rhetoric of CONAMAQ, which often puts forwards a similar demand for Bolivia to restructure the economy towards a vision of the *ayllu*, claiming that the *ayllu* system could not present a possible economic alternative that would be able to sustain and provide for Bolivia's large urban populations.

At the time of Morales' election there was considerable hope for decolonization in Bolivia, with some arguing that merely having an indigenous president was decolonizing as, for the first time in Bolivia, an indigenous person was in a position of power (Howard, 2010). However, after 8 years of Morales' presidency, many are disappointed. For

example, in the 2013 edition of an annual journal created in the city of El Alto⁴, which was titled “False Decolonization: after seven years why has Bolivia not changed?” Pablo Mamani Ramirez (2013a) states, “...the false decolonization is defined by a radical discourse and reformist practices...[the state] says that it is indigenous, but it is anti-indigenous...talks of decolonization but reproduces the colonial state...what it says it knows will not be reality. That is the rule of this new regimen of power – talk and talk without doing anything that it says...” (p.7, my translation). Later he concludes that “In sum, in the seven years of the MAS government, those that have really won are the groups of power such as the agro-industrialists of Santa Cruz, the transnational oil companies and miners and a small group of those from an indigenous origin (though they are still subordinated to big capital) even though this is “their” government” (Mamani Ramirez, 2013b, p.64, my translation). According to Mamani Ramirez, the MAS party has not addressed or “decolonized” Bolivia’s structure of power relations and has even supported the elite agro-industrialists and transnational corporations and, while there is a small group of indigenous persons rising in economic wealth, the basic structure of the government and the situation for the majority of indigenous peoples in Bolivia has stayed the same.

Pedro Portugal (2011; 2013), a prominent intellectual and journalist argues that the government has taken the demands for decolonization and converted them into a depoliticized and culturist expression that is based on concepts borrowed from post-colonial schools of thought originating outside Bolivia. He argues that the practical issues of decolonization relating to autonomy and self-determination are passed over while the government continues to speak of decolonization by emphasizing the need to revalorize indigenous culture and recover cultural traditions. For Portugal (2013) the influence of post-colonial studies has corrupted the original sense of decolonization which was concrete, political and related to historical processes of those who were subjugated regaining power and self-government, such as Algeria gaining independence from France or what I have termed so far as ‘formal decolonization.’ Portugal (2013) argues that the post-modern and post-colonial conceptions of decolonization refer more to problems that

⁴ El Alto is a large city surrounding the suburbs of La Paz which has a predominantly indigenous population.

exist in a post-colonial context, while Bolivia is still in a colonial context. Portugal (2011) specifically takes issue with the relevance of the work of Mignolo and Dussel for Bolivia's context. Similarly, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) also criticizes how post-colonial theorists such as Mignolo and Quijano influence the current discourse of decolonization in Bolivia. Portugal (2011) concludes that,

The post-colonial approximation is not legitimate or adequate to solve the problem of decolonization in Bolivia... It is not a current of thought that came from the fight of the colonized... decolonization should be understood and as the political act of achieving self-determination for the colonized peoples... decolonization implies, then, the debate over the form of the state and the contemporary viability of Tawantinsuyu and of Qullasuyu in the forms of states. (p.92, my translation)

For Portugal (2011) the self-determination of formerly colonized peoples is the fundamental condition for decolonization and post-colonial versions of decolonization that focus on recovering cultural traditions and indigenous languages are "depoliticized" and not sufficient in challenging state power for the goal of self-determination.

However, Portugal's perspective (2011) is also critical of pluralist visions for decolonization and calls for a unified and national vision of Tawantinsuyu⁵. He states,

The current politics, founded in post-colonial ideas, advocate the dispersion of indigenous autonomy in 36 supposed indigenous nations... [However] we understand that decolonization is to continue on the path of integration and unity in the form of the "society of the Inkas" which the Spanish found and destructured with the invasion initiated in 1532. This process of integration and unity should continue, creatively, taking into account the historical reality, which is the existence of a Bolivian Nation. Decolonization is, then, the creation of a new national identity founded in the historical rights of Tawantinsuyu.

(p.93, my translation)

Here we see a nationalist vision for decolonization that is critical of the cultural focus of decolonization taken by the Bolivia state. However, as will be described in detail in the following chapters, this proposal for a nationalist vision for decolonization that is based on "integration and unity" runs contrary with other indigenous leaders who support a vision of decolonization based on pluralism, regional indigenous autonomies and a system of "plurinationalism."

⁵ Tawantinsuyu is the Quechua name for Inca Empire which ruled in the area of Bolivia at the time of the Spanish invasion in 1532.

3.2 Conclusions

What has been demonstrated in this brief literature review is only a small portion of the many current opinions and perspectives on decolonization in Bolivia. However, what is already noticeable is how broad the concept of decolonization has become, where different groups focus on different areas of decolonization and offer competing visions and definitions of what the term should imply. Considering this lack of clarity, a study examining how the concept of decolonization is understood and utilized by the state compared to how it is understood and utilized by key indigenous sectors would add much to the clarity of the debate. Furthermore, no study that I am aware of specifically addresses how the state's adoption of the project of decolonization has shaped its meaning and direction. This study intends to fill this gap in the literature.

What will be demonstrated is how the state has taken on the project of decolonization in ways that are compatible with its other key interests and overall agenda, which is to centralize state control and sustain the means of capitalist production, especially in the area of exploiting natural resources. In order to achieve these state goals, the government interprets decolonization as a nationalist project, where the recuperation of indigenous values and culture is intended to provide the moral foundation for a strengthened indigenous nation-state. However, the state's displays and demonstrations of indigenous culture are often done without the cooperation of indigenous communities themselves, and therefore often appear as top-down state orchestrations of an imagined national pan-indigenous culture. Furthermore, by strengthening the state's centralized authority the many indigenous groups calling for decolonization as a movement towards a pluralist system that provides territorial self-determination continue to be marginalized.

CHAPTER FOUR: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In order to discuss decolonization in Bolivia it is important first give a short review of Bolivia's history of colonialism as well as trace important the events in recent decades when demands for decolonization began to surface. Historically, the indigenous peoples of Bolivia have suffered for centuries at the hands of both colonial rulers and the *Criollo* (Bolivians of Spanish descent) leaders that assumed control after independence from Spain in 1825. In this past century alone Bolivia has experienced numerous economic booms and busts, costly wars and revolutions, military dictatorships, intense neoliberal economic restructuring and recently the rise of social protest and turmoil which led up to the election of Evo Morales in 2005. This chapter will briefly review important sections from this history that relate to the current process of decolonization, ending at the time of Morales' election when social movements were demanding decolonization and a new constitution. While decolonization can now be connected to many different political agendas, I argue that the dominant demands for decolonization emerging at the time of Morales' election can be closely associated with the widespread demands for a new constitution. Demands for the constitution were accompanied by decolonial discourse and the constitution was meant to address the neocolonial structures of the state as well as many long-standing demands from indigenous groups for autonomy, self-determination and territorial control.

4.1 Bolivia's Long History of Colonialism and Processes Leading to Current Demands for Decolonization

Before the Spanish invasion in 1532 many sophisticated Andean civilizations had ruled for centuries in the region now called Bolivia. While the most famous of these was the Inca civilization, which was eventually defeated by Spain, prior to their rule was the Aymara civilization and before that the Tiwanaku civilization (Kohl & Farthing, 2006). When the Spanish invaded, the Incas controlled of a vast territory and ruled an empire of over 10 million people. However, the Inca leaders, who were divided at the time of the Spanish invasion, succumbed to the Spanish forces and Spain seized control of the territory and population. A few years after the Spanish defeat of the Incas, large deposits of silver were discovered in the "Cerro Rico" mountain in Potosí. In the end, this

mountain alone up provided the Spanish crown with "...more than half of [the] world production of silver and gold from the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries" (Kohl & Farthing, 2006, p.37). However, the brutal conditions for forced indigenous workers in the mines, combined with the spread of European diseases resulted in the death of 75 per cent of the population within forty years of the conquest (Kohl & Farthing, 2006, p.37). In order to supply the needs for workers in the mines, the Spanish set up large agricultural estates called *haciendas* and forced many indigenous peoples into institutionalized systems of bonded labour. However, while the Spanish forced many indigenous peoples into slave labour and greatly disrupted the existing structures and systems of production, the *ayllus* – indigenous kinship structures and productive units – were not entirely dismantled and persist even until today (Kohl & Farthing, 2006). In sum, Benjamin Kohl and Linda Farthing (2006) claim that "For over 250 years of Colonial rule, the Spaniards taxed the indigenous population, stole their lands and coerced them to work in mines, textile workshops or agriculture plantations" (p.38).

In 1825, following the wars for independence from Spain, Bolivia was founded as its own state as it broke apart from the territory of Alto Peru for complex political reasons. Unfortunately, the 19th and early 20th century republican leaders did not improve the situation for Bolivia's indigenous population and indigenous peoples tended to have almost no political rights and were not even allowed to enter and walk in La Paz's downtown public plazas until after the revolution of 1952 (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010). The 1874 "disentitlement law" dissolved indigenous the communal lands and subdivided them (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010) and this "paved the way for massive expropriation of Indian lands and the creation of the *Latifundio* system, in which Indians served as labor for white or *mestizo* landowners" (Postero, 2007, p.3-4). Furthermore, Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) notes the explicitly racist nature of the "liberal oligarchy" that took power at the turn of the 20th century and highlights quotes from a number of leaders who proclaimed the inevitable extinction of the "racially inferior" Indians (p.86-88).

During the leadership of the "liberal oligarchy" in the first few decades of the 20th century, James Malloy (1970) explains how "two Bolivias" began to emerge with "two increasingly differentiated socio-economic systems" (p.25). One part of Bolivia's economy centered on the extraction of tin, where a staggering monopoly was formed

consisting of three principle “tin barons” that received the majority of the benefits, while the other part of Bolivia’s economy was located in rural areas and focused on subsistence or low-level commercial agriculture (p.25). By the end of the 1920s both of these systems were extremely strained: the semi-feudal *latifundio* agricultural system, based on the appropriation of communal lands and exploitative labour control but minimal capital investment, was running out of fertile land and communities to penetrate into. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the externally dependent tin industry was dealt a devastating blow by the depression of world markets as well as a depletion of resource (Malloy, 1970). It was precisely at this precarious time that Bolivia entered into the devastating Chaco War with Paraguay (1932-1935).

Malloy indicates that economic stagnation and the defeat in the Chaco war were both significant factors in establishing the preconditions for the 1952 revolution in Bolivia. Following the Chaco War, the old elite began to struggle to maintain control of a declining political and economic situation and were challenged by new group of young educated veterans of the Chaco war who created the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (National Revolutionary Movement – MNR) political party. At the same time, indigenous peasants and labour unions – whose members had military experience from the Chaco War – were revolting and gaining importance on the political landscape. Between 1935 and 1952 there were five successful coups and many violent encounters between the army and peasant-labour groups. There was also brief civil war in 1949 (Malloy, 1970). Recognizing the power of the indigenous masses, the MNR eventually linked up with indigenous labour movements and in April, 1952 a massive three day revolt lead to the MNR seizing control of the state.

The 1952 revolution greatly changed the Bolivian state and brought about many advances for the indigenous peoples in Bolivia and at the same time enshrined a new “*campesino*” indigenous identity (Malloy, 1970; Postero, 2007). Most notably, the 1952 revolution initiated an agrarian reform to address the unjust *latifundio* system and portioned off small individual land titles to the rural indigenous/*campesino* masses. Also, voting rights were extended to indigenous citizens. However, while the MNR-controlled state engaged with the rural indigenous masses for the first time, Malloy (1970) argues that for many within the MNR this alliance was primarily tactical in order to seize state

control. Also the MNR related to worker and indigenous groups through union mediation and this corporatist relationship brought these groups significantly under state control (Malloy, 1970; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010). Finally, it is important to note that rather than affirming the ethnic identity of Bolivia's indigenous groups in the process, the MNR classified all indigenous peoples as "*campesinos*" ('peasant' workers) and thus instilled a new classed based identity that better aligned with the MNR interests and ideology. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) states, "...the MNR tried to turn the Indian movement into a '*campesino* movement;' they set up structures for co-optation and union control to convert the rural masses" (p.129, my translation). The continued influence of the 1952 revolution cannot be underestimated. The *campesino*/peasant class-based identity is still held onto strongly by many of Bolivia's current indigenous peoples.

While many significant changes were made following the revolution, the divided nature of the MNR itself as well as a stagnant and failing economy caused the MNR government to eventually crumble and a coup led by General Barrientos in 1964 reinitiated military rule in Bolivia. From 1964 and until 1982 military-led governments controlled Bolivia and indigenous peoples suffered under these undemocratic and often brutal dictatorships. Also, during this time the wealth and political power of the *Cruceño* (those from Bolivia's eastern Santa Cruz region) agricultural and industrial elites grew substantially (Eaton, 2007; Kohl & Farthing, 2006). Kent Eaton (2007) claims that a "pro-Santa Cruz bias" dominated the investment decisions of the national government for decades, especially during the rule of the dictator Hugo Banzer (1971-1978) who hailed from Santa Cruz himself.

During these same years, indigenous movements in the Western Altiplano began to grow and become more vocal. Towards the end of the 1960s a younger generation of Aymaras living in La Paz and the Altiplano began what is called the *Katarista* movement (named after Tupaj Katari, the indigenous leader who led an important rebellion against the Spanish colonial rulers at the end of the 18th century). Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) claims that "...[the *Kataristas*] perceived the continuation of the dominant oligarchical ideology. Even though the Indians were officially called "free and equal" citizens, in practice they were excluded and marginalized...[*Kataristas*] defended their own culture and...vehemently refused to be manipulated by the union apparatus..."(p.179, my

translation). In 1973 the *Kataristas* released a political manifesto titled “the Tiwanaku Manifesto” which boldly accused the paternalism of the government, describing the indigenous peoples as being “foreigners in our own country” (p.183, my translation). The *Katarista* movement adopted a double discourse that emphasized how *campesinos* were both an exploited class as well as repressed culture and nation and greatly shaped the direction and ideology of Bolivia’s workers and *campesino* unions towards demanding a reaffirmation of cultural difference (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010; Tapia 2011). In the following decades and until today, *Katarismo* has had a tremendous influence in Bolivia, criticizing the “internal colonialism” of the state and demanding indigenous autonomy and the revalorization and reaffirmation of Bolivia’s indigenous cultures and nations (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010). *Katarismo* can be seen as one of the principle origins of demands for decolonization in Bolivia.

Following the period of military dictatorships, Bolivia shifted into a neoliberal period which also saw the rise of numerous social movements (mainly indigenous) that fiercely protested the neoliberal policies. Eventually, these protests led to the election of Evo Morales. In the wake of a terrible economic crisis and severe hyperinflation in the mid-1980s, Bolivia adopted dramatic economic structural adjustment policies and programs which initiated almost two decades of neoliberal hegemony. Kolh and Farthing (2006) explain that “this policy orientation included ‘free’ trade, privatization, opening national markets and resources to international capital, and instituting floating rather than fixed exchange rates” (p.61). Bolivia’s neoliberal turn had dire consequences, especially in poor indigenous sectors, and over the decades fierce protests mounted leading up to Morales’ election. However, Nancy Postero (2007) argues that the massive protests were “...not just a response to increased poverty under neoliberalism” (p.5) but were also connected to the new “regime of citizenship” that began in the neoliberal area with a number of important social and legal reforms that occurred in the 1990s and altered the position of Bolivia’s indigenous peoples. While there is not sufficient space to explain the processes of this period in detail, what is important for this study is to trace the development of certain social movements and demands which can be connected to the theme of decolonization.

While the *Katarismo* political movement, mentioned above, provides one historical line towards the demands for decolonization, the mobilization of indigenous groups in Bolivia's lowlands provides another. In the late 1980s and throughout the 90s the indigenous groups from the eastern lowlands and Amazonian regions, who typically refer to themselves as *indigenas*, began to unify and organize in demand of cultural recognition and territorial rights from the state. The historic "March for Dignity, Land and Territory" in 1990, which began in Trinidad, the capital of the department of Beni in the Amazon, and ended in the highlands in La Paz, brought international recognition to the indigenous nations and communities in Bolivia lowlands, who were frequently ignored in previous times (Tapia 2011; Valencia García & Égido Zurita, 2010). Luis Tapia (2011) explains how these demands from the lowland *indígenas* "raised the necessity that the Bolivia state reformed itself in a way that included these communities and cultures in conditions of equality" (p.137, my translation). As such, the 1990s witnessed the development of many multicultural policies and important reforms. For example, the signing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the creation of bilingual education and perhaps most importantly, the recognition and collective titling of "*Tierras comunitarias de origen*" (Lands of Communal Origin – TCOs). Finally, Tapia (2011) concludes that this movement from the lowland played an important role in characterizing indigenous peoples as "nations" which is crucial for the conception of a "Plurinational state" which, as will be described later, became centrally connected to demands for decolonization.

In the Fourth March from the lowlands in 2002 explicit demands were made for the creation of a new constitutional assembly to reform the constitution and transform the neocolonial character of the state that excluded indigenous peoples. Valencia García & Égido Zurita, (2010) claim that this march in 2002 was the first time that *campesino* and *indigenas*, who were historically competitors for land, came together at a national level, creating the possibility for the formation of the *Pacto de Unidad* (Unity Pact), an important alliance which demanded and later helped plan and conceive Bolivia's recent constitution passed in 2009. Valencia García & Égido Zurita (2010) explain how in September 2003,

“...the in city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the principle *indígena* and *campesino* organizations from all of the country formed an alliance called the “*Pacto de Unidad*.” It was made with the objective of establishing the demands for the “October agenda,” and in particular the convocation of a Sovereign and Foundational Constitutional Assembly. (p. 28, my translation)

Shortly after, in October 2003, the famous “Gas War” in La Paz broke out and six weeks of violent protest led to more than eighty deaths and the eventual fleeing of then President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada from Bolivia. During these protests, the central demands of the “October agenda” were the nationalization of Bolivia’s gas companies, the writing of a new constitution to re-found Bolivia, and land reform (Postero, 2007, Valencia García & Égido Zurita, 2010).

It is important to note that the “Gas War” crisis followed on the heels of the famous 2000 Cochabamba “Water War” protests which, as Postero (2013a) claims, [unified]...a wide coalition of popular movements (like farmers, urban residents, factory workers, and students)...to protest neoliberal privatization of public water services. Popular demands included the reconstitution of public services, the nationalization of natural resources, and the establishment of a Constitutional Assembly... Thus, the desire for a new form of the state emerged not just from indigenous people but became a “national necessity” across sectors. (Postero, 2013a, p.6-7)

Here we see popular demands for a new state and constitution coming from across sectors in Bolivia. According to both Postero (2013a) and Tapia (2011) the three trajectories that converged with the Unity Pact in demanding a new constitution and state were: 1) the *Katarista* influence among highland indigenous groups which had demanded cultural recognition and autonomy for decades, 2) the mobilization of *indígenas* in the lowlands that came to demand territorial rights, autonomy and recognition as nations, and 3) the mobilization of urban popular uprisings seen especially in the 2000 Cochabamba “Water War.”

Following in the wake of these nation-wide protests, Evo Morales and his *Movimiento al Socialismo* (Movement Towards Socialism - MAS) political party that strong connections to indigenous coca growers and *campesino* (peasant) unions (Evo Morales rose to power as the president of a coca growers federation) was able to capture the attention of enough voters to win an absolute majority in elections in December 2005. Morales’ political platform rested primarily on the two central demands of the “October

agenda” to nationalize Bolivia’s gas companies in order to redistribute wealth and to initiate a process of rewriting the constitution in order to re-found Bolivia as a state (Kohl & Bresnahan, 2010). However, it is important to note that the Unity Pact, which was the principle group demanding the new constitution, was formed separately from the MAS political party and that MAS only later adopted the new constitution as one of its goals. In the years leading up to Morales’ election (and following) his political party began to utilize a strong indigenous discourse and rhetoric, employing many indigenous symbols and themes, including decolonization, and, at the time of his election, there was tremendous hope and optimism: Evo Morales, Bolivia’s first indigenous president, was promising to address the demands of social movements and to introduce genuine change (Kohl & Bresnahan, 2010). However, while eight years later Morales still commands the support of many indigenous groups, his administration has also generated bitter resentment and dissatisfaction among many of the indigenous groups that originally support him.

Here, I want to highlight the importance of the decolonial aspirations tied to these demands for a new constitution and the vision of decolonization and plurinationalism that was eventually imagined by the Unity Pact. As seen in the previous chapter, there are currently many different conceptions and understandings of decolonization in Bolivia. However, it is possible that the vision of decolonization found in the proposals for the constitution prepared by the Unity Pact provides the most representative understanding of decolonization and the demands and aspirations of the widest range of Bolivia’s varied and diverse indigenous peoples. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the Unity Pact consisted of a wide range of indigenous organizations that represented the great majority of indigenous peoples in Bolivia and in the Unity Pact’s proposals for the constitution they imagined a new political system called “plurinationalism” that was supposed to “decolonize” Bolivia as a state and also address long-held demands by indigenous organizations for self-determination, autonomy, greater political representation, and territorial control over resources (Garcés et al, 2010).

In conclusion, Bolivia’s indigenous groups have suffered extreme marginalization and subjugation in both colonial times and later under the rule of republican states. The revolution in 1952 furthered the rights for indigenous peoples and also created a new

campesino identity which many indigenous persons and groups have embraced. Furthermore, the revolutionary period following 1952 proved to be short lived and incomplete as military rule was re-established in 1964. These military leaders held control up until the mid-1980s when Bolivia fell into severe economic crisis and eventually transitioned into neoliberal era that lasted up until the election of Morales when social movements came together in mass protest of neoliberal practices. What should be especially noted for our study is that indigenous groups in Bolivia have made explicit demands for self-determination, autonomy, territories and recognition as “nations” since at least the 1970s with the *Katarista* movement in the highlands and since the 1980s in the lowlands. I argue that for the majority of indigenous groups, these long-held demands, which were often linked together with a discourse of anti-colonialism and decolonization, became connected to the hopes and demands for Bolivia’s new constitution. Given how widely representative the Unity Pact was, its vision of decolonization is of central importance in understanding demands for decolonization in Bolivia. The following chapters will explain the Unity Pact imagined a vision for the constitution that would introduce a radical new system called “plurinational,” that was meant to “decolonize” the state. However, while the state passed a new constitution in 2009, much of the original vision for decolonization and plurinationalism has been gradually restricted by legal and bureaucratic state regulations, signaling the practice of state discipline and governmentality. Furthermore, while the government continues to claim support for decolonization, it articulates drastically different vision of decolonization which is nationalist in nature and denies the central demands for autonomy, self-determination and territorial control of natural resources.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT FOR DECOLONIZATION IN BOLIVIA

This chapter will examine recent events and issues relating to Bolivia's decolonization process. Before directly looking at current perspectives on decolonization, it is necessary to explain important recent political events that bear upon decolonization and that help to demonstrate the political landscape and discourses of indigeneity found in Bolivia. First, I will focus on the process of how Bolivia's recent constitution was passed. I will start by explaining the nature of the Unity Pact and its role in the constitutional process and then examine their original proposals for the constitution, which contain a strong pluralist vision of decolonization. After, I will compare this vision with the final text of the constitution that was passed in 2009. This analysis will show that while the constitution marks an important achievement for indigenous peoples in Bolivia and tends to be seen as an example of decolonization, at the same time, the final text of the constitution is significantly different from the original vision for the constitution found in the proposals prepared by the Unity Pact. In fact, key elements of the original vision for plurinationalism and decolonization are significantly modified and restricted in the final constitution. Next, I will look at how secondary laws following the constitution have further restricted the original vision of decolonization found the Unity Pact.

In the second half of this chapter I will examine some of the contradictions of the MAS administration and the divisions between indigenous groups within Bolivia. First I will look at how, contrary to much of his environmentalist rhetoric, the Morales administration is pushing forward a strong developmentalist agenda that relies heavily on natural resource extraction, much of which takes place in indigenous territories. Next, I will examine the notorious "TIPNIS" crisis that concerned the construction of a highway through the Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécuré (Isiboro Sécuré Indigenous Territory and National Park - TIPNIS). Examining TIPNIS will lead into a discussion centering on how the government interacts with local indigenous groups that voice opinions contrary to the state plans for development or natural resource extraction.

Finally, this chapter will examine how the government utilizes a "nationalist" indigenous discourse which emphasizes the need for the central state to work in the

interests of a “majority indigenous” population over and above the demands of specific local indigenous communities. While this new discourse appeals to many indigenous peoples, it also presents an important division between those who support a “nationalist” vision of indigeneity and emphasize central state authority and those who demand greater self-determination and autonomy for Bolivia’s many particular indigenous communities, which can be termed as a “pluralist” vision of indigeneity. This division between “nationalist” and “pluralist” tendencies was noticeable even in the Constitutional Assembly (CA) and relates closely to debates over decolonization. Understanding the context of the recent constitutional process, the state’s developmentalist agenda and focus on natural resource extraction, and the government’s “nationalist” indigenous discourse will be vital in the following chapters where the views on decolonization found in my interviews will be examined directly.

5.1 From the Unity Pact to the Constitution: Decolonization, Plurinationalism and Indigenous Autonomy

As described in the previous chapter, in the years leading up to Morales’ election, nation-wide protest demanded the writing of a new constitution to re-found Bolivia. The most vocal group demanding the new constitution was the Unity Pact, a coalition consisting of various indigenous organizations. As Fernando Garcés (2011) states, for those involved in the Unity Pact “...the Constitution Assembly was to be a foundational political moment, one that was truly constitutional, in which social movements, indigenous and others, rather than conventional political parties would literally ‘re-found’ the state” (p.47). As seen in their proposals for the constitution, the Unity Pact’s plans for the constitution were to “decolonize” and radically alter the structure and system of the state towards a system called “plurinationalism.” However, while the final constitution was undeniably a great achievement and a profound improvement from the previous constitution, in the process of producing the constitutional text the state reintroduced measures of central state control, consistently restricting and disciplining the original “pluralist” vision found in the proposals put forward by the Unity Pact. After the constitution was passed, the original vision of the Unity Pact was further reduced and restricted by many secondary laws, such as the *Ley de Deslinde Jurisdiccional* (the Law

of Jurisdictional Demarcation) and the *Ley Marco de Autonomías* (the Framework Law for Autonomies – LMAD).

These restrictions and disciplining measures on the new constitution came early. According to Tapia (2011), the first instance where MAS acted to reduce the original plans for the constitution into a model that resembled previous liberal institutions was the *ley de convocatoria* (the Law of Convening) for the CA, which made it necessary for the representatives in the CA to be elected via political parties. Originally, many indigenous groups were in favor of having representatives elected through indigenous forms of election or by having direct representation by each community (Valencia García and Égido Zurita, 2010, p. 80). However, following the *ley de convocatoria*, representatives in the CA had to be affiliated with a political party, which both undermined indigenous forms of representation in favor of a modern liberal model and also further consolidated MAS' position within the CA (Olivera et al, 2007). Valencia García and Égido Zurita (2010) explain how, by claiming "...we are the *pueblo* (people or community) and the *pueblo* is now in power... The new discourse coming from the national government firmly declared that all of the excluded peoples already formed part of the administration of the state" (p.80, my translation). However, this did not convince everyone; for example, José Ledezma, an advisor to the *Asamblea del Pueblo Guaraní* (Assembly of Guaraní People – APG) is quoted saying "we felt absolutely deceived" (In Valencia García and Égido Zurita, 2010, p.80, my translation) because now the CA would be controlled by the political party system. This pattern of the state denying the demands of indigenous leaders by claiming to be an "indigenous state" that already represents Bolivia's indigenous people is reoccurring and was seen in my interviews with the vice-ministry of decolonization (VMD).

However, while the CA was to be formed by people within the political party system, the Unity Pact still carried out the task of preparing proposals that outlined the vision for the new constitution, which the CA was supposed to interpret and put into the format of a formal constitution. As mentioned, the Unity Pact was a coalition and "pact" that was formed by many different indigenous organizations. Therefore, drawing up the proposals for the new constitution was a long and difficult task that took years of intense debate between the different organizations (Garces et al, 2010). However, in the end the

Unity Pact prepared two proposals (one in May 2006 and another more refined in May 2007) that envision a radical and pluralist system which was supposed to “decolonize” Bolivia and alter the colonial structure of the state and address many long-held demands from indigenous sectors, including indigenous autonomy, self-determination and the recuperation of pre-colonial territories (Garces et al, 2010).

There were five principle indigenous organizations present in the Unity Pact when the proposals were written⁶ and these organizations represented the three main indigenous sectors of Bolivia: *Indigenas*, *Originarios* and *Campesinos*. These groups should be described briefly as they will be referred to throughout the paper. The “*Indigena*” identity refers to indigenous groups that come from the Bolivia’s lowland areas. While there are various organizations representing this sector, the largest organization and the one which is also most mentioned in this paper is the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (The Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia – CIDOB). The “*Originario*” identity refers primarily to Aymara peoples of the highlands which, rather than organizing in unions and working according to private land titles (like *campesinos*), continue to organize according to the *ayllus* and *markas*, which as traditional communitarian economic and social structures. The principle organization representing this sector is the *Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu* (the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu – CONAMAQ). *Campesino*, or “peasant,” is the identity created after the 1952 revolution. This category refers to the large group of Quechua and also some Aymara peoples that typically work in rural agriculture and on small individually owned plots of land (originally distributed in the agrarian reform following the 1952 revolution) and organize themselves according to the post-1952 union structure. The largest union representing this group is the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (the United Syndicalist Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia – CSUTCB), however, there are other

⁶ 1) La Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (The United Syndicalist Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia – CSUTCB). 2) La Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia (The Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia – CSCIB). 3) La Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Originarias e Indígenas de Bolivia “Bartolina Sisa.” (The “Bartolina Sisa” National Confederation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Native Women of Bolivia – CNMCIQB “BS”). 4) El Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (The National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu – CONAMAQ). 5) Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano (The Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia – CIDOB). (See Garcés et al, 2010).

important groups including the *Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia* (the Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia - CSCIB) which represents *campesinos* who have migrated from the highlands into other areas of Bolivia in search of agricultural land to farm.

The Unity Pact worked together for years to imagine and create the proposals for the new constitution. However, for reasons that will become clearer in the following pages, the Unity Pact has recently dissolved. The organizations representing the *indígena* (CIDOB) and *originario* (CONAMAQ) sectors of society are currently very critical and disappointed with the state and have thus formally withdrawn from the Unity Pact. However, the *Campesino* organizations, such as CSUTCB and CSCIB, still form the base of support for the MAS administration.

Now that I have explained a little about the Unity Pact's organizational make up and its role in the constitutional process, I will examine the Unity Pact's proposals for the constitution. In the original vision put forward by the Unity Pact, the concept of indigenous autonomy was central and seen as the pathway towards both self-determination and decolonization. Also, the idea of plurinationalism as a new form of political organization was seen as a means to decolonization. The first proposal for the constitution made by the Unity Pact in May 2006 states clearly that "Autonomy *indígena*, *originaria* and *campesina* is the condition and principle of liberty for our people and nations and the keystone of decolonization and self-determination" (In Garcés et al, 2010, p.152, my translation). It also states that, "We understand the Plurinational State as a model of political organization as a means for the decolonization of our nations and peoples, reaffirming, recovering and solidifying our territorial autonomy in order to achieve a good life and to live well with a vision of solidarity" (In Garcés et al, 2010, p.145, my translation). It is important to note how decolonization and self-determination are linked closely and that indigenous autonomy (*Autonomía Indígena Originaria and Campesina* - AIOC) is seen as the condition and means for achieving both. Also, in the second quotation, there is an emphasis on territorial autonomy and the need for plurinationalism as the model of political organization to ensure this vision of decolonization. Since both indigenous autonomy and plurinationalism were seen as

pathways towards decolonization, it will be helpful to look more in depth at how these concepts were originally conceived.

Indigenous autonomy was not conceived of as simply a mechanism for further decentralization or a system of federal government, rather the AIOCs were seen as spaces where plural forms and systems of self-government could develop and co-exist in a plurinational organization. The first proposal by the Unity Pact in May 2006 states that the goal of the indigenous autonomous territories was to “guarantee the pluri-cultural unity of the country and the self-determination and self-government of the *indígena*, *originario* and *campesino* peoples and nations to define their own judicial, economic, social and cultural systems and structures of government and election of authorities” (In Garcés et al, 2010, p.152, my translation). Autonomies were to be sites where plural forms of government and judicial systems were allowed to develop on their own terms. Indigenous forms of government and electing authorities would be affirmed and judicial pluralism would ensure that decisions made according to indigenous *normas y procedimientos propios* (traditional norms and procedures) would not be monitored by the central state (Garcés, 2011).

Likewise, the creation of these territories was not to be bound by the territorial boundaries of the colonial and republic state. Garcés (2011) explains how there would be an “asymmetric territorial organization,” stating that “Some territorial entities would still be organized around the foundational base of a colonial and republican state (the departments, municipalities, and provinces). Other territorial entities would eventually be organized around the territories of the indigenous peoples, according to their ancestral or actual uses” (p.52). The possibility of constructing regional autonomies that could transcend municipal or departmental boundaries had the purpose of allowing for political alliances and solidarities to extent to wider areas, preventing the situation of autonomies turning into small groups of isolated minorities. These regional autonomies were imagined as being either indigenous or intercultural and ethnically mixed (Garcés, 2011). Garcés (2011) explains the novelty of this vision of autonomy by contrasting two understandings of autonomy. He states,

In one, autonomy exists as part of a decentralized system that proposes self-government of territorial entities within a liberal, monocultural and Western civilizational paradigm. In another, autonomy is part of a process of territorial

(re)distributions of power in a plural form. *Plural* in this sense refers both to numerical status (more than one) and to a diversity of civilizational paradigms (of more than one kind). In the first case – autonomies of a singular form within a monocultural state – we are speaking of a mononational federal model. In the second, of autonomies linked to diverse peoples and nations, we are speaking of the construction of a plurinational state...in the first case, one might argue simply for deepening the mechanisms of decentralization. In the second, transformation would require strengthening forms of self-determination within a framework of a state that recognizes the forms of governed society of, by, and for the peoples and nation(s) that compose it...the proposal of the Unity Pact was clearly aimed at the second model. (p. 60-61)

The plurinational state as it was originally conceived by the Unity Pact was a bold new model for Bolivia's political organization. It was meant to break with the dominant conception of a nation-state that viewed the government rule as corresponding to a single culture, territory, language and peoples (Garcés, 2013).

In place of a single form of administration and a strong central government, the vision of the Unity Pact emphasized the need for plural forms of governance and for shared decision making at the national level (Postero, 2013a). The first Unity Pact draft states, "The autonomies aim to break the vertical nature of the current state, its structure of power, allowing for the construction of a new state from "the bottom up," from the bases" (In Garcés et al, 2010, p.151, my translation). Nancy Postero (2013a) explains how the proposals of the Unity Pact "...describe a form of government in which autonomous originary peasant communities are governing themselves at the local level *and* actively involved in the state's decision-making about national issues, where they are to "co-administer and co-manage" resources" (p.9). The right to land and the use of natural resources within autonomous territories was fundamental, and the need for shared decision making concerning the exploitation of natural resources within their territories was emphasized. Importantly, exploitation and exploration of non-renewable resources within indigenous territories required proper consultations that were to be done in advance and were to be binding, where indigenous peoples held the right to veto power (Postero, 2013a; Garcés, 2013). Furthermore, their proposals called for 70 of the 167 members of the Plurinational Assembly (the Congress) to be elected by IOC nations and peoples (Postero, 2013a). Postero (2013a) concludes that "The plurinational state, then,

was envisioned as a mechanism for the plurality of the Bolivian people to participate directly in public power” (p.9).

These were some of the main characteristics of the original vision of the plurinational state found in the proposals made by the Unity Pact. The plans were meant to radically alter the structure and political organization of Bolivia and to be a means towards decolonization and self-determination for Bolivia’s indigenous nations and peoples. However, by the time the final constitution was passed in 2009, much of this original vision was lost. After the proposals of the Unity Pact were made (one in May 2006 and another more refined in May 2007), the CA worked towards putting these ideas into a constitutional text. During this time, there was a great deal of political turmoil and opposition from the political right that refused to participate in the constitutional process. Tension even led to in instances of violence and deaths.⁷ When the final text of the constitution was completed by the CA in Oruro in December 2007, elite backroom political negotiations followed. In these discussions, much of the constitution’s content was modified and altered undemocratically. Garcés (2011) explains, “The original constitutional text approved in Oruro in December 2007 reflected, in large part, the proposal of the Unity Pact. However, the later text...which emerged from high-level discussions between MAS and the right-wing opposition in October 2008 departed in major ways from the position of the Unity Pact, significantly domesticating the issue of autonomy.” (p.59) The high-level negotiations held in congress in October 2008 in total made 144 modifications to 122 articles of the constitution (Garcés, 2013), significantly changing the original text in many key areas, especially those relating to the issue of indigenous autonomy, which was held as the pathway towards indigenous self-determination and decolonization.

While some substantial gains were made in the new constitution, such as the recognition of the precolonial existence of the *indigena, originario, campesino* (IOC) nations and peoples (Art 2), the official re-designation of the state as “plurinational” (Art 1) and openings towards juridical pluralism (Art 178), many of the changes to the constitution altered the original vision of the Unity Pact in troubling ways. The following

⁷ Postero (2010) reports how, “...in the northern region of Pando, a group of eleven indigenous MAS supporters were brutally massacred under the leadership of the prefect-governor” (p.67).

describes some of the most concerning changes that were made, relating to issues of indigenous autonomy, territoriality, juridical pluralism and shared decision making.

Garcés (2011) summarizes a number of changes relating to territory as follows,

The region is conceived, fundamentally, as a space of planning and management (Art 280.III). It is so weak that the constitution assigns it no attributes (Art. 301). As such, a category deemed crucial to articulating cross-ethnic alliances and reconstituting indigenous territorialities beyond existing jurisdictions was significantly restricted (p.59)...regions, which could in theory have become spaces for translocal indigenous autonomy projects, they are...constituted not as entities possessing their own political authority, but as spaces for planning and management...As for indigenous autonomy, the “consolidation of ancestral territories” is eliminated, giving way only to the ancestral territories actually occupied by the NPIOC [*indigena, originario and campesino* peoples and nations] (Art. 290). The possibilities of reterritorialization are also limited; any claim for indigenous peasant autonomy that affects municipal boundaries must be subjected to approval by the (state-level) Plurinational Assembly (Art. 293). At base, indigenous originary peasant autonomy is being given the status of a municipality (Art. 303) and contained within the limits of existing TCOs. (p. 61)

While the constitution does open up a space for the creation of indigenous autonomy, the possibility of recovering and reconstituting the precolonial territories is greatly restricted, especially when extending beyond existing municipal or departmental boundaries – a problem for many communities especially in Bolivia’s lowlands (Interview with Author, 2013 November 19, La Paz). Regional autonomy is greatly restricted and cannot gain political authority and AIOCs are only possibly by converting from an existing municipality or TCO (communal territory of origin). Furthermore, a restriction was introduced stipulating that populations smaller than one thousand (which is very common for minority indigenous groups in the eastern lowlands) cannot aspire towards indigenous autonomy at all (Gustafson, 2012).

While the principle of judicial pluralism was maintained, various articles in the constitution reduce its capabilities and introduce measures of state control and authority. First of all, decisions concerning natural resource exploitation remain solely within the jurisdiction of the central state (Art. 349 and Art. 351) and in place of a binding consultation process the new constitution only guarantees a previous and informed consultation, without the possibility of veto power (Postero, 2013a). Postero (2013a) further explains the limitations of the new constitution,

...the constitution establishes a clear hierarchy of jurisdictions, with the central state carrying out the seemingly “universal” work of governing the country and the people, and the AIs making those decision that only apply to their community and do not contradict the central state. In Art 30, the section dealing with indigenous rights, this is echoed: indigenous peoples have the right to *their* political, juridical and economic systems. Most importantly, the constitution eliminates the heart of the plurinational proposal: shared decision making. Nowhere does it mention co-administration or co-decision-making. Instead of giving a large number of special congressional seats to indigenous representatives, the constitution pushed the proportion off to the Electoral Law...in 2011, over huge protest by lowland groups, the Assembly settled on a tiny number: seven special seats.” (p.11)

The possibility of “co-government and co-management” was greatly reduced by all these measures. Furthermore, Xavier Albó (2012b) explains how the section dealing with the creation of the *Tribunal Constitucional Plurinacional* (the Plurinational Constitutional Tribunal) eliminated the requirement that there be equal representation between the ordinary justice system and IOC justice systems. Also, the requirements to become a member of the Tribunal were changed. Originally, it stated that candidates representing the IOC justice system “will be” from the social organizations of the IOCs communities and nations; in the final text it merely states that they “can be” (See Art. 199 in the CPE and compare with Art 200. in the text passed by the CA in Oruro 2007) (Albó, 2012b, p.228). Finally, the possibility of indigenous jurisdictions not facing review and control by ordinary jurisdictions was removed as well, since “...the election, designation or nomination of the indigenous ordinary peasant nations and peoples will be done through their own norms and procedures, but in conformity with the law (Art. 11) and under supervision of state electoral commissions (Arts. 26 and 211)” (Garcés, 2011, p.60-61).

While these changes to the constitution greatly reduce the space for indigenous autonomy and plurinationalism, there were also other changes and reductions made. Another important change to the constitution was that the upper limit of 5,000 hectares for an individual land holding was altered so as not to be retroactive (Art. 399), thus grandfathering existing large landholdings. This greatly restricts the possibility of land reform and eased the worries of the Santa Cruz agro-business elites (Garcés, 2011; Postero, 2010). Furthermore, while lands exceeding this size may be deemed by the state as not serving an economic or social function and thus subject to expropriation, this arrangement leaves all the power in the hands of the central state. And, since the passing

of the constitution MAS has suspended evaluations of this kind (Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz).

5.2 The Ley de Deslinde and the Ley Marco de Autonomias

Despite all these modifications made to the constitution, most still view the constitution as an exemplary moment for indigenous rights and decolonization in Bolivia (Many Interviews). For instance, Bolivia's most prominent and political anthropologist, Xavier Albó (2012b) claims that "no other constitutional assembly had been as representative of the heterogeneity of the Bolivian population" (p.203, my translation). In fact, criticism from indigenous groups is typically directed at the secondary legislation that has followed the constitution rather than at the constitution itself, which retains a high degree of popular legitimacy, despite the many restrictions that it places on plurinationalism and decolonization. For example, a prominent Bolivian scholar that I interviewed praised the constitution as being an example of "decolonization" but then went on to explain how the laws following the constitution were a return to colonial practices, especially criticizing the "*ley de deslinde*," which regulates the jurisdiction of indigenous justice (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz). In the following section we will examine the "*ley de deslinde*" and the "*ley Marco de Autonomias*" (LMAD), which establishes the framework for the construction of indigenous autonomy in Bolivia. Both of these laws have received a great amount of criticism for restricting and limiting the practice of indigenous autonomy and the application of indigenous justice.

The *ley de deslinde*, passed in 2010, radically limits the practice of indigenous justice and has received tremendous criticism, widely being considered as unconstitutional (Albó, 2012b; Cameron, 2013). Before the passing the *Ley de Deslinde*, Xavier Albó (2012b) explains how many different indigenous leaders condemned the law as "reducing the IOC jurisdiction to the 'robbing of chickens' and other 'trifles,' while others spoke of the unconstitutionality of the law" (p.244, my translation). However, at the time (2010), there was no Constitutional Tribunal (created in 2011) to officially condemn the law. Nonetheless, Albó (2012b) shows how a document was sent to the senate on December 13, 2010 by many indigenous deputies explaining their concerns.

While there is not space to fully explain the complaints here, the conclusion of the document states that,

To not acknowledge our capacity for self-government and to exercise our own political and juridical systems (Art. 30-14...) is to suppose that our peoples lack the seriousness of ordinary justice, that we would not have sufficient maturity, as if we were minors in age. This would imply discrimination even to the point of racism. (Quoted in Albó, 2012b, p.247, my translation)

Yet, despite this document being presented to the Senate, Albó (2012b) claims that it had almost no influence, as, shortly after the senate passed the *ley de deslinde* with only two minor changes. In sum, the *ley de deslinde* acts to further restrict the jurisdiction and practice of indigenous justice, which can be seen as contradictory to the hopes and aspirations of a plurinationalism and decolonization as originally conceived in the Unity Pact. Albó (2012b) highlights the contradictory nature of the constitution and the current situation of indigenous justice following the *ley de deslinde* and by asking: how does Art. 2 of the constitution guarantee the right for IOC communities and nations to their forms of government and justice when later this right is confined as applying only within the territories that have gained *Autonomia Indígena Origenario Campesino* (Indigenous Originary Peasant Autonomy - AIOC) status (Albó, 2012b, p 232)? This is an especially important critique when, as of yet (five years since the passing of the constitution), no communities have been able to complete the process of converting themselves into an AIOC territory (Tockman & Cameron, Forthcoming).

This brings us to the *Ley Marco de Autonomías* (The Framework Law of Autonomies – LMAD), which provides the framework for indigenous autonomy and the creation of AIOC territories. This law has also been criticized for number of reasons. First, the only routes available for becoming an AIOC are through either converting from municipality or from an *Territorio Indígena Origenario Campesino* (Indigenous, Originary Peasant Territory – TIOC – formerly TCO), meaning that AIOCs and indigenous autonomy is limited to territorial units that are already recognized by the state (Cameron, 2013). Furthermore, as of yet, while zero progress has been made in route of TIOCs converting to become AIOCs, only 11 municipalities have started the process of converting to become an AIOC.

The second major critique of the LMAD is that it imposes incredibly onerous conditions and bureaucratic requirements that stand in way of communities desiring to gain AIOC status. A Canadian scholar who specializes in the area of indigenous autonomy in Bolivia explained the situation by stating that, “The MAS does not seem very committed to enhancing the number of indigenous autonomies – the number of municipalities or TIOCs that are converting to AIOCs – and in fact has thrown up quite a few obstacles in the path of creating AIOCs...the main obstacle is that the process is extremely long and slow...” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz). Similarly, one investigator from the Bolivian NGO *Funacion Tierra* stated that, “The state has not given a free path for its application [indigenous autonomy] and has placed many regulations...” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 19, La Paz, my translation). Looking at the municipal route to become a AIOC, which, as of yet, is the only route that exists, these regulations include: Holding two separate referendums, electing authorities and representatives to draft an autonomy statute, and later submitting the statute to two separate bodies for review (Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz). Since 2009, eleven municipalities have started the process and none have completed all of the steps. One municipality, San Pedro de Totora, is the closest; however, the government has made it clear that no AIOCs will be formally established before the 2014 December elections. So, that means it will be well into 2015 before the first AIOC is formally recognized, which is more than six years after the process began (J. Cameron, personal communication, June 18, 2014).

Many of those with whom I spoke with were very dissatisfied with the difficult process of converting into an AIOC. The Canadian scholar interviewed describes the situation well,

So in all...we have examples of 11 municipalities that are converting. One that hasn't started, one way out in front...the process is very lengthy, very difficult. They don't get paid, so people have to volunteer their time...refrain from work...often travel great distances to meet...It's really quite a difficult process that I don't think most people who began in 2009 anticipated would be so long, difficult and uncertain...A lot of other municipalities that might consider, I think have observed the long and difficult process...it's quite a disincentive for others to pursue it. (Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz)

From my experiences in Bolivia and the people with whom I spoke, the main criticisms of the AIOCs are that: 1) they are reduced to the territory of a municipality or TIOC, 2) the restriction of having a population of a thousand prohibits many in the eastern lowlands from even starting the process, 3) they are given less authority and decision-making power than originally hoped, and 4) it is an extremely long bureaucratic process to convert into an AIOC.

However, another criticism of the LMAD is that the state is heavily involved in the actual process of defining and devising the organizational structure of indigenous autonomies, often imposing requirements which cause the AIOCs to repeat municipal structures. For example, the LMAD framework requires that indigenous self-government be divided into legislative and executive branches, imposing a very liberal legal framework to begin with (Cameron, 2013; Tockman & Cameron, Forthcoming; Tockman, Cameron & Plata, Forthcoming). Also, as the Canadian scholar of indigenous autonomy explains,

The government has quite a heavy hand in the construction of what is “indigenous autonomy” on two levels: One, the national level. Drafting National laws...setting strict limits as to what indigenous autonomy can be...And then actually in the processes, in the deliberative assemblies...there is a significant presence of “*técnicos*,” government consultants...they have had a significant role in actually shaping those discussions and in delimiting conceptions of what indigenous autonomy can be...So rather than the starting point being ‘let’s envision what we want, let’s create autonomy based on our values, history, *normas y procedimientos propios*’ [traditional norms and procedures] the framework for discussion in these deliberative assemblies has been very clearly set from the start by *técnicos* representing the government.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz)

Describing the same process, Cameron (2013) states that despite the Ministry of Autonomy being severely underfunded, the “...lack of resources has not prevented Ministry staff and consultants from imposing a highly legalistic focus on indigenous deliberations of autonomy or from paternalistic interference with proposals for the design of indigenous self-governance” (p.183). As such, the government has a large role in defining and limiting the structure of AIOCs themselves and communities are not fully allowed the freedom to define their own systems and structures of government.

Nonetheless, the Canadian scholar that I interviewed claimed that, although the constitution and especially the secondary laws, such as the *ley de deslinde* and LMAD,

have constrained the practice of indigenous autonomy, within the those constrains there remains “limited yet meaningful spaces for decision making,” which, for many, has been a sufficient improvement (Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz). However, while some are satisfied, he also was clear to point out that,

Others are really disappointed. Others have expressed that this is not what they envisioned with indigenous autonomy, that the small number of permitted spaces for the practice of *normas y procedimientos propios* [traditional norms and procedures] is disappointing, isn't sufficient, [and] is not in keeping with the grandiose rhetoric of plurinationalism and decolonization and this is not the indigenous autonomy that they wanted. And a lot of that depends on who you are talking to, if they come from a more *indígena* or *originario* perspective or if they come from a *campesino* perspective.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz)

Typically, those coming from a *campesino* identity tend to be more content with the current arrangement than those aligning with CONAMAQ coming from an *originario* identity or those coming from the lowlands that identify as *indígenas* (Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz). In fact, there is a general division in perspective between *campesinos* on the one hand and *originarios* and *indígenas* on the other which is important to understand. And this division can be seen in how CSUTCB and the other *campesino* federations, such as CSCIB, remain closely aligned with Morales and the MAS political party, while CONAMAQ and CIDOB, representing the *originarios* in the highlands and *indígenas* in the lowlands, respectively, have now distanced themselves from the government.

5.3 TIPNIS and the contradictions of Morales' 'indigenous state'

Before moving on, it is important to understand some characteristics of the Morales' government as well as better explain current divisions within Bolivia's indigenous populations. While Morales' rhetoric focuses heavily on themes such as indigenous rights, anti-capitalism, and the protection of *pachamama* (mother earth), there is often a considerable gap between the government's rhetoric and practice. Examining the recent TIPNIS controversy will help to highlight some of the most glaring contradictions of the Morales administration. While Morales continues to espouse an environmental and indigenous discourse, his government also pursues environmentally damaging development practices and tends to ignore and even silence the demands of

local indigenous communities when they oppose this developmentist agenda. Furthermore, Morales often utilizes a “nationalist” indigenous discourse and emphasizes state authority and claims to prioritize the interests of an “indigenous majority” over that of specific indigenous minority groups. However, while this “nationalist” government discourse conflicts with the “pluralist” vision described above in the proposals from the Unity Pact, it does appeal to the interests of many indigenous sectors, particularly *campesino* groups.

One of Morales’ greatest contradictions concerns his rhetoric, especially internationally, against exploitative capitalism which harms nature and damages *pachamama*. Morales is famous for proclaiming the “Rights of Mother Earth” in international forums, such as in the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen in 2009 and even held an international conference of Global Climate Change near Cochabamba, Bolivia, in April 2010 where he stated that “We have two paths; either Pachamama or death. Either Capitalism lives or Mother Earth dies” (quoted in Postero, 2013b, p.78). However, while Morales uses this discourse abroad, his actions at home tell a different story. Postero (2013b) agrees with Gudynas’s (2010) placement of Bolivia within the category of recent “neo-extractivist” countries, which, according to Gudynas, recycle the extractivist tendencies of old extractivism under a slightly new set-up that involves an increased regulatory role for the state and justifies resource extraction through increased redistribution of the wealth amongst the population. The words of Vice-President Alvaro Garcia Linera describe the attitude of the government well. He states,

We are going to construct highways, we will drill wells, we will industrialize our country preserving our resources in consultation with the people, be we need resources to generate development, for education, transport, and the health of our people. We are not going to turn ourselves into park-rangers for the powers of the North who live happily, while we continue in poverty.

(Quoted in Postero, 2013b, p.86)

Bolivia’s economy heavily depends on the extraction of natural resources and, contrary to what many may believe from Morales’ speeches in international forums, since his election Bolivia’s extraction of natural resources has increased in pursuit of economic development. Postero (2013b) claims that “Two recent projects...reveal that Morales is aggressively pursuing several new megaprojects that have the potential for devastating

impacts” (p.84) and describes the plans to extract lithium from Bolivia’s vast Uyuni salt flat and to create a massive dam in Bolivia’s Amazon region.

However, some (Kohl & Farthing 2012; Postero, 2013b) point out how the Morales government has been constrained by the situation inherited from previous governments. Kohl & Farthing (2012) explain that, while MAS has a strong rhetoric of anti-imperialism and “resource nationalism” (claims that Bolivia’s resources should not be plundered by outsiders and should benefit the Bolivian people) it still depends heavily on transnational capital, mainly in the sectors of natural resource extraction and large-scale agribusiness. While Morales is famous for nationalizing Bolivia’s oil and gas industries, Kohl and Farthing (2012) point out how “...Bolivia’s new gas law was not in fact a classic nationalization – there was no expropriation of assets and all the foreign companies negotiated new agreements” (p.230) and that,

Even though the Morales government has significantly expanded state investment, FDI [Foreign Direct Investment] stocks equaled 37% of Gross Domestic Product in 2010, 10% higher than the South American average...this puts a left-wing, anti-imperialist government in the awkward position of relying economically on the very foreign firms it often publicly attacks.(2012, p.231)

Pointing out such inconsistencies, Kohl and Farthing (2012) claim that “...structural path-dependent economic constraints can impede fundamental transformations over the short and medium term” (p.234). Therefore, while the MAS has developed social programs to redistribute wealth, in order to do so it has had to rely heavily on the rents from transnational firms working in the sectors of natural resource extraction and large-scale agribusiness, sectors which are capital intensive and thus create further dependence on outside capital and fail to provide large numbers of employment (Kohl & Farthing, 2012; Postero, 2013b) Moreover, the MAS has thus far been unable to diversify Bolivia’s economy or develop new and sustainable jobs in other sectors.

With Bolivia heavily dependent in these areas and Morales continuing to focus on extractivism and large-scale agro-industry as a development model, these plans often come into conflict with the demands of many indigenous groups that live in territories possessing natural resources (Tockman & Cameron, Forthcoming). Nicole Fabricant and Bret Gustafson (2011) explain that the two main trajectories in Bolivian politics since Morales’ election are: “...one, the turn toward a state-led economic model based on

aggressive natural resource extraction and, two, the shift toward a pluralist vision of decolonization and plurinational governance...”(p.2). However, it could be that these two trajectories are fundamentally opposed in key areas. One favors a strong central state authority and the other emphasizes the rights of indigenous communities to self-determination. What happens when Morales’ extractivist development model confronts local indigenous communities that oppose resource extraction in their territory?

According to Bolivian scholar Raul Prada (quoted in Tockman & Cameron, Forthcoming)

From this extractivist perspective ... the government cannot accept the [right to prior] consultation with free, informed and prior consent, nor can it guarantee the rights of indigenous nations and peoples or even less respect their territories, autonomy, self-governance and self-determination, as established in the constitution. (p.29)

According to this view, the government’s focus on extractivist developmentalism limits its ability to respect indigenous autonomy and self-determination. This issue of prior consultation processes for the exploitation of natural resources in indigenous territories has become highly controversial in Bolivia as the government consistently fails to comply with international standards as well as the demands from indigenous groups.

Legally, the government’s position regarding prior consultation is contradictory. While the constitution guarantees the right to indigenous self-determination (Art. 2), it does not guarantee the right to a binding prior consultation and free, informed and prior consent, which itself is a key component derived from the right to self-determination (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2013). Furthermore, the right to prior consultation and free, informed and prior consent are guaranteed by the ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous peoples and Tribal Populations and the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Schilling-Vacaflor, 2013). However, while Bolivia is a signatory of these international agreements and the UNDRIP was established as national law in Bolivia in 2007, the 2009 constitution grants almost complete decision making authority concerning the exploitation of natural resources to the central state. Also, the sections of the constitution ensuring that prior consultations are binding and that reserve veto power for local communities were not included in the final constitution. For Tapia (2011), the final constitution’s abandonment of binding consultations processes is the principle

reduction causing the current form of plurinationalism to act merely as a new form of multiculturalism, similar to Bolivia's structure during the neoliberal era. In December 2013, CONAMAQ and CIDOB published a booklet ("La consulta previa," 2013) together that deplores government's prior consultation practices and demands that new legislation follow the guide lines of international human rights standards. However, recently, in May 2014, Morales presented the plans for the new "Law of Free and Informed Prior Consultation" which claims to respect the collective rights of Bolivia's indigenous peoples. However, this new law is also set to include clauses that guarantee the execution and continuity of extraction activities on the grounds that they are of "strategic" importance for the "public interest of national development" (Aguilar Agramont, 2014).

The most notorious example of Morales failing to consult with and respect the demands of indigenous organizations is the TIPNIS crisis, which is useful to examine in detail. In August 2011, CIDOB and CONAMAQ, along with a group of many other organizations, began a march with as many as 2000 people from Trinidad, the capital of the Department of Beni, to La Paz in protest of a highway that was being constructed through the indigenous territory and national park called "TIPNIS." The main issue was that the highway was being constructed without any prior consultation. John-Andrew McNeish (2013) claims that, while many describe TIPNIS as primarily concerning environment protection (which was a factor), for the leadership of TIPNIS and other indigenous groups involved, the defense of indigenous territory and autonomy were seen as the principal issues at stake. Some originally proposed that the road merely be re-routed to further benefit communities and to better limit the environmental degradation (McNeish, 2013). However, shortly after, the government attempted to smear the leaders of the TIPNIS march claiming that they were in league with dangerous company, such as the American Embassy, foreign NGOs and the right-wing political opposition, groups who wished to destabilize the country and Bolivia's "process of change" (McNeish, 2013). In my interviews with those from the VMD, many claimed that the TIPNIS march was a betrayal against the government because the TIPNIS leaders had signed deals with the political right (Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz; Interview with

Author, 2013 November 18, La Paz) and one claimed that it was a “perverse and dishonest march” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation).

Forty days into the march, passage on the road was blocked by a counter-protest led by coca farmers and colonists (The colonists are now called the *interculturales* (interculturals), which are a group highland Aymaran and Quechua *campesino* farmers who have migrated in recent years to “colonize” or farm in Bolivia’s lowland areas. They are members of the *Confederación Sindical de Comunidades Interculturales de Bolivia* (CSCIB), which translates as the Syndicalist Confederation of Intercultural Communities of Bolivia organization) (McNeish, 2013). The coca growers and colonists have the interest of further cultivating the territory of TIPNIS for coca production and are closely allied the MAS government. As such, their counter-protest can be seen as a further attempt by the government to quell the demands of the TIPNIS marchers (Albó, 2012a). Also, there is a historical context to this conflict. In the early 1990s the leaders of TIPNIS were in conflict with a group of coca growers (led by none other than Evo Morales in his early days) who were penetrating the territory in the south of TIPNIS called “*Polígono 7.*” Eventually the leaders of TIPNIS made an agreement with Morales and the coca growers and drew a “red line” marking the limit for where coca growers were allowed to enter and harvest coca, which has since been trespassed many times (Albó, 2012a). The construction of a highway through TIPNIS would surely lead to further coca cultivation and an incursion colonists into the territory of Isiboro Sécure, as such activity is very difficult to monitor and regulate.

A few days after the stand-off between the TIPNIS marches and the *Campesinos Interculturales*, on September 25th of 2011, the police raided the TIPNIS protesters using tear gas and considerable violence. McNeish (2013), who was present during the police raid, claims that “Men, women and children were beaten to the ground, and had their mouths taped and their hands tied behind their back before being hauled away into a fleet of awaiting hired busses” (p.221). Furthermore, the report by the *Defensor del Pueblo* (The National Public Defender) claimed that the police’s actions amounted to human rights violations (Albarricín Sánchez, 2012). The sight of the police violently accosting and harming peaceful indigenous protesters – covered by the national media – appeared to many Bolivians as a return to the worst of the colonial and dictatorial practices of

previous governments and Morales' popularity significantly dropped while sympathizers for the march grew substantially. Eventually, the protesters reached La Paz in late October and were received with a "hero's welcome" (McNeish, 2013, p.227). Following this, Morales first claimed to stop any development and construction activity within TIPNIS, however, this decision was quickly reversed.

Shortly after the march reached La Paz, the government initiated a campaign to undermine its legitimacy, calling into question the extent to which the leaders actually represented the inhabitants of TIPNIS. For example, the government claimed that of the 66 communities within TIPNIS only 10 participated in the march (McNeish, 2013). In the end, a consultation process was performed by the government which surprisingly demonstrated that the majority (80%) of indigenous communities were in favor of the highway (McNeish, 2013). However, there are many reasons to be skeptical of this outcome and many criticize the way in which the consultation was performed. For example, numerous observers noted how the government began to grant contracts for the construction of the road even before the consultation process was completed. Also, McNeish (2013) states that, "Fernando Vargas, head of the TIPNIS Sub-central [indigenous peasant union], insists that at least 30 communities rejected the *consulta*. In many cases – he argues – the official *consulta* included only a minority of the residents and took place without the sanction of indigenous authorities" (McNeish, 2013, p.231). Vargas' claims gained more credibility as further studies looking into the matter dramatically contradicted the results of the official *consulta* and indicated that the government "did not conform to standards for prior consultation established by national and international laws" (McNeish, 2013, p.231). Among the many criticisms, the consultations were seen as failing to respect indigenous collective decision-making norms, holding meetings in the absence of traditional authorities, and not providing adequate information on the highway for informed decision making.

As Nancy Postero (2012a) claims, TIPNIS conflict calls into question "not only the government's commitment to due process, but also its claims to decolonization" (p.13). The government's actions demonstrate that in cases where the demands of indigenous peoples and nations conflict with the state's broader interests of development or resource extraction there is a reluctance and aversion towards respecting the rights of

autonomy, self-determination and free, informed, and prior consent – all of which were central to the demands for decolonization put forward by the Unity Pact. This evidences a major contradiction in the Morales administration. As Cameron (2012) states, even though government officials in the Ministry of Autonomies and Decentralization claim that “without indigenous autonomies, there is no Plurinationalism,” (p.192, my translation) the government continues to deny and restrict indigenous autonomy. On one hand, indigenous autonomy is legally restraining in its practice (as seen above) and on the other hand, indigenous autonomy is limited because the government consistently fails to heed its central obligations toward indigenous communities, such as respecting the right to prior consultation (as seen in TIPNIS). Early on in the TIPNIS conflict Morales was reported as saying that “whether the indigenous organizations liked it or not, this road would be build” (In Postero, 2013a, p.14), demonstrating a lack of concern or political will to respect the demands of these indigenous organizations. Likewise, in another interview quoted by Canessa (2012a), Morales states the following concerning the TIPNIS consultations,

They want the consultation to be binding. That’s impossible; it’s nonnegotiable. The constitution and international law mandate previous consultation, and we will always respect that, but letting a group of families tell us what to do would mean paralyzing all our work on electrification, hydrocarbons and industries.

(p.27, translation by Canessa)

Therefore, while Morales can accept the need for prior consultations, the prospect of these consultations being binding is seen as “nonnegotiable.” However, the non-binding status of consultations means that indigenous peoples who oppose nonrenewable resource extraction in their territories have little to no legal recourse (Tockman & Cameron, Forthcoming).

Almut Shilling-Vacaflor (2013) has examined the 27 prior consultations that have been concluded in Bolivia between 2007 and 2012 in its hydrocarbon sector and describes many common short-comings. He argues that Bolivia’s noncompliance of the rights to prior consultation are, unfortunately, “more the rule than the exception” when seen in the wider context of countries such as Brazil, Peru, Ecuador or Colombia (2013: 203). However, Bolivia’s reality is a “far cry from the new progressive legal norms and the expansion of indigenous rights (e.g. to autonomy, prior consultation, self-

determination)” (p.204) that Morales boasts and in practice there is a “dominant state ideology that subordinates local ideas of self-determined development to the so-called ‘strategic’ extractive industries” (p.204). In his conclusion, he claims that, while some consultations have been better than others,

...the government is willing to politicize consultations by presenting them to the affected communities as a medium to express their support for the ‘change process’; to foster fragmentation of local populations and indigenous organizations and to discredit critical voices; to provide biased and superficial information about the planned projects; and to look away from irregular, illegitimate or even illegal corporation activities.

(Schilling-Vacaflor, 2013, p.216)

While Morales garners much of his legitimacy from representing the indigenous populations of Bolivia, his administration is, in fact, often opposed to the demands of particular indigenous groups.

Concerning the government’s decision to reject a petition against oil exploration in Masetén, in the north of the department of La Paz, made by various indigenous leaders and organizations in 2009, Vice-President Alvaro García is quoted in an interview by Andrew Canessa (2012a) as stating,

Who is preventing the state from exploring oil in the North of [the Department of] La Paz: The Tacana Indigenous communities, an NGO, or foreign countries? We have gone to negotiate from community to community and there we have found the support of the communities to go ahead with the exploration and exploitation of oil...in the case of the minority indigenous people of the lowlands, the state has consolidated millions of hectares of historic territory for many groups with low population density, but alongside the right to land of a people is the right of the state...of the state led by the indigenous-popular and peasant movement, to impose the greater collective interest of all the people...(p.21-22)

Canessa (2012a) claims that here, the government not only “ignored the recognized representatives of the indigenous communities and, in effect, went in search of people who would support the oil exploration” (p. 22) but also that this “follows in a long tradition of discounting indigenous peoples’ voices on the grounds that they are manipulated by NGOs, and secondly...[they take a view that] subordinates indigenous peoples interests to that of the state” (p.22). This tradition of discrediting indigenous organizations by claiming that they are manipulated by NGOs was also repeated in my interviews with the VMD (next chapter). Furthermore, it appears that the government does not, in fact, wish to be tied to the obligations of heeding the demands of small

indigenous communities that oppose the state's developmentalist agenda based on resource extraction. For many, this attitude is entirely contrary to the principles of decolonization and plurinationalism and this appears very contrary to the vision seen in the Unity Pact proposals.

However, what is also important to note in the quote above is that it is not merely the state that is overriding minority views, it is an "indigenous" state, which, as described by the vice-president Alvaro García, is led by the "indigenous-popular and peasant movement" (Canessa, 2012a, p.22). This presents a new dynamic in typical discourses of indigeneity and also resembles the pattern described before where the "indigenous state" claims to better represent the indigenous people than recognized indigenous leaders themselves. Here, the priority is placed on the "indigenous majority" which is allowed to trump the views of local indigenous leaders. Andrew Canessa (2012a) explains, "The Bolivian case points to a number of tensions and contradictions which occur when indigeneity shifts from being a language of opposition to the language of governance; from when it moves from articulating the discourses of vulnerable minorities to those of national majorities" (p.32). According to Canessa (2012a), there are two very different discourses of indigeneity in Bolivia: one comes from more minority indigenous groups of Bolivia, such as the *indígena* communities in the lowlands or the *originario* groups in the highlands, who demand self-determination and autonomy from the state. The other discourse has been taken up by the government and its main base of *campesino*, coca grower and colonist (or the *interculturales*) indigenous groups and articulates a very different "nationalist" discourse of indigeneity.

These two indigenous discourses fit very closely with my interviews concerning decolonization. As will be seen in the following chapter, two very distinct versions of decolonization are found in Bolivia with one version coming from *indígena* and *originario* organizations like CIDOB and CONAMAQ that follows a pluralist vision, desiring greater self-determination and autonomy for indigenous peoples and nations. The other version comes from the state and closely aligned *campesino* organizations which articulates a nationalist vision of decolonization, where indigenous values and culture as seen to provide the moral foundation for the strengthening of the state as a whole.

Before moving on, however, it will be helpful to demonstrate how this division was visible even in the CA and to also briefly describe how this nationalist indigenous discourse appeals to many indigenous persons in Bolivian society. Following the in-depth ethnographic study on the CA by Schavelzon (2012), Garcés (2013) explains how within the CA,

There coexisted the pluralist vision of the indigenous communities and the vision of the nationalist left. The first received their ideas from the Katarista perspective that sought to overcome the standards of homogenization in the nationalist experience of 52, while also reclaiming the “national” condition of originary peoples. In this way the line of thought changed to the field of plurality. The vision inherited from the nationalist left, on the contrary, pushed for the notion of national sovereignty, reclaiming social justice, the recuperation of sovereignty over natural resources and anti-imperialism. Here, the emphasis is not found on pluralism but on development and the economic independence of the nation.

(p.100, my translation)

These two tendencies are found in the MAS administration and were present within the CA; however, according to Garcés (2013), the side favoring the nationalist left has always been stronger. While the MAS government’s rhetoric may include pluralist elements that resemble a *Katarista* influence, its actions resemble the dominant perspective within MAS that consists of the nationalist left. For example, in practice, the state has sought to consolidate state control and sovereignty and initiate a developmentalist agenda that extracts natural resources and seeks to redistribute natural resource rents to the population – all of this resembles the vision of the national left. Meanwhile, as shown throughout this chapter, the pluralist demands for self-determination and autonomy have been severely restricted, likely because a full expression of indigenous autonomy would limit the authority and control of the central state and could potentially disrupt the state’s ability to extract natural resources in indigenous territories – which the state is heavily dependent on (Tockman & Cameron, Forthcoming; Kohl & Farthing, 2012).

Finally, it should be recognized that the state has been able to generate significant popular support for its nationalist extractive model. Kohl and Farthing (2012) explain how the state’s discourse of “resource nationalism” – that Bolivia’s resources should be for the Bolivian people – is extremely powerful, affording the government support when it claims that the rents from resource extraction are being used to fund government social

programs. Moreover, the government has been very clear in linking new social programs to the money received from natural resource extraction (Tockman and Cameron, Forthcoming). Canessa (2012a) describes the characteristics of dominant indigenous groups that make up the MAS' main base. He states,

Coca growers are one of several groups of people – landless peasants... urban people, highland colonists to the lowlands – who originate in the ‘traditional’ indigenous communities and have an historical consciousness of racism and injustice but who nevertheless do not identify closely with the lifeways and cultural values of their communities of origin... what we find are large numbers of people who neither see themselves as mestizos or as *jaqi* or *runa*, the Aymara and Quechua words for people who follow a traditional lifestyle... Urban people, coca growers, and highland colonists to the lowlands form a majority of those people identified as indigenous in the 2001 census... It should not be surprising then that the dominant mode of indigeneity in Bolivia is one that speaks to a dynamic population engaged in market activities seeking economic growth, rather than one which seeks to sacrifice economic growth in favor of *buen vivir* [“living well” the Quechua phrase meant to signify living in balance with nature]. (2012a, p.20-21)

And later,

In this context, opening up new areas for coca growing or destroying the highland plains for the extraction of lithium makes perfect sense; it is about creating wealth and distributing resources to a majority group who have been largely excluded from power and do not want to join the mestizo middle class, although they clearly do want to increase their consumption. (2012a, p.30)

Therefore, while there are many indigenous groups and organizations demanding autonomy, self-determination and territorial rights in order to live according their own customs and life-ways. There are many other indigenous groups in Bolivia – arguably the majority of those who self-identify as “indigenous” – that tend to be either urban people or *campesino* farmers who are primarily seeking greater plots land to farm and benefits of a socialist state, they are typically engaged heavily in market activities and desire the benefits of industrialization and the redistribution of wealth from natural resource extraction.

5.4 Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated how the Unity Pact's original vision for plurinationalism and decolonization was eventually restricted in the constitution and even more so with the passing of secondary laws such as the *ley de deslinde* and the LMAD. The legal restrictions currently in place confine and limit the practice of

indigenous autonomy and self-determination in many ways, such as limiting political representation in the central state, imposing strict bureaucratic requirements in the process of converting towards an AIOC, limiting AIOC territories to the level of a municipality or TIOC, narrowing the scope and jurisdiction of indigenous justice, and asserting the central authority of the state in administering the extraction of natural resources. Furthermore, while the original vision of the plurinational state emphasized plural forms of government and shared decision making, the state has since begrudged and neglected its obligations of prior consultation for resource extraction and development projects in indigenous territories. Finally, while the rhetoric of Morales centers on anti-imperialism as well as *pachamama* and protecting nature, his developmentalist agenda continues to be heavily dependent on natural resource extraction and large scale agro-industry, which are both heavily funded by outside capital.

While some indigenous sectors are extremely dissatisfied with these developments, other indigenous groups are still aligned with the government and seek the benefits of industrialization and wealth redistribution. The indigenous discourse that the state is now espousing is less concerned with the rights of specific minority indigenous groups and more concerned with the interests of the pan-indigenous majority. These developments all reflect the vision of the nationalist left within the MAS administration. The state maintains some elements that resemble a pluralist vision inspired by the demands of the Unity Pact, such as Bolivia's title as a "plurinational state" and sections of the constitution that speak of decolonization (Art. 9) or that formally recognize indigenous nations and the right to self-determination (Art 2. Art 30.). However, in practice, these elements have been greatly restricted in favor of a direction that supports the vision of the nationalist left.

What will be demonstrated in the following chapter is how the government is also attempting to reinvent the understanding and discourse of decolonization, taking away the elements relating to its original pluralist vision and introducing a new articulation that asserts central state authority and emphasizes the revalorization of indigenous values as the moral foundation of a strong nationalist and indigenous state.

CHAPTER 6: DECOLONIZATION FROM BELOW AND DECOLONIZATION FROM ABOVE

“So this has produced a confrontation between two different understandings of decolonization, one from the government and one from the indigenous peoples. The government considers that it is decolonizing but we, who are the indigenous peoples, we consider that this is not decolonization, rather we are going backwards.”

– Quote from a member of CONAMAQ
(Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz, my translation)

In this chapter I will examine current perspectives on Bolivia’s process of decolonization looking mainly at the content from my interviews. The central purpose here is to examine how Bolivia’s indigenous organizations understand and conceive of decolonization compared to how the state currently promotes and utilizes decolonization in its discourse. However, as was seen in the second and third chapters, decolonization is a political concept that developed from its original meaning and may now relate to many different aspects, dimensions and understandings. As such, it is not possible to cover every area relating to decolonization in detail; instead, my discussion focuses primarily the noticeably different understandings and opinions relating themes such as self-determination, indigenous autonomy, political representation and plurinationalism. The reasons for this are twofold: first, these themes were often identified as the most central categories relating decolonization (as they were also seen in the Unity Pact proposals⁸); second, in these areas there was the most disagreement and interesting results and findings from my investigation. However, in focusing my attention in these areas, I am forced to neglect or only briefly mention other important areas that relate to decolonization, such as recent education and language policies and actions to incorporate “traditional” medicine into the Western health system.

To begin this section, I will look at the views coming from Bolivia’s indigenous social organizations regarding the theme of decolonization. What will be seen is that those allied with *originario* or *indígena* groups, such as CONAMAQ and CIDOB, emphasize, first and foremost, the importance of concepts of self-determination,

⁸ For example, indigenous autonomy was identified as the “keystone of decolonization and self-determination” while plurinationalism was seen as “the model of political organization as a means for...decolonization” (In Garcés et al, 2010, p.145, my translation).

territorial autonomy, political representation, and proper prior consultations for resource extraction in their territories – all issues which relate to political power relations and authority in decision-making processes. Also, while these groups recognize the cultural realm of decolonization they tend to be critical, unaware of or generally disinterested in work that the VMD performs. Following this, the interviews with *campesino* groups, such as CSUTCB and CSCIB, will be looked at for comparison. In general, they presented a similar view of decolonization to that found in the VMD. Finally, the VMD, which represents a dominant state perspective on decolonization, will be examined in detail in the second half of the chapter. The VMD tends to emphasize the cultural aspects of decolonization and a nationalist vision. However, in the VMDs promotion of indigenous culture it often does not cooperate with indigenous communities themselves, and even opposes the views and demands of many indigenous communities, especially relating to indigenous autonomy. Therefore, rather cooperate with indigenous communities themselves, the state attempts to orchestrate indigenous culture through a top-down process. Furthermore, the VMD vision of decolonization is distinctly nationalist, where Bolivia, as a nation based in indigenous values, achieves self-determination from external forces, such as the United States imperialism or global capitalism. Meanwhile, demands for autonomy by indigenous organizations are treated with caution, sometimes with suspicion, and in almost every case the authority of the state concerning the administration of natural resources was firmly asserted in my interviews.

In sum, the direction for decolonization found in *originario* or *indigena* and indigenous organizations was similar to the pluralist vision found in the Unity Pact, which sought greater levels of indigenous autonomy, political representation and shared decision making power. However, the direction of decolonization found in the VMD affirms a strong central state authority while viewing indigenous values as the basis for a new indigenous nationalism for the entire Bolivian society. Meanwhile, *campesino* organizations seemed to be on board with the government's direction. Thus, I argue that, in taking up the project of decolonization, the state has reinterpreted the political concept so that it loses its original connection to the pluralist vision and, instead, is articulated along lines that support the goals of the nationalist left in centralizing state authority and

redistributing the wealth accumulated by a developmentalist agenda based on natural resource extraction. While this new nationalist discourse of decolonization seems to be accepted by the *campesino* and *interculturales* organizations, others are extremely disappointed. Furthermore, in the process of promoting this new discourse the state is resorting to top-down orchestrations of indigenous culture while silencing the dissident indigenous groups and organizations.

6.1 Decolonization From Below

The first group of interviews that I will examine are with representatives and persons associated with CONAMAQ and CIDOB.⁹ Those interviewed who were associated with either CONAMAQ or CIDOB were highly critical of the current decolonization process. In general, when asked about decolonization they placed the right to self-determination at the forefront and while valorizing culture and identity was acknowledged as an aspect of decolonization, typically the emphasis was on matters such as of political representation, reconstituting indigenous territories, autonomy, self-government, jurisdiction for the practice of indigenous justice, proper prior consultation for the extraction of natural resources in their lands – all issues which relate to increasing political power and decision-making vis-à-vis the state. While strengthening culture and identity was seen as a part of decolonization, this strengthening of culture and identity was seen as going hand in hand with increases in political representation and self-government. Also, the process of strengthening indigenous culture and identity was seen as connected to decolonization in the education system. However, concerning projects of decolonization done by the VMD, which also aim to strengthen indigenous identity and culture, those interviewed were either unaware or critical. In general, interviewees were very upset that the government was continuing to act unilaterally, failing to allow for the participation of indigenous organizations and often acting in direct contradiction to their demands. Many claimed that the government was seen as not fulfilling its commitments and obligations regarding indigenous rights found in the constitution. Because of this,

⁹ Currently there are two branches of the CIDOB and the CONAMAQ organizations, one branch aligns with the MAS government, whereas the other is autonomous and critical of the government (“División en Conamaq,” December 2013). My interviews were with the autonomous branches of CIDOB and CONAMAQ. The reasons for CIDOB and CONAMAQ dividing into two branches will be explained in the following pages.

many were frustrated, and concluded that the government was claiming to implement decolonization and plurinationalism in speeches and rhetoric while at the same time marginalizing indigenous communities.

Self-determination was seen by many from the organizations of CONAMAQ and CIDOB as the central component of decolonization. For example, an important leader from CIDOB stated that “decolonization resides in self-determination” (Interview with Author, 2014 February 5, Santa Cruz, my translation) and an Aymara intellectual that is closely associated with CONAMAQ claimed that

When we speak of decolonization we refer to the spirit of the resolution 1514 of the United Nations in the year 1960, which recognizes the right of self-determination for peoples under colonial tutelage... And as well, the constitution of the Plurinational state of Bolivia recognizes the right to self-determination... What we are searching, together with indigenous peoples, is simply to act like any other people, our right to self-determination means that we freely determine our political condition, our development... and, in terms of education, defense, transport, workforce, the administration of our territory...

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz, my translation)

While self-determination was seen as the principle category for decolonization, autonomy and plurinationalism were also seen as closely connected. Another leader from CONAMAQ stated that, “Autonomy is important for us, with autonomy we will have self-government, our self-determination, which is found in international norms that are recognized. Also it is in our constitution. This is what we want for ourselves, this process should move towards the Plurinational state...” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 13, La Paz, my translation). And finally, another member of CONAMAQ claimed that

We, the indigenous peoples, want to have our indigenous autonomy, self-determination, we want to determine our territory, our own education, etc... But the government does not allow us, the government, even though it talks about the decolonization of the indigenous, it follows a path that is a little different

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz, my translation)

Self-determination was seen as a central component of decolonization and concepts such as autonomy and Plurinationalism were seen as centrally connected. While self-determination did not mean separation for the state, it did imply having territorial authority and self-government. Those from CONAMAQ claimed that reconstituting their territory and their systems of government (the *Ayllus* and *Markas*, which are traditional communitarian social and productive units found in Bolivia’s highland) was the principle

objective (Interview with Author, 2013 November 13, La Paz; Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz; Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz). One claimed that "...to secure indigenous self-government is to say control over natural resources" (Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz, my translation). Likewise, an important leader from CIDOB claimed that "Indigenous Autonomy is based in a territory, we have a territory, what happens is that the government is worried about territorial administration because it does not want to give away the economic resources that correspond to it" (Interview with Author, 2014 February 5, Santa Cruz, my translation). With self-determination and the recovery of indigenous territories seen as the principle goals of decolonization, these groups are very disappointed with the current process of decolonization.

Each person from these two organizations that interviewed (along with most of the academics that I interviewed) was extremely critical of the government's politics of decolonization. For example, one Aymaran intellectual with CONAMAQ stated,

Examples of decolonization in Bolivia? There are not any examples...what exists is...a constitutional recognition. Words in the constitution, but still there is nothing that resembles decolonization, there is nothing of decolonization in this country. (Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz, my translation)

While there is formal recognition of important indigenous rights that relate to decolonization and self-determination, many claimed that in practice these rights were not respected or realized. A member of CONAMAQ claimed that,

They give us recognition in the theme of self-determination, but there is no exercise of self-determination...in the theme of plural justice...the political constitution of the state of Bolivia tells us that they are of equal hierarchy, the ordinary justice and the indigenous ordinary justice, but there are not these advances, or they tell us 'you don't have the authority for the area of labour, for the workforce, and, well, for many things...They restrict us in the area of justice. (Interview with Author, 2013 November 13, La Paz, my translation)

The leader from CIBOD concisely summarizes the common sentiment stating, "There is a great distance between the word decolonization and the practice...there is nothing for us, nothing that has changed in practice in this government" (Interview with Author, 2014 February 5, Santa Cruz, my translation). For all of the state's rhetoric of indigenous rights and decolonization, many feel that very little has actually changed in practice.

There was great frustration at how the government was continuing to marginalize indigenous voices and opinions while at the same time claiming to decolonize Bolivia and to be act as a Plurinational state. For instance, the Aymara intellectual from CONAMAQ later claimed,

The Plurinational states, like I'm telling you, were never born. We have a birth certificate...the constitutions, but there is nothing plurinational, neither in Ecuador or here. The name is plurinational, everything now is plurinational, but in fact, in reality, nothing Plurinational exists at all.

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz, my translation)

While another Quechua member of CONAMAQ stated,

The constitution, for example, says that the indigenous originary peoples, we are the essence of the Plurinational state, but even though we are the essence of the Plurinational state, the indigenous originary peoples, the organizations, are not thought of, either to be discussed with or to formulate public politics. They never consult us. The decisions continue to be taken by the state, no?...the political constitution of the state says that all exploitation of natural resources needs to be done in consultation with indigenous peoples. But they don't consult us for anything, and so the government continues to exploit natural resources.

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz, my translation)

Everyone in this group expressed frustration at how the government acted unilaterally without properly consulting indigenous communities and organizations and often acting contrary to the demands of indigenous peoples and their organizations. For example, the leader from CIBOD described how the government dismisses them by saying, “Look, I'm the good guy from the government and your leaders and organizations don't matter...” and then stated, “where there is a state that imposes things on you it means that it is a state that does not represent us...that it returns to be a state of unilateral decisions...”(Interview with Author, 2014 February 5, Santa Cruz, my translation).

Meanwhile, one of the members of CONAMAQ claimed,

The problem that we find is that the Bolivian government, the Bolivian state is not responding to the understanding of decolonization coming from the indigenous originary peoples, the reason being that the Bolivian government, the current Plurinational state is taking decision against the indigenous originary peoples. For example, in the cases of extracting natural resources, it is taking decisions that are contrary, in the education sector, the linguistic sector, and in the territorial sector. For example, the *Ley Marco de Autonomias* (LMAD) was approved without the majority of consent from the indigenous originary peoples and their organizations... (Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz, my translation)

The LMAD was the law discussed earlier that provides the framework for indigenous autonomy and, according to many (Tockman and Cameron, Forthcoming), greatly reduces and restricts what indigenous autonomy could have possibly become.

While all of this is plenty of reason for disappointment, it was the TIPNIS affair eventually which caused both CIDOB and CONAMAQ to step away from the Unity Pact and to break their alliance with the *campesino* and *interculturales* organizations that form the base of the government and that also supported the highway (“División en Conamaq,” *La Razón*, 2013). A member of CONAMAQ explained that “The government imposes, and if you think different than the government...they say no. So we have decided to leave the Unity Pact, CIDOB and CONAMAQ” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 13, La Paz, my translation). However, as CIDOB and CONAMAQ have now distanced themselves from the government and have become critical of many of the state’s actions and plans, the government has since recognized parallel divisions of each organization. This means that currently there are “pro-government” CIDOB and CONAMAQ organizations as well as “autonomous” or “organic” CIDOB and CONAMAQ organizations which remain outside the state and oppose the government (my interviews were with the autonomous organizations). The government’s funding and backing of these parallel organizations can be seen as an attempt to silence, fracture and discredit opposing organizations. Also, since CONAMAQ and CIDOB have divided there have been instances of violent conflict between the parallel organizations. For example, when the autonomous CONAMAQ organization wanted to protest Rally Dakar (a mega sporting event taking place in Bolivia) they were blocked by the military and also by a counter-protest led by the pro-government CONAMAQ that violently took control of autonomous CONAMAQ’s offices (“Prensa Internacional Pregunta,” *WikileaksBolivia*, 2014). While the public defender of human rights condemned these actions the police have not addressed the issue.

Concerning indigenous autonomy, many from CIDOB and CONAMAQ were frustrated at the bureaucratic requirements that the LMAD puts in the way of converting to become an AIOC, the limited amounts of authority and jurisdiction that is given to AIOCs, and the how the AIOC is reduced to the level of a municipality. For example, regarding indigenous autonomy the leader from CIDOB claimed, “There isn’t any,

because the government has made the way towards autonomy very bureaucratic”

(Interview with Author, 2014 February 5, Santa Cruz, my translation), while the Aymara academic aligned with CONAMAQ stated,

The theme of indigenous autonomies is a trick. Here, the indigenous peoples are the majority, but, even so, the space for indigenous autonomy is minor – a municipality. If we talk about the Aymaran people, and the Aymaran people need to self-govern, how is it that they are going to give the Aymaran people a municipality? It’s an absolute and total trick, a deception.

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz, my translation)

Members and those affiliated with CONAMAQ clearly stated that the reconstitution of precolonial territories is one of their central objectives; therefore, the reduction of indigenous autonomy to the territory of a municipality is seen as a great disappointment.

When asked how decolonization could be improved, common answers were that there should be changes to democratize the branches of power in the government and that there should be direct representation of indigenous peoples rather than representation by political parties. The academic associated with CONAMAQ stated that,

The state needs to democratize itself. The state needs to begin to speak [indigenous] languages and the state needs to open up participation for the indigenous peoples, but there is no participation from the indigenous, neither in the executive nor the legislative branch...there is no channel for the participation of indigenous peoples, all the participation is submitted to the political party system, and those are “dominio blanco”[(dominion of the whites)]. And if the state does not democratize itself, it continues being a colonial state, the old republican state...

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz, my translation)

Likewise, other representatives of CONAMAQ and the leader from CIDOB echoed these sentiments and many were unsatisfied with representation through political parties.

Another leader from CONAMAQ stated that, “...in the legislative assembly there should also be true representation by originary nations. We don’t have this now, it is only by [political] party, and it should not be that way. When a political party has a majority they do what they want, like what is happening now” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 13, La Paz, my translation). The leader from CIDOB claimed, “when we talk of decolonization and talking about the structure of the state, the power of the legislature, the judicial body, the electoral body, and the executive power, for us indigenous peoples, it means having direct representation as indigenous peoples in the Constitutional

Tribunal” (Interview with Author, 2014 February 5, Santa Cruz, my translation). This demand for further democratization and direct political representation is perhaps similar to Frantz Fanon’s (2004) claim for the need of “politicizing the masses” where he states, “...we must, as we have already mentioned, decentralize to the utmost. The flow of ideas from the upper echelons to the rank and file and vice versa must be an unwavering principle...” (Fanon, 2004, p.138). Certainly having a unilateral state that does not open up political representation for important indigenous sectors poses a problem for process of decolonization.

One Quechua intellectual aligned with CONAMAQ identified how the government’s conception of decolonization differed from the understanding found in indigenous originary organizations. He stated that,

Basically there exist two meanings or two senses which we have with respect to the concept of decolonization. In the first, the concept of decolonization has to be with the process of developing and strengthening the indigenous originary identities that inhabit Bolivia...[the second] is well understood as a process of strengthening the state, the strengthening of the state and the sovereignty of the state over its territory with respect to other countries, in this case the countries from the “first world”...the United States, France, Europe...

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz, my translation)

Here there is recognition of the state’s nationalist decolonization discourse and how it differs from the understanding of the indigenous originary peoples. So, while the government is concerned with strengthening Bolivia as a whole, or decolonizing Bolivia at an inter-state level, many indigenous organizations are more concerned with decolonizing internal relations, improving their relationship with the state and their political representation and jurisdiction. The Quechua intellectual continued stating,

What the government makes you understand with decolonization has nothing to do with, or has very little to do with, the origins of decolonization found within the indigenous originary peoples, no? And in the indigenous originary peoples the idea of decolonization, the idea that always had to be seen...[was] indigenous rights, territoriality, strengthening and developing their identities, their own education, etc...But the state has not responded to these demands, but it says that it is decolonizing...

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz, my translation)

I would argue that the VMD does emphasize the need to strengthen cultural identity, but in doing so it often resorts to a top-down state orchestrations of indigenous culture and it does not respond indigenous organizations and communities themselves or to the

demands for greater political representation, territory, and the relationship between indigenous organizations and the state. Furthermore, the VMDs emphasize for decolonization is often at the inter-state level. Because of the government's lack of regard for "internal colonialism" the Quechua intellectual from CONAMAQ concluded by saying,

the relation that exists between the indigenous originary peoples and the state, the current government, continues being colonial...even though we could say Bolivia has grown a lot in the economy, and they say that we have developed considerably and that now the country does not obey, for example, Washington anymore...Inside the country the relations between the organizations, or the indigenous originary peoples and the state, and the government, continues to be colonial. We continue living in a situation of marginalization, because we are not considered in the legislature, in the executive, no, we do not have deputies or indigenous senators that respond to the indigenous peoples. No. So, in the area of the executive, they take decisions against the indigenous originary peoples

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 25, La Paz, my translation).

In sum, those from CONAMAQ and CIDOB are not satisfied with how the government is working towards decolonization and they demand greater political representation and improved avenues for the practice of self-determination in their territories.

While this was the perspective coming from those aligned with CONAMAQ and CIDOB, which are *Originario* and *Indígena* organizations, the perspective coming from *Campesino* organizations like CSUTCB and CSCIB was much more generous and approving of government policies. Decolonization was identified primarily as process of recovering indigenous values, practices and knowledges, while taking away the negative practices associated with colonialism. However, contrary to the views seen above, little criticism was directed at the state; instead there was considerable praise. Furthermore, their attitude towards themes such as indigenous autonomy revealed major differences from CONAMAQ and CIDOB and a general alignment with the views I saw in the VMD. In sum, indigenous autonomy was accepted with hesitation and seen as necessarily subordinated to the central state.

When asked about decolonization, the leaders of CSUTCB and CSCIB both to replied by reciting the long history of colonialism in Bolivia throughout the centuries. After explaining the rise of *Katarismo* (See chapter four) in the 1970s and 80s and the battles with neoliberal government, Evo Morales was affirmed as the final leader of

decolonization in Bolivia (Interview with Author, 2013 November 27, La Paz; Interview with Author, 2014 January 14, La Paz). The attitude towards the government was totally different from *originario* and *indigena* organizations. Evo Morales was praised and the MAS was affirmed as being the “government of social movements.” The leader of CSCIB claimed that,

Our relation with our brother, President Evo Morales, is always close, we coordinate many activities...in order to make structural changes he consults us. We also make proposals, if there are some things that don't work then we also make note to the president so that he can correct a few things...we are practically the vanguard of this process of change and we are pushing from our bases in an organic manner...it is a great system that we are managing and we are advancing as a government.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 27, La Paz, my translation)

The difference of opinion here is drastic. While the *Originario* and *Indigna* organizations felt marginalized and rejected by the government, these sectors felt highly represented and connected. So, the first thing to note is how these *campesino* groups gave a strong approval to the government. It is also noteworthy to consider here that Morales came to power as a leader of a coca growers union that is closely affiliated with CSCIB.

In my interviews with the *campesino* and *interculturales* organizations, there was a focus on recovering indigenous values while taking away the negative practices brought to Bolivia through colonialism. The leader from CSCIB stated,

we need to rescue our knowledge, our traditions, our culture, the way of living together with Mother earth...and first,[we need to] push away a few bad things that came with the colonia, no?...but it does not mean that with decolonization we are pushing away 100%, all the knowledge – technology and the rest.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 27, La Paz, my translation)

and later,

we are going to rescue the essence of our culture and always supporting ourselves with what comes from technology, supporting ourselves with what comes from outside, but not imitating.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 27, La Paz, my translation)

Here, there seems to be support for a form of cultural hybridity or alternative modernity, as decolonization is seen as a way of affirming ancestral knowledges and culture while also taking what is helpful from modernity and finding a way to combine them. The constitution was identified as a clear example of decolonization, which changed the

structure of the state and re-founded the previous colonial and republican state (Interview with Author, 2014 January 14, La Paz; Interview with Author, 2013 November 27, La Paz). However, the leader from CSUTCB also explained the need to decolonize many other elements of society, such as the neoliberal economy, colonial and capitalist ways of thinking, education, and the political sphere which was identified as “patriachalized” and dominated by males (Interview with Author, 2014 January 14, La Paz). Patriarchy was described by the leader of CSUTCB as a negative colonial influence which needs to be combatted by increasing the number of females in the government (Interview with Author, 2014 January 14, La Paz). Concerning the economy, the leader from CSUTCB claimed that rather than neoliberalism there needs to be a “social communitarian” economy, where there will be a more equal distribution of wealth (Interview with Author, 2014 January 14, La Paz). It is important to note how this “social communitarian” economy fits well with Morales’ developmentalist agenda that redistributes the wealth from rents on resource extraction.

Compared with the interviews of CONAMAQ and CIDOB, what is perhaps most interesting is the difference in opinion regarding indigenous autonomy and self-determination. For the *Originario* and *Indígena* organizations self-determination was the first thing mentioned and the principle category for the discussion of decolonization. However, for CSUTCB and CSCIB, autonomy was not even mentioned until I asked. Furthermore, there were marked differences in attitudes towards indigenous autonomy. While the *originario* and *indígena* groups were extremely disappointed that indigenous autonomy had not amounted to greater authority and levels of decision-making vis-à-vis the state, the CSUTCB and CSCIB leaders were quick to assert the need for state authority and the dangers of indigenous autonomy in either disrupting the structure of the state or allowing indigenous communities to sell the resources in their territories to multinational corporations or the political right. For example, the leader from CSCIB claimed,

The political constitution of the state recognizes indigenous autonomy, but with certain limitations. It does not mean that by having indigenous autonomy you will

govern in full¹⁰ in a determined sector inside Bolivian territory, it is not that way. Rather, natural resources have to be administered by the central government...

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 27, La Paz, my translation)

Likewise, the leader from CSUTCB explained,

...in the constituent assembly, they established the indigenous autonomies, then it means self-government, self-management, self-education, but without separating ourselves from the structure of the Plurinational state, without disintegrating ourselves... however, this autonomy is also dangerous because those that dominate capitalism, the hegemony, the elite that is already accustomed to dominate at a world level...they are not going to leave these communities, they are going to strangle them, they can separate them strategically to continue dominating...[they will be] prey for the big because autonomy is going to mean that they will not have resources, then, that is where the multimillionaires will be, above, trying to finance with millions, so these indigenous autonomies are going to have to submit themselves for economic resources to this imperial power...the solution to this danger is that the indigenous autonomy simply has certain levels, a cultural level, productive level, rituals and customs, with the line being that this does not break the structure of the central state – then, neither will they be prey

(Interview with Author, 2014 January 14, La Paz, my translation).

Here indigenous autonomy is seen as a danger. The fear is that once they are isolated, they will be taken advantage of by international global capitalists and this serves as a justification for the central state to handle matters of strategic importance.

In summary, *Originario* and *Indígena* organizations defined decolonization as connected to self-determination, first and foremost, and were extremely dissatisfied with the current limitations of indigenous autonomy, their lack of political representation and decision-making power and the unilateral actions of the government in dismissing their demands and failing to conduct proper prior consultation processes. In contrast, the *campesino* organizations were favorable towards the government and praised Evo Morales' administration. They felt represented and were behind the direction of the government. Their definition of decolonization focused on the process of recuperating indigenous values as the foundation for society and they were reticent towards giving power to indigenous autonomies, affirming the need for central state administration.

¹⁰ The phrase used in Spanish was “gobemar en plenitud” (govern in plenitude) I suppose that by “plenitude” he means to say ‘govern in a “full” or “complete” way.’

6.2 Decolonization From Above: The Vice-Ministry of Decolonization

Here we will turn and focus on the perspective of decolonization found in the Vice-Ministry of Decolonization (VMD). The VMD was created in 2009 and operates as a branch within Bolivia's Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The VMD works on projects that are aimed to promote decolonization in Bolivia. On the one hand the VMD organizes many events and ceremonies, such as Bolivia's collective wedding ceremonies, the Aymaran New Year celebration, the "Day of Decolonization," and others. However, the VMD also produces publications on decolonization, or related themes such as depatriarchalization, and coordinates with other government ministries in order to promote decolonization throughout government. Finally, the VMD also promotes various public projects which claim decolonial ends, such as the plan to "decolonize" and change the colonial names of the Bolivian state, such as the department of "Pando" which receives its name from a colonial general Jose Manuel Pando who was particularly cruel to indigenous populations (Luizaga, 2013).

The VMD was chosen as a focus for this study because it most clearly represents the government perspective and vision for decolonization. While there are other government bodies, such as the unit for decolonization within the Ministry of Justice, which have a relation to the process of decolonization, the VMD is the governmental body most responsible for implementing the concept of decolonization. In my interviews, I spoke with four persons associated with the VMD, all men. Since I will work through the content of their interviews together, I have given each person a pseudonym to distinguish between them. Two were currently in high level positions within the VMD (Carlos, and Juan), one was in a lower level position (José), and the final interviewee was formerly in a high level position in the VMD but is now working in another government ministry (Roberto). While each person interviewed had notable differences in their opinions, there were many general alignments in their understandings of decolonization. It will be seen how the perspectives of the VMD differ greatly with the views found in *Originario* and *Indigna* organizations (CONAMAQ and CIDOB), and with the original vision of decolonization found in the Unity Pact (explained last chapter), while they are, however, more similar to the views found in the *campesino* organizations (CSUTCB and CSCIB).

From my interviews with the VMD and from reading their published material, I found that decolonization is explained, first and foremost, as a process of recuperating indigenous values and culture while removing negative aspects of colonial culture. The focus here is predominately cultural, and the recuperation of indigenous values is treated as the moral foundation for the state of Bolivia. While part of decolonization is seen as rejecting modern practices that harm *pachamama*, they were also emphatic that not all elements of modernity are to be rejected and that decolonization should not mean a complete return to the past – thus affirming a sort of hybridity or alternative modernity. However, many of their projects, such as the Andean Wedding ceremonies and the Aymara New Year, are newly created celebrations and traditions and are not developed in cooperation with practices of indigenous communities themselves (Postero, Forthcoming; Canessa 2012a). As such, they appear more as state orchestrations of indigenous culture aimed at instilling a nationalist sense of unity based on a symbolic relationship to an imagined indigenous culture (Canessa, 2012a). Here, the target audience is not so much those who actually belong to particular indigenous traditions themselves, but rather those with a connection an indigenous heritage and identity but no longer “identify closely with the lifeways and cultural values of their communities of origin” (Canessa, 2012a, p.20). Also, while the proposals of the Unity Pact stressed the pluralist nature of Bolivia’s many distinct indigenous cultures, the VMD seems to homogenize indigenous culture for the whole of Bolivia and plurintaionalism was even described by one representative as a “stage” in a process of consolidation towards a single Bolivian society.

When not in the realm of culture, the emphasis for decolonization is often placed at the global and inter-state level, where the most dangerous threats are global capitalism and United States imperialism and where decolonization ought to be evangelized and spread to other countries. Finally, indigenous autonomy is often viewed with suspicion, seen as a threat the state structure or even simply not related to decolonization. In all my interviews the need for the central authority of the state was clearly stated. In general, the consolidation a strong and centralized “indigenous state” founded on an abstract and imagined sense of indigenous culture seemed to be the primary goal of decolonization.

In my interview with Carlos, a high-level worker within the VMD, he begins by explaining that, “Decolonization is recovering another philosophy of life because planet

earth is danger...the over-development, the over-industrialization...is madness. So this philosophy of life failed..." and later he states, "We dream of decolonization and say that it is the basis for the construction of a new society" and that,

The *pachamama* is the main paradigm, and should be the paradigm for all the inhabitants of planet earth, it is a planetarian paradigm. So, decolonization cannot be done only in Bolivia, we are obligated to develop it in all the continent...we have to evangelize the world, tell it that there is another way to life; there is a way to live, also with comfort, with a car, a house, but in equilibrium with *pachamama*... (Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation)

Likewise, Juan, another high-level worker within the VMD, asks "Should we industrialize with the same methods that there are in the world? No! Because those methods are creating pollution...they are creating the death of planet earth..." (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation). A point of criticism could be made here between this rhetoric of *pachamama* and the policies of Evo Morales which have continued to focus on industrialization and natural resource extraction.

However, while there is a rejection of the forms of modernity that harm *pachamama*, they also are clear to point out how decolonization does not mean a complete rejection of modernity. Carlos explains,

What we propose is to recuperate the best from our past, recover it scientifically, in order to combine this with modernity. But not with just any modernity, with a modernity that can allow us to develop, to make roads, while also taking care of *pachamama*... This is the only condition. So, decolonization is, then, a way of putting together knowledges, our and others, in order to be better.

(Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation)

Here we see a clear acceptance of what could be called cultural "hybridity." The VMD is clear that decolonization is not about "going back," each of the interviewees emphasized this point in different ways, rather, decolonization should mean recovering what is good from the past and combining it with what is good in modernity in order to move forward.

The vision expressed is also imagined at a very macro and global level. Carlos explains how Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina, are all discussing decolonization and states that, "Someday we will erase the borders, this will come with decolonization when we understand that we are different cultures but that we need each one" (Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation). Likewise, the Felix Cardenas (2013) booklet *Mirando Indio: Aportes para el Debate Descolonizador* (Indian Watch: Ideas for

the Decolonization Debate) published by the VMD to help explain decolonization, states, “To begin, there is no other option than to look at imperialism, the *imperio*, and global capitalism, and from there establish our front against colonialism which will be decolonization” (p.2, my translation). The booklet goes on to assert that the *imperio* is the United States, which is described as an “insatiable beast for natural resources” that invents wars in order to gain control of natural resources (p.2-3, my translation). Here, the major threat is externalized, and centers on global capitalism and the reach of United States imperialism. While probably most indigenous organizations would view global capitalism and imperialism as a danger, this external and macro focus shifts the emphasis away from decolonizing the internal structures of the state.

While decolonization is about recovering elements of indigenous culture, it is also about removing the negative influences of colonialism. For example, José, a lower-level worker at the VMD, states, “To decolonize Bolivia is to build a different country that overcomes racism, patriarchy and all forms of discrimination that was brought to us by the Europeans since 1492...” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 18, La Paz, my translation) and later,

We say that we have to be able to throw off the colonization that we carry in our minds, and be able to throw off the Judeo-Christian religion and Catholicism as a condition to open a situation of constructing decolonization in this country, because these two visions, the colony and the Judeo-Christian and Catholic vision...both visions have constituted the colonial world-view.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 18, La Paz, my translation)

Likewise, religion is identified as “the heart of modernity” by Carlos and is seen as the source of many societal ills, such as patriarchy (Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation). José claimed that, “A fundamental program that we have developed was, or is, the collective weddings from our identity, which recover the control that has been exercised by the Catholic Church until today...” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 18, La Paz, my translation). The “collective wedding ceremonies” sponsored by the VMD were seen as having the purpose of taking away the colonial control of the church in area of marriage. Furthermore, the church is seen to introduce colonial ways of thinking and colonial behaviors, such as patriarchy.

In my interview with Carlos, he explains the importance of culture. He states, “Culture is identity. Identity is ideology. Ideology is power. How can we construct power

if we don't have a solid culture?...Why does Halloween¹¹ enter so easily in the middle to upper classes, the schools and highschools? Because their identity is not solid" (Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation). Culture needs to be solidified to protect from foreign intrusions, such as Halloween, which corrupts indigenous values. The criticism of the church follows the argument that the church is part of Western-European hegemony and functions as a system of colonial control that needs to be destabilized. However, it appears that the VMD also takes the role of acting as the guardian of Bolivia's indigenous national culture, seeking to protect it against intrusions such as Halloween and at other times even criticizing the decisions of local indigenous communities.

On the one hand, the VMD praises local indigenous cultures which remain "pure," and untouched by the mark of colonialism. However, on the other hand, the VMD also criticizes the decisions made by many local indigenous communities and, as will be seen shortly, is often skeptical towards extending indigenous autonomy, affirming the need for a strong state. At times, the VMD employs essentialisms and romanticized views of indigenous culture, where it seems as though indigenous culture represents all that is pure, and Western culture is the root of all evil. For example, Juan asserts that,

In the territory of Karangas they live in the ways of their culture, their ancient civilization, continuing to use their form of writing, symbols...communicating everything through their system...they are living under the same values that they used to live by –'do not lie, do not be lazy, do not be a thief' – so, in these communities police are not necessary, the ordinary law is not necessary...these experiences are the basis for what we are recovering in the process of decolonization, they are decolonized...But the majority of our indigenous communities, the majority have been colonized, and we need to decolonize ourselves...the majority of the indigenous population has entered into the colonial system, but the minority exists that was not colonized, and these are the sources for the process of decolonization.

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation)

Here there seems to be an over-glorification of these "pure" communities that were never contaminated by colonial imposition and thus have no need of the police. However, while these "pure" communities are seen as the sources of decolonization, at the same time the

¹¹ Halloween has only recently begun to be celebrated in Bolivia, typically among the urban middle and upper-class. Its appearance in Bolivia has been somewhat of a controversial issue with some claiming that it is an example of Western consumerist culture invading Bolivia and displacing authentic indigenous culture ("Viceministro de descolonizacion dice...", 2012)

VMD's position concerning important issues is contrary to hopes and desires of these same indigenous communities. As will be demonstrated shortly, the VMD is hesitant to support local demands for indigenous autonomy; however, those from the Nation of Karangas mentioned above are currently demanding their own indigenous autonomy and also wish to extend their regional autonomy beyond the territorial limits of a municipal government (Tockman, Cameron & Plata, Forthcoming). It appears that while the VMD claims to support indigenous communities, it also criticizes the decisions made by many indigenous communities themselves and instead of allowing indigenous peoples to make their own decisions organically, the VMD seems to view themselves as the sole guardians and promoters of indigenous culture.

While the VMD describes decolonization as a process of recuperating indigenous values for the foundation of a new society, it is important to ask "how" and "who" will recuperate these indigenous values for Bolivian society? Should these values be allowed to develop naturally in indigenous communities themselves, or is the VMD responsible for recuperating these values? Similar to Carlos' statement cited above, the *Mirando Indio* booklet (Cardenas, 2013) claims that decolonization "aims to scientifically recuperate the past and combine it with modernity" (p.15, my translation). However, this process is not further explained. While it is unclear how this process could be done "scientifically," other parts of my interviews seem to indicate that the VMD proposes to be the official body in charge of overseeing this process. Carlos states,

There is no other Vice-Ministry of Decolonization in the world. We have to invent everything ourselves. We have to be capable of being imaginative...what is it that should be recuperated? What is it that needs to be recuperated? What is it that we have to envision?

(Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation)

Here Carlos describes the VMD itself as being responsible for determining what should be recuperated from indigenous culture.

Furthermore, when discussing the process of constructing indigenous autonomy or AIOCs, Carlos criticizes how the autonomy statutes produced by municipalities in conversion to AIOCs reproduce municipal structures. He states,

If you look at the...autonomy statutes, they are exactly the same as any, as any colonial norm and procedure. They don't change...so the actor is failing, the indigenous communities that should enter much more into the theme of

decolonization, which is to recover what is our own...and then [they should] covert that into an organic letter. Like that, it could work. But they are copying the organic letters from whatever consultant; lawyers are doing the organic letters from their occidental background.

(Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation)

What Carlos completely fails to acknowledge is that the primary reason AIOC statues resemble municipal structures is the restrictive framework of the LMAD and the influence that government technocrats and consulates in shaping the AIOC process and outcomes (Chapter 5; Tockman, Cameron & Plata, Forthcoming). In his criticism of the AIOCs, Carlos conveniently ignores the primary role of the state in creating the problem he identifies. Furthermore, this uncompromising and even dogmatic post-colonial position which rejects indigenous autonomy on the grounds that AIOC statues resemble liberal “municipal” structures creates many inconsistencies. For example, if the VMD rejects AIOCs on the grounds that they are too “municipal,” then why does it not protest municipalities themselves and the whole state structure? Surely AIOCs are less municipal than municipalities themselves. However, Carlos’ does not mention this and instead emphasizes the need for Bolivia, as a whole, to become autonomous and gain self-determination at the state level. Finally, in these instances where the VMD locates itself as the body in charge of “recuperating indigenous traditions” and is critical of the decisions made by indigenous communities themselves, it appears that the state is attempting to orchestrate indigenous culture and values from the top-down while silencing and discrediting other opinions.

Furthermore, many events and ceremonies that the VMD sponsors in promotion of indigenous culture and decolonization, such as the Aymara new year celebrations on June 21 or the Andean collective wedding ceremonies, can be seen as state orchestrations and attempts to “invent traditions” (See Hobsbawm, 2000) in the founding of a new national indigenous culture for the whole of Bolivia. These new traditions often have little relation to the actual practices of local indigenous communities, or, many times traditions with a distinctly Andean basis are spread throughout the whole of Bolivia. For example, the Inca proverb “do not lie, do not be lazy, do not be a thief,” as well as the Aymara New Year celebration are now applied to the whole of Bolivia, including the Amazonian lowlands, where these ideas and practices have no historical roots (Canessa,

2012a). Yet, as Canessa (2012a) claims, “It cannot be assumed that even in the highlands those who are most rooted in traditional rural lifeways will be the most comfortable with national indigeneity; in fact, it speaks most clearly to a very different constituency” (p.32), namely those in urban areas who desire a more imagined connection to indigeneity. Canessa explains how the local and traditional indigenous people of an area near Lake Titicaca in the Altiplano were amused and surprised by the descriptions of *pachamama* given by the state official during the Aymara New Year ceremony, an event they had never celebrated before. Instead, Canessa (2012a) claims that state ceremonies and displays of indigeneity are directed mostly at the much broader category of those who wish to have a symbolic connection to indigeneity, rather than local indigenous communities themselves.

Similarly, Postero’s (Forthcoming) study of the Andean Collective weddings hosted by the VMD demonstrates how in the ceremony,

There was an enormous heterogeneity of cultures, languages, and social status...[yet] Despite this variety, the speakers lumped all of them together, referring to “our” tradition, “our” identity, and “our” amautas [spiritual leaders]. Here the state was creating a fictional unity for its purposes, that invented commonality often invoked by nation-states (p. 25)

Moreover, Postero (Forthcoming) explains how, while the VMD and the state claimed that the Wedding ceremony “was a “recuperation” of real, past traditions that survived and resisted the centuries of colonization” (p.26), in fact, the ceremony contained many new and invented elements and that were different from the typically Andean tradition that the ceremonies were most supposed to represent. However, “Like the growing celebrations of Andean New Year, which enable urban residents and foreign tourists alike to enjoy Andean spirituality (Sammels 2012), the wedding spectacle presented a form of indigeneity easily incorporated into urban lives” (Postero, Forthcoming, p.41). Therefore, this state promotion of indigeneity and indigenous culture appears to be used in the service of creating a broad and unifying connection to a new and imagined form of indigeneity that is for the whole of Bolivia. As such, it seems that decolonization and indigenous culture is meant to serve as the foundation for a new indigenous nationalism.

In my interviews, those from *originario* and *indigena* organizations were not impressed with the ceremonies held by the VMD and Morales’ spectacles of indigeneity.

For example, the leader from CIDOB explained, “I don’t know what [the VMD] does; it doesn’t coordinate anything with us. The government here in Bolivia coordinates with its political enthusiasts; it has formed its own indigenous subject” (Interview with Author, 2014 February 5, Santa Cruz, my translation). An intellectual associated with CONAMAQ claimed that, “The only thing it [the VMD] does is distract attention from the real and big problems that face the majority population of this country” (Interview with Author, 2013 October 16, La Paz, my translation). Another CONAMAQ representative (Interview with Author, 2013 November 13, La Paz) even argued that many ceremonies displayed a lack of respect for indigenous culture, claiming that when Evo Morales enters the sacred temple of Tihuanaku (which he did during his presidential inauguration ceremony and often repeats during the Aymara New Year celebrations) he is “folkloricizing” their beliefs and that he did not have the right to perform these ceremony. The collective weddings were also described as a lack of respect. In sum, we see that the VMD’s many projects of decolonization appear to be attempts of the state to orchestrate indigenous culture from the top-down. Therefore, even as the government praises indigenous culture it does not, in fact, respond to or represent indigenous communities themselves; instead, this attempt to orchestrate indigenous culture can be seen as having to purpose of reinforcing state power according to a nationalist vision of indigeneity.

However, while the VMD has a strong cultural focus, it should be noted that Roberto, who formerly held a high position in the VMD but now works in a different government ministry, claimed that having the VMD in the Ministry of Cultures was a “bad idea” because decolonization should be more ‘political’ than ‘cultural.’ His vision seems to be to change the ideology of the state in order to create better public politics and policies. He explains,

So, how do we work to decolonize the state from within the state? We are talking about changing the ideas of the state...changing its spirit, historical, racist, *señorial*, patriarchal... To decolonize is to change the spirit and design of public politics...but not from just any place, rather from a specific place, from indigenous identity. The idea of indigenous identity has two words, community and *pachamama*.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation)

For Roberto, it appears that designing new public politics for the benefit of the majority indigenous population is decolonization. Later he claims,

[we should do] as the president is doing, thinking about the majority while not forgetting about minorities... what happens in the colonial order is it makes the state privilege the urban world while forgetting about the rural world, that is an injustice... We have said that if the rural areas produce food that comes to the city, you need to take care of the rural areas, you have to give water to the rural areas, and we are doing well with this... these are politics of decolonization that are not causing sufficient attention in the political world or in the academic world.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation)

In another section he talks about how decolonization ought to repair historical injustices and clearly sees that indigenous peoples ought to move up in positions of power. Roberto complains later, saying how “even that today there is an indigenous government, if you look at the hierarchical scheme, you’ll see that those with white color skin are dominantly above, while the darker skin is on the bottom.” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation) This view breaks with the typical cultural focus of decolonization seen in the VMD by focusing on the physical reality of poor indigenous populations and seeking to alter the power-relations of white-mestizos dominating government positions. However, this is still very different from the pluralist vision of decolonization, and, as will be seen, Roberto is very critical of indigenous autonomy and stresses the importance of a strong central state administration. While the vision of the Unity Pact would have radically changed the unilateral central state mode by creating plural forms of self-government and shared decision-making power, Roberto seems to view decolonization in terms of redistributing wealth, equalizing opportunities and replacing the white-mestizos elites in the government, while leaving the structure of the state intact.

Concerning the relationship between decolonization and indigenous autonomy, the VMD had views that were very different from the vision seen in the Unity Pact and from the interviews I had with CONAMAQ and CIBOD. The general view from the VMD was that indigenous autonomy within an “indigenous state” was a contradiction. This seems to resemble the pattern described in the previous chapter where the “indigenous state” claims to better represent the indigenous people than the indigenous leaders themselves. When explaining decolonization no one mentioned indigenous

autonomy until I asked about it specifically. While one lower-level person official (Jose) recognized that indigenous autonomy was connected to decolonization, the three others interviewed in high-level positions (or recently) in the VMD were skeptical towards indigenous autonomy in different ways. To give a few examples, one claimed that indigenous autonomy is “unrelated” to decolonization, another said that was demand manufactured by foreign NGOS, and another highlighted the dangers of giving indigenous communities a high level of authority over the natural resources in their territory, arguing that they would be bought out by the political right or that they would sell their resources without benefiting the state. The need for autonomies to be “relative” and submitted to the central authority of the central state in essential matters was described by many as a priority. Finally, when talking of autonomy and self-determination the focus was shifted to the national level; instead of decolonization relating to the strengthening indigenous autonomies within Bolivia, decolonization was described rather as a process where Bolivia as a whole territory becoming autonomous and sovereign at the inter-state level.

Carlos was very clear in expressing the difference between decolonization and local indigenous autonomy, He explains,

The [indigenous] autonomy is a theme that should not exist. It is a contradiction in a plurinational state. How, in a country where the majority is indigenous can there be indigenous autonomy? Because, in the classic understanding, majorities give autonomy to the minorities, ethnic minorities in danger of disappearing, in danger of extinction. In Bolivia, autonomy was not put forward by indigenous peoples, it was an imposition from the right...indigenous autonomy cannot be related with decolonization. In any case, the self-determination of all Bolivian territory is another thing than the minority view of indigenous autonomy. That does not enter into the imaginary of decolonization...autonomy is like saying “hey dad, I want my own room...” ok, live there...In any case, it should be self-determination, but as the territory of Bolivia against whatever external force, whether it be capitalism or...whatever.

(Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation)

It is useful to contrast these statements with the earlier quotation from taken from the original text produced by the Unity Pact in May 2006 which states that “Autonomy *indígena, originaria* and *campesina* is the condition and principle of liberty for our people and nations and the keystone of decolonization and self-determination” (In Garcés et al, 2010, p.152, my translation). In this original conception of decolonization by the

Unity Pact, AIOCs were seen as the “keystone” of decolonization, but the VMD now claims that they are “unrelated” and a “contradiction in a plurinational state.” Also, here we see decolonization again put in the global, macro context where internal structures are not considered and the need for a strong state as whole is emphasized. Finally, the way in which the “indigenous majority” is employed here has a homogenizing intent, aimed at silencing dissenting indigenous voices which would demand local autonomy rather than submitting to the administration of the indigenous central state that represents the indigenous majority.

However, it should be noted that not everyone’s opinion in the VMD were the same. José was the most generous toward local efforts for indigenous autonomy. He states,

...the respect and acceptance of indigenous autonomies is a starting point for decolonization, because it respects the other that is different, its forms of organization, its forms of exercising power, its exercise of justice, which we can see in its best manifestation in the exercise of indigenous ordinary justice, and, in fact, it is a principle element of decolonization...[The constitution] recognizes the legitimate form of territorial, geographic and cultural organization that is based in the indigenous autonomies, which is a starting point of decolonization...however it is contradictory, above all, because it is in the form of a municipal organization, which has been the dominant form since colonization until the date in which the indigenous peoples are organized now, regionalized in a municipality...this has generated difficulties...

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 18, La Paz, my translation)

Here, José notes how indigenous autonomy is a principle of decolonization and the problem that he mentions about indigenous autonomy is the same as what many indigenous organizations who wish to expand indigenous autonomy and self-determination complain about – that indigenous autonomy is organized in within a municipality. However, while this was the most accepting view on indigenous autonomy, it came from person who had the least amount of responsibility in the VMD.

When discussing indigenous autonomy, all the others interviewed in the VMD asserted the need for central state authority over and above the practice of indigenous autonomy. Roberto was very critical of the practices of many indigenous communities and organizations in the lowlands and expressed his fears of indigenous communities having control of their nonrenewable natural resources. For instance, he states,

I have an expression for the Guarani...they are professional extortionists. They are not interested in the country, what interests them is their well-being, here and now. I worked with them and they told me in the face... 'who cares about the state, who cares about the country'...the Guarani [say] 'now, the money, right now!' (Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation)

Here, there is a very negative attitude taken towards the Guaraní, and the thought of Guaraní communities controlling their strategic resources is seen as not in the interests of the wider Bolivian state. He states elsewhere,

Strategic resources generate money for the country. If we let go of those strategic resources in the hands of the *indígenas*, they're going to sell it. They're not going to industrialize anything...but the constitution is prudent in this sense, strategic resources are for all the Bolivian people, while the renewable resources are the property of the indigenous people, and that is good.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation)

This view maintains that strategic resources are meant to generate money for the state and for all Bolivian people. Here we see the interests of local indigenous communities subordinated to the interests of the majority, a very significant proportion of which also self-identifies as indigenous. Also, for Roberto, placing the control of these resources in the hand of the indigenous communities would mean that there would either be no industrialization or that they would sell the resources to the political right and big businesses. Here, not having industrialization is perceived as a bad thing, which is noteworthy since decolonization is often paired with efforts to take care of *pachamama*. Moreover, evidence from indigenous territories in the Chaco indicates that hydrocarbons from their territories are being industrialized and that the Guaraní are not against industrialization and desire larger cut of the profits for resources extracted in their territories (Hinojosa, 2012).

Roberto later explains the dangers of the TCOs (*Tierras Comunitarias de Origen*, or Communitarian Lands of Origin)¹², which are precolonial territorial land holdings that many indigenous communities lay claim to, predominantly in the lowlands. He states,

You're not going to think that the Guarani Indians...are great revolutionaries...no way! What do you think? No way! But the businesses know they can buy them, the big landowners [will buy] the Indians, because money moves everyone. It's pure logic for the TCOs. Today the situation changes, today it is convenient for

¹² TCOs were first recognized in 1996. However, TCOs were renamed as *TIOCS* (Territorios Indígena Originaria Campesinas, or Indigenous Originary Peasant Territories) in the 2009 constitution. While officially these lands are now TIOCs, many still refer them by their old acronym – TCO.

the right that the Indians of the orient have large territories because they become the perfect allies to question the Plurinational state. No? The alliance between patriado and patriado.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation)

Roberto views the TCOs as dangerous because it is believed that the political right and economic elites will be able to infiltrate these territories and buy off the indigenous peoples that live there, this is similar to the fear expressed by the leader of CSUTCB concerning indigenous autonomy.

There is some truth to Roberto's concern, as Fabricante and Postero (Forthcoming) describe the recent efforts of the political right in attempting to appear as allies to the currently marginalized indigenous groups in the lowlands for their own political ends. However, this argument is used to question precolonial rights to indigenous territories that have been recognized since 1996 and to assert the authority of the central state over the demands indigenous communities. What is perhaps most troubling, however, is the extremely negative attitude that is expressed towards the Guarani peoples. While Roberto speaks about the need to decolonize and move beyond racism in other areas of the interview, it seemed as though his general attitude towards the Guarani was not without prejudice.

In other sections of the interview Roberto criticizes the organizational structure of CIBOD, claiming that it is based in a familial and genealogical structure that is not democratic. However, this is a fundamentally liberal-republican critique that does not respect the norms and procedures of the Guarani, which, according to the constitution, ought to be respected. Furthermore, here we see Roberto using a liberal critique to discredit the institutions of indigenous groups that oppose the state. However, Carlos earlier criticized the AIOCs for recreating structures that follow liberal municipal institutions, displaying an ideologically dogmatic post-colonial position that is completely contrary to Roberto's liberal critique. The single common factor appearing here is that the contradictory critiques are both used in order to delegitimize views and organizations of indigenous groups that differ from the state.

Further explaining his views of indigenous autonomy, Roberto describes how demands for indigenous autonomy were intended for a different era, before the indigenous took control of the state. He claims,

But that [indigenous autonomy] was the model for challenging the neoliberal state, the state in its maximum colonial version. It was our weapon for fighting. But when we are the owners of the state now, the Indians are in the state, we have to rethink the tactics... We made a modification in tactics, because the idea of maximum autonomy was quickly appropriated by the political right...

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation).

Roberto goes on to explain here how the concept of autonomy was appropriated by the political right in an attempt to fracture and challenge the Plurinational state. In this context, it appears that indigenous communities must unite as the “indigenous majority” in the state in order to confront the resurgence of white-mestizo elites from Santa Cruz pushing to fracture the state with demands for departmental autonomy. Concerning this subject, Charles Hale (2011) notes how the right was able to hijack the discussion of autonomy with their demands for radical departmental autonomy. He states that now, “Autonomy is resignified as sedition: to support indigenous empowerment one must, first and foremost, defend the state” (p.202). However, the idea that the indigenous are now the owners of the state, and that the indigenous must therefore protect the indigenous state party, works as one of the most homogenizing indigenous discourses, silencing the indigenous groups who disagree with the direction of the state.

Thus, we see that as the VMD affirms a place for indigenous autonomy, it is generally accepted only under the central authority of the state, especially concerning strategic matters. As will be seen, there is also the view that demands for indigenous autonomy are the result of manipulation from NGOs or other imperial powers. In the end, Roberto states, “Well, autonomy has its levels. There are maximum, medium, and minimum...Indigenous autonomy, yes, but the strategic resources are for all of Bolivia” (Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz, my translation). Likewise, Juan states, “We can talk about relative autonomies. What is relative autonomy? It is a level of power to work in your territory, but in the same way you need to work for the whole society. This type of autonomy is the more viable. Above all in order to achieve the same opportunities in economic development, institutions...” (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation). However, later, Juan is skeptical of the benefit of indigenous autonomy, stating, “It is a contradiction saying that we are now the state, the indigenous, we are now the state, and inside the state I’m going to ask for my autonomy? How is that?” (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation) Again

we see the idea of the “indigenous state” used to oppose the demands indigenous autonomy and claiming to better represent the interests of Bolivia’s indigenous people. Juan continues by asking, “How is it going to be better than if they did not have autonomy? How is it going to be better? We have to see...and I guess...I have the hypothesis that nothing will really happen” (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation). While, indeed, Tockman and Cameron (Forthcoming) claim that in the current context “many...indigenous peoples – particularly those who already control municipal governments – appear to be deciding that indigenous autonomy is not worth pursuing” (p.35), this is primarily because of the numerous legal restrictions on AIOCs and limited form of autonomy that is currently permitted by the state.

When I asked if indigenous autonomy was a desire that these communities had, Juan replied, “It’s their desire in part I think, because the idea of autonomy was new in the indigenous communities. Who came up with autonomy? The NGOs, there are NGOs that live to manage autonomy...” (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation). Here we see the view that communities desiring autonomy are manipulated by foreign-funded NGOs and other interests. In response to this attitude, one Bolivian academic and public figure that I interviewed claimed that when the government says that the indigenous peoples of the orient are controlled and manipulated by NGOs or by the political right,

...that is another proof of the colonial character of the government. It is another perfect demonstration of the colonial mentality...to deny the *indigenas* their own rationality, their own thoughts, their own will...the *indígena* is almost an animal, similar to a cow. If no one is moving it or herding it, it cannot move itself according to its own decision. They used to say exactly the same thing...each time there were indigenous marches...[that] the communists were involved, the communist NGOs...now the government is the same. The NGOs are manipulating. Now you can’t say communist so now they are from the right...imperialists...

(Interview with Author, 2014 January 31, Cochabamba, my translation)

Juan’s quote above displays this tendency by ignoring the long-held demands by indigenous communities for self-determination and autonomy. Likewise, in explaining the events of the TIPNIS crisis, those in the VMD as well as in CSUTCB, tended to dismiss the demands of TIPNIS leaders claiming that they were influenced by NGOs and especially the political right and that they betrayed the government by cooperating with

the political right (Interview with Author, 2014 January 14, La Paz; Interview with Author, 2013 November 26, La Paz; Interview with Author, 2013 November 18, La Paz). Along similar lines, Carlos stated, “In Bolivia, autonomy was not put forward by indigenous peoples, it was an imposition from the right” (Interview with Author, 2014 January 24, La Paz, my translation). While there is some truth in this, as the political right has indeed demanded departmental autonomy during this last decade, the statement is made in order to dismiss the demands of indigenous communities who currently demand indigenous autonomy and have explicitly demanded autonomy and self-determination since at least the late 1980s (Valencia García and Égido Zurita, 2010).

In sum, the VMD’s perspective on indigenous autonomy, in general, is that it does not make sense in the current “indigenous state;” instead, decolonization is imagined much more at the inter-state level, where a strong Bolivia founded on an abstract sense of indigenous values stands up against global imperial forces. Similarly, the Canadian scholar who studies Bolivia’s indigenous autonomy, claimed that,

It seems clear that the national government, as well as the campesino federations – CSUTCB, the Bartolinas, the interculturales – that they locate it [decolonization] nationally...that they think that decolonization happens at the state, that you need a strong state to do it, and the local efforts to decolonize could be a threat...a threat in principle to how they see decolonization happening. Whereas indigenous communities or those who are seeking to recuperate the *Allys* and *Markas*...and certainly those in the lowlands...their interests in decolonization, their interests in indigenous rights, is much more at the local level and so...it’s kind of a question of where you locate decolonization.

(Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz)

So, for some, decolonization is about gaining local control and reconstituting new levels of authority, for example the *Ayllus* and the *Markas*, and local practices of self-determination. However, for those within the government, decolonization tends to fit with a process of consolidating the strength of the state around the idea of indigenous values.

This fits also with Andrew Canessa’s (2012a) work, where he concludes that,

In Bolivia today there are broadly speaking two indigenous discourses: one sees indigenous peoples and values as the foundation of the nation state and seeks to create an ecumenical indigeneity for a majority of Bolivia’s citizens; the other seeks to respect cultural difference in its multiple forms and protection of marginal peoples from the state. They are sometimes both articulated by the current government so it is not surprising that contradictory positions are taken since, at root, the two discourses are fundamentally opposed. (p.33)

These two indigenous discourses that Canessa describes parallels closely with the two dominant conceptions of decolonization described above. One, coming from the VMD, envisions a strong state founded on indigenous values while the other, coming from CONAMAQ and CIDOB emphasizes the need for self-determination according to traditional practices and territorial authority for indigenous communities.

The state's project of decolonization which focuses on the recuperation of indigenous values as the foundation for Bolivian society points in a very different direction than indigenous discourses that focus on the rights local self-determination and the need for pluralism (Canessa, 2012a). The original proposals for the Plurinational state found in the Unity Pact presented a vision of radical pluralism with multiple systems of authority and co-administration. However, as Canessa (2012a) states, the state's discourse of indigeneity (which decolonization can be seen as a part of) is "...a very different vision of indigeneity: a homogenous national culture for the majority" (p.15). Furthermore, Canessa (2012a) later states, "the Morales government is seeking in the twenty-first century to create a national culture based on indigenous culture. Paradoxically, this national indigenous culture holds a very strong potential of excluding marginal indigenous groups" (p.30). It appears that when the indigenous are in the state, indigenous groups themselves cannot oppose the state. This ultimately leads to a forced homogenization of indigenous peoples and a vision that takes away the "pluri" nature of plurinationalism. At times, this mono-cultural direction was even expressed explicitly.

In my interview with Juan he presented a very different understanding of plurinationalism than the one found in the Unity Pact or even the constitution. For Juan, plurinationalism is seen as merely a phase that will eventually lead to a single Bolivian society without cultural divisions. First, he states,

In this moment it is necessary [plurinationalism], because each people has to recuperate their identity, each nation, so Bolivia is understood as the sum of the nations, all the nations in Bolivian Territory...but this also has it's negative side and risk; we are not equal, in this moment the Aymaras and the Quechas are hegemonic and we will continue being so if things don't change...

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation)

Juan then explains how Aymaras and Quechuas are expanding and improving economically while "the other 34 [nations] are very poor, isolated, very distant in terms of modernity, so there is no equity. So, if things continue this way we [Aymaras and

Quechuas] are going to be hegemonic or the new colonizers...” (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation). Because of this, Juan envisions a process taking place where greater equality of opportunities will lead to a breaking down of cultural divisions. He eventually states,

Neither do we pretend that for our whole life we are going to be indigenous with our semi-folkloric togas...this is a process, and because of that, it is a necessary first step to re-understand and affirm ourselves, and the next step from here, in 20, 30 years, we are going to give up being indigenous, we have to give up being indigenous, or are you going to be Guarani, you Aymara, you are Quechua, no!...the state plurinationalism is a...also a method, a political stage in the history of a single Bolivian society.

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation)

It is incredibly troubling that a senior staff member in a ministry in charged to carry out decolonization, within a so-called “plurinational” state, would call for what is effectively the assimilation Bolivia’s various indigenous cultures into a single Bolivian national culture. Despite having different interpretations, both decolonization and plurinationalism promote diversity and involve recovering and protecting marginalized cultures from assimilation and encroaching systems of homogenization. However, here, “plurinationalism” is considered to be only a “stage” in the process of constructing a homogenous national culture. Juan continues by claiming,

Also, this theme of autonomy is a transitional and provisional theme, it is a step in order to think in self-government, but a self-government that is not autonomous in territories, but rather a government at the level of Bolivia.

(Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation)

And finally,

this is a nation that lived disintegrated but now we can integrate ourselves as a single society and give better opportunity to those that had less opportunity and in 10 years we will try to level the life of Bolivians, but without divisions...[For example] Aymara, Quechua, Guarani...this philosophy also exists no? So, we’ll see. (Interview with Author, 2013 October 30, La Paz, my translation)

Again, we see a push towards an eventual homogenous Bolivian society where the creation of equal opportunities breaks down cultural barriers. This view appears entirely contrary to the spirit of both decolonization and plurinationalism and is radically different from the views found in the proposals prepared by the Unity Pact as well as the current constitution.

6.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, similar to the vision found in the Unity Pact proposals, *Originario* and *indígena* organizations view decolonization primarily as a means towards self-determination for the various indigenous nations of Bolivia and, as such, they envision a plural structure for government where there is territorial autonomy for communities and greater shared decision-making in state matters. However, while the state also claims to support decolonization it is heading in a very different direction – towards solidifying a centralized state control and administration implementing a developmentalist vision based on the extraction of natural resources (often located in indigenous territories) and the redistribution of wealth. Therefore, I argue, in order to pursue both decolonization and this agenda the state has radically reinterpreted the concept of decolonization towards its own ends. The result is that the VMDs vision of decolonization is nationalist rather than pluralist; it affirms the need for a strong central state rather than shared decision-making; it promotes its own version of a homogenous indigenous culture rather than coordinate with Bolivia's various indigenous communities themselves.

On final assessment it appears that the decolonization promoted by the VMDs is primarily conceived as a process of recuperating (or orchestrating) an imagined and homogenous indigenous culture for the whole of Bolivia in order to foster a new indigenous nationalism that will strengthen the state as a whole against global imperial forces. Since the VMD appears to disregard and discredit the views of decolonization coming from many indigenous organization and communities themselves and since its own trajectory for decolonization is contrary to their central demands by supporting strong state control and administration, it appears that the VMD has the role in the marginalizing the voices of indigenous communities that are disruptive of the state agenda while attempting to produce a form of decolonization and decolonized subject that is manageable according to the state's interests. Or what Postero (Forthcoming) calls “the *descolonizado permitio*¹³, the permissible decolonized subject supporting the MAS state” (p.25). As such, I argue that the VMD provides an example of what could be called “colonial decolonization” or the state's “re-colonization of the decolonization process.”

¹³ Here, Postero is expanding on the concept of the “*indio permitido*” coined by Charles Hale (2004), which referred to the subject of a permissible Indian in the neoliberal era that did not threaten the state or capitalism.

This represents the state's co-opting of decolonization, taking it away from its original conception that would disrupt the structure of the state and towards a new direction that helps to consolidate state control. It should also be noted that this co-optation is proving to be largely successful with many dominant indigenous organizations, particularly *campesino* organization (CSUTCB and CSCIB), choosing to accept this new direction for decolonization.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary of Central Findings and Conclusions.

This final section will analyze what has been covered so far making use of the critical theories outlined in chapter two in order to draw final conclusions. Also, in closing, I will outline some important implications that follow from the study. To begin, I will briefly summarize the main points of the thesis by considering my original research question and sub-questions outlined in chapter one. My initial question was “Can a state decolonize itself?” which I later worked into a more precise research question: “To what extent and in what ways is Bolivia’s process of decolonization influenced by its state-led nature?” However, in order to answer this question I created four important sub-questions. My first sub-question was “What is decolonization in theory?” This was considered in in chapters two and three. Here, I demonstrated how, as it is globally understood, the term decolonization has developed from originally being linked to ‘formal decolonization’ processes towards new meanings that connect to a variety of different political agendas, including the challenge of combatting racism and racial hierarchies, the process of recuperating indigenous cultures and languages, often through education and language policies, or resisting the homogenization of Western cultural globalization. Moreover, in Bolivia, decolonization has come to be linked to a variety of different political agendas that range from radically resisting White/Mestizo culture, to recuperating indigenous identity, history and language in the education system, to restructuring Bolivia’s capitalist economic system. What this ultimately means is that there are many different and competing definitions and understandings of decolonization, often causing a lack of clarity in debates and discussions.

Considering this lack of clarity, the second, third and fourth sub-questions¹⁴ guiding my research project were aimed at comparing how the state’s understanding and discourse of decolonization differed to the understanding and discourse of decolonization found in important indigenous sectors. I also asked if the state’s discourse of

¹⁴ Sub-question two: How is the concept of decolonization used by the actors associated with the government’s decolonization policies in Bolivia? Sub-question three: To what extent is there a discrepancy between the government’s conceptions and practices of decolonization and other understandings of decolonization that may exist on the ground in Bolivia? Sub-question four: To what extent is there a discrepancy between state discourse on decolonization and state actions to actually promote decolonization?

decolonization differed from its actual practice. These questions were considered in chapters five and six where it was found that the government's discourse and understanding of decolonization differs greatly from the view found in the *indigena* and *originario* indigenous organizations, while the perspectives found in *campesino* and *interculturales* organizations are more in line with the government's position.

The state's promotion of decolonization emphasizes the need to recuperate indigenous cultural practices and to strengthen the state as a whole against outside forces such as foreign imperialism. However, the VMD also appeared to disregard the views of indigenous communities themselves and in its approach to recovering indigenous culture there was often little coordination with indigenous organizations themselves. Moreover, while the celebrations of indigeneity promoted by the VMD are intended for the whole of Bolivia, they often relate to only a single indigenous tradition. Even more concerning, these celebrations are often newly created traditions and appear as strange and foreign to the very people the celebration is meant to represent; rather, the most enthusiastic supporters of these celebrations are urban indigenous groups or those who desire a more symbolic connection to indigeneity and indigenous spiritualism (Canessa, 2012a; Postero, Forthcoming). Therefore, these tactics appears more as a sort of top-down state orchestration of an imagined pan-indigenous culture. Taken alongside the rhetoric of strengthening the state as a whole, it appears that state is attempting to promote indigenous culture as the foundation of a new state nationalism and is making use of invented indigenous traditions to solidify unity. The tactic of state-led "invented traditions" in the process of nation making has been long recognized (Hobsbawm, 2010).

The danger of this nationalist version of decolonization is that it appears directly opposed to the definition of decolonization given by many indigenous organizations and the vision for decolonization seen in the Unity Pact proposals. Indigenous organizations which were *indigena* (CIDOB) or *originario* (CONAMAQ) described decolonization primarily in terms gaining territorial autonomy and self-determination, greater political representation, wider jurisdiction for the application of indigenous justice, and the right to a binding prior consultations process and free, informed prior consent for the exploitation of natural resources within their territories. However, on this account the VMD differed clearly by asserting the need for "relative autonomy" and central state control especially

concerning strategic matters such as the administration of natural resources. Meanwhile, *campesino* indigenous groups (CSUTCB and CSCIB) echoed this sentiment and tended to view the government progress concerning decolonization favorably.

Looking historically, it should be remembered that indigenous groups have been demanding territory, autonomy, self-determination, and recognition as distinct cultural nations since at least the 1970s (highlands) and 1980s (lowlands) and have often articulated these demands with an anti-colonial or decolonial discourse (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010; Valencia García and Égido Zurita, 2010). Furthermore, many of these same indigenous groups were a part of the Unity Pact which helped propel Evo Morales to power and which was most vocal group in demand of a new constitution that was meant to erase the old state's colonial forms of exclusion of indigenous peoples. The Unity Pact's proposals for the constitution presented a pluralist vision for decolonization that related closely to "plurinationalism" and rested on a full conception of indigenous autonomy and self-determination, recovering pre-colonial territories and establishing a radical new state structure that would also facilitate greater levels of shared decision-making at the national level (Postero, 2013a; Garces et al., 2010). Therefore, we can see continuity in the demands connected to decolonization when we look at the long held demands for autonomy and self-determination coming from the *Kataristas* and the *indigenas* in the lowlands, the initial proposals for plurinationalism and decolonization found in the Unity Pact, and the current perspectives on decolonization found in the *indigena* and *originario* organizations. However, the state's nationalist perspective of decolonization appears as a new understanding of decolonization and seems to fit more closely with the vision of the Nationalist left which emphasizes national sovereignty, wealth redistribution and anti-imperialism.

Concerning how the State's discourse of decolonization matches with its practice (sub-question four), there are some important contradictions to be noted. First, while the VMD often emphasizes the need for living in "equilibrium with *pachamama*," at the same time the government can be seen as accelerating programs which exploit of natural resources (Postero, 2013b; Kohl & Farthing 2012). Furthermore, in so far as the government maintains a discourse that retains elements that relate to the pluralist vision seen most clearly in the Unity Pact proposals there is often a contradiction. John

Cameron (2012) identifies one of the clearest examples of this sort of contradiction when he points out that, even though government officials in the Ministry of Autonomies and Decentralization declare that “without indigenous autonomies, there is no Plurinationalism,” (p.192, my translation) the government continues to deny and restrict indigenous autonomy. Or, said differently, while the actions of the government demonstrate that it is moving in a direction that resembles the Nationalist Left position – towards a strongly centralized government administration that relies heavily on resource extraction (commonly within indigenous territories) to redistribute wealth – much of the language of the state still retains elements that came from the pluralist vision seen in the proposals prepared by the Unity Pact. In fact, “decolonization” can be seen as a primary example of this. However, I argue, that in order to avoid contradiction the state has now reinterpreted decolonization under a new light that supports the state’s nationalist interests.

Finally, in answer to the central research question: “To what extent and in what ways is Bolivia’s process of decolonization influenced by its state-led nature?” it can be seen that Bolivia’s process of decolonization has been greatly affected by state involvement and has moved from a “pluralist” direction towards a “nationalist” direction that fits in line with the governments’ broader interests and neo-extractivist developmentalist agenda. While the government claims to support decolonization and officially adopts the terms decolonization and plurinationalism in the constitution, at the same time it greatly restricts and limits the practice of these each of these concepts, especially in the area of indigenous autonomy, self-determination and territorial rights over natural resources. The VMD now promotes a new nationalist discourse of decolonization that calls for the strengthening of the state as a whole and disregards indigenous demands for local autonomy, which was previously described as the “keystone” of decolonization by the Unity Pact (Garces et al, 2010, 152, my translation). Furthermore, the VMD’s projects aimed at revalorizing indigenous culture often appear as a state a top-down state orchestration of an imagined indigenous culture aimed fostering a new indigenous sense of nationalism. Since the state’s nationalist discourse of decolonization disregards and denies many of the central elements of the original pluralist understanding of decolonization and plurinationalism, the state’s adoption of the

decolonization process can be described as a co-optation or the state's re-colonization of the decolonization process. While some indigenous groups accept this new decolonization, many of the original groups demanding decolonization continue to be silenced and marginalized, with the state continuing to act unilaterally to extract resources from their territories.

7.2 Theoretical Analysis of Bolivia's State-Led Decolonization Process.

Now that these conclusions have been reached, I will analyze these findings incorporating the critical theories explained in chapter two in order to gain a better theoretical understanding of the situation. Following this, I will explain some important implications that may be drawn from this study. First, following Miliband (1972) and Poulantzas (1972), the state's dependence on rents from transnational corporations extracting natural resources (Kohl & Farthing, 2012) would severely limit the state's autonomy and ability to act freely. In Poulantzas' (1972) structural argument for the limited autonomy of the state from capital, a principle function of the state itself is to ensure the means of capitalist production. Therefore, according to this theory, it would be difficult or impossible for the state to promote a version of decolonization that threatens this capitalist production. The pluralist vision of decolonization found in the demands made by *Indigena* (CIDOB) and *Originario* (CONAMAQ) organizations and Unity Pact proposals emphasizes the need for a full expression of territorial autonomy and self-determination for indigenous peoples and nations. According to these demands for decolonization indigenous peoples would gain larger territories and greater authority within them – at the minimum, indigenous peoples would gain veto power over the decision to extract natural resources from their territories. This could potentially disrupt a vital source of income for the state as well as threaten the business opportunities of many capitalist elites. Tockman and Cameron (Forthcoming) explain just how much this would affect the state,

...73 municipalities in the highland region include populations that are over 90 percent indigenous, which in theory could be expected to pursue conversion to AIOC (Albó and Romero 2009, 22; Colque 2009, 48). In the lowland region, indigenous peoples are a minority in most municipalities, but have gained state recognition for 60 TIOCs, many of which have expressed interest in AIOC (Salgado Moreno 2011). Countrywide, the 190 TIOCs that had been legally recognized as of February 2011 represent 19 percent of Bolivia's national

territory. If the long list of demands for TIOCs that have not yet received formal legal status and collective land titles is added, the proportion of national territory rises to more than 35 percent (Fundación terra 2001, 46). Although no data yet exist on the land area represented by the predominantly indigenous municipalities that could pursue conversion to indigenous autonomy, it is clear that more than half of Bolivia's national territory could be subjected to such claims. The danger that a serious model of indigenous autonomy would present to Bolivia's resource extraction-dependent state becomes particularly clear when we consider that many of the nonrenewable resources on which the state currently depends, as well as future areas of exploration, lie precisely in areas where indigenous peoples could be expected to pursue autonomy. (p.28)

If the state's autonomy is bound by its function to reproduce the means to capitalist production, as Miliband (1972) and Poulantzas (1972) argue (for slightly different reasons), then it seems that the state would be incapable of supporting a version of decolonization that grants a full expression of autonomy and extends veto power to indigenous peoples concerning the extraction of natural resources from their territories. This provides an important lens to explain why the government has changed and altered decolonization towards a nationalist instead of pluralist direction.

Scott's theories (1998) explain how one of the state's principle interests is to facilitate the means for bureaucratic management and control over its internal territory. As such, when communities begin to interact with the state, the state seeks to create and place upon these communities new systems which are "legible" to state planners. This process, according to Scott (1998), has often meant the standardization and simplification of complex local systems as well as the introduction of measures and regulations that facilitate taxation, centralized management and bureaucratic control. The pluralist vision of decolonization and plurinationalism would have done more than simply decentralize the state; it would have introduced a complex system of shared-management and plural forms of local administration and indigenous forms of self-government (Garces, 2011). According to Scott (1998) this would go against the state's natural interests in standardizing, codifying and systematizing structures for simple management and manipulation from the center.

In the in process of granting AIOCs and a space for indigenous autonomy, we can see how the government gradually introduced numerous bureaucratic regulations and reasserted centralized state control, converting plurinationalism into a system that

resembles modern liberal governance. According to Tapia's assessment (2011), the Unity Pact was the body that imagined and designed the Plurinational state in theory, while MAS was "...the actor that established the reduction of the Plurinational State into the format of a modern liberal state that recognizes multiculturalism" (p.143, my translation). Beginning with the *ley de Convocatoria* (the law of convening) which reasserted the control of the political party system in electing representatives within the CA (See chapter five), Tapia (2011) claims that each phase of MAS' application of plurinationalism, for example the passing of the final constitution and the secondary laws following the constitution, has simultaneously reduced the vision of plurinationalism to a format that resembles a modern liberal state and a hierarchical structure favoring centralized authority. This reassertion of a hierarchical liberal structure can be interpreted as an example of the state converting plurinationalism into a "legible" form that aids central bureaucratic administration, planning and control. If bureaucratic "legibility" is a fundamental goal of the state, then this reintroduction of liberal institutions and bureaucratic regulations could be seen as an expected outcome of state involvement in a decolonization process. Also, it appears that important aspects of decolonization, such as the reconstitution of local systems of indigenous self-government, run contrary to increased state involvement that aims to standardized and systematize.

Similar to Scott's theories, Foucault's (1991) concept of "governmentality" demonstrates the ways in which the modern state has increasingly set up systems of control and apparatuses of security which serve to discipline the population and render them "governable." Therefore, rather than simply representing the population, the state also "governs" and disciplines its population towards its own ends and away from directions that threaten state control. The gradual yet significant restrictions and limitations which have been placed upon central concepts of decolonization and plurinationalism, such as in the area of indigenous autonomy, seem to indicate that these disciplining tactics are in play. Rather than rejecting the popular demand for indigenous autonomy, the state has instead conditioned its application into a "governable" form that allows the continuance of centralized control. In order to do so the state has employed various measures and apparatuses of security and discipline. For instance, AIOCs are reduced by a very restrictive legal framework that not only limits their authority and

territory but also creates numerous bureaucratic requirements that make the process of converting to become an AIOCs very long and arduous. Furthermore, in the process of writing and deliberating autonomy statutes, government officials (*técnicos*) are seen to be actively present in determining a favorable outcome for the state (Cameron, 2013; Tockman & Cameron, Forthcoming; Interview with Author, 2013 November 4, La Paz, my translation). These measures of control are so restrictive on AIOCs that Tockman & Cameron (Forthcoming) claim, “the apparent success of some indigenous groups in establishing autonomous self-governance draws them much more closely into the “bureaucratic entanglements” of the state, arguably eroding rather than enhancing autonomy” (p.4-5). In these instances the state’s tactics of governmentality allow it to appear as though it is responding to popular demands while at the same time restricting and disciplining the demand into a reduced and governable form. Arguably, the VMD is another example of an apparatus of security and control and the state’s attempts to discipline and neutralize demands for decolonization towards direction in line with state objectives.

However, recalling Foucault’s conception of power, discourse and truth will be helpful in discussing the role of the VMD in affecting the process of decolonization. According to Foucault (1980), “There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth...” (p.93). This means is that the state’s exercise of power must be supported by set of discourses which the society accepts as truth. Also, the state often utilizes its power in producing and influencing public discourse and in this way influences the truth and subjectivity of those in society. Around the time of Morales’ election in 2005 neoliberalism was in crisis and failing as a governing discourse (Kohl & Farthing, 2006) and, in its place, new discourses arising from indigenous social movements were emerging and gaining support. Tockman and Cameron (Forthcoming) point out how “...indigenous peoples have prevailed through sustained mobilization, especially between 2000 and 2005, to redefine the relevant social categories that exist in Bolivian society” (p.4). Much of Bolivia’s current language and discourse of the state, such as decolonization and plurinationalism, arose from these demands of indigenous social movements. Furthermore, since his election, Morales and his MAS government

have adopted and relied heavily on discourses of indigeneity in order to gain support and legitimacy (Canessa, 2012b).

There are two ways to interpret how this new indigenous and ‘decolonial’ public discourse can affect Bolivian society. On the one hand, some take the view that this change in the discourse will help to keep the state accountable and eventually lead to important social improvements. For example, Postero (2013a) states, “Now the state must respond to the accusations of colonialism from the so-called decolonizing state. Now the state is held accountable for the gap between its discourse about the *pachamama* (Mother Earth) and its practices on the ground” (p.18-19). On this account, even if the state does not currently match its rhetoric with practice, this gap will produce contradictions and social protest and eventually the state will become more and more accountable. Therefore, advances in the constitution such as Art. 2, which recognizes the pre-colonial existence of indigenous nations and their right to self-determination, and changes in the discourse and language of the state are important even when the state is not living up to its rhetoric or claims because new standards are set which may be used as a tool in protest against the state.

However, while this is certainly a valid argument and a possible scenario, what the current study indicates is how the state can also co-opt the discourse and demands of social movements and use its position of power to influence and adapt the discourse for its own purposes. A central finding in this study indicates that the state is currently utilizing a discourse of decolonization as a strategy to promote a nationalist vision that consolidates centralized state control and allows the government to continue with its developmentalist agenda of natural resource extraction within indigenous territories. This is drastically different from the pluralist vision of decolonization seen in the Unity Pact and the current demands of *indigena* (CIDOB) and *originario* (CONAMAQ) organizations. This points to a current discursive struggle between ‘nationalist’ and ‘pluralist’ visions of decolonization and, it appears, that the role of the VMD is to promote this new discourse of decolonization that is in line with state interests. The VMD demonstrates how state is capable of using its power to shape public discourse and create new subjectivities and truths which allow it to govern society according to its interests. Moreover, there is no reason to deny the possibility that the state could bring a majority of the population on

board with this new understanding of decolonization. Indeed, the MAS party continues to command a strong support base, especially with *campesino* organizations. Unfortunately, if this direction continues to win out the many indigenous communities who have been demanding greater autonomy and territorial self-determination from the state will continue to be marginalized and brushed aside.

7.3 Implications of the Study

In closing, I wish to highlight some important implications that may be drawn from this study. First, considering the effect that the state has had on the process of decolonization in Bolivia, it appears unlikely that a state could effectively “decolonize itself.” Decolonization often implies a radical restructuring the state system. However, the state’s ties to capitalist production and its interests in securing the means of bureaucratic management and control are likely to restrain the state and keep it from implementing changes that would disrupt the governing order. Therefore, government involvement in decolonization is likely to push the project away from its revolutionary elements and towards a reformist path. In the case of Bolivia, the governmentality of the state has effectively disciplined and neutralized the many of the radical elements of decolonization towards a governable form and the also reinterpreted the direction of decolonization towards further state control. However, while it is likely that the state will aim to discipline the revolutionary political aspects of decolonization, it may still be possible that the state could address more politically neutral aspects of decolonization, such as improving language and education policy, yet this prospect was not the central focus of the current study.

Another important point that this study makes clear is that because the concept of decolonization has changed so much from its original meaning, its current use is incredibly flexible and often imprecise. Decolonization can now refer to a variety of even opposing political agendas, such as the pluralist and nationalist visions of decolonization described above. Therefore, in debates on decolonization it is necessary to clearly define how the term is being used and for what ends.

Finally, this study demonstrates and affirms what Fanon (2004) recognized about decolonization decades ago. Writing at a time when many African states were still occupied by colonial rulers, he claimed that “National liberation and the resurrection of

the state are the preconditions for the very existence of a culture” (p.177). While recognizing the importance of affirming one’s own culture and history, Fanon states clearly that the priority must first be on political liberation. He states elsewhere,

Sooner or later, however, the colonized intellectual realizes that the existence of a nation is not proved by culture, but in the people’s struggle against the forces of occupation. No colonialism draws its justification from the fact that the territories it occupies are culturally nonexistent. Colonialism will never be put to shame by exhibiting unknown cultural treasures under its nose. (2004, p.159)

Many in Bolivia, including the VMD, are greatly influenced by the theoretical and abstracted project of decolonization put forward by scholars such as Mignolo, Dussel and Quijano (Postero, Forthcoming; Portugal, 2011; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012). In this project of decolonization the goal is to challenge modernity and global forms of modern western hegemony in the area of global knowledge production by locating a new paradigm and epistemology in the “cultural richness” found at the “exteriority of modernity” and producing knowledge from “new loci of enunciation,” (meaning locations other than the hegemonic Western location and perspective) (Mignolo 2002; Dussel, 2006). However, what this study indicates is that there is an incredible difference between this cultural project and instances where indigenous peoples and communities are still struggling for political self-determination and territorial autonomy. While one group is fighting against “modern western culture” and abstract, subtle forms of colonialism and “coloniality,” the other is fighting against concrete forms of political exclusion and marginalization. As Portugal (2013) claims, post-colonial decolonization refers more to post-colonial problems; however, Bolivia is still in a colonial situation. Therefore while the revalorization of culture is something that is important, the state claiming to support indigeneity while continuing to marginalize the demands and political aspirations of indigenous nations cannot be seen as a gain worth much celebration.

While the understanding of decolonization found in the Unity Pact proposals and currently seen in *indigena* and *originario* organizations (CIDOB and CONAMAQ) centers on self-determination and autonomy, the state’s understanding focuses heavily on recuperating and revalorizing indigenous culture and identity and, when speaking politically, decolonization is interpreted as the strengthening of a single sovereign and indigenous nation-state. While this nationalist interpretation of decolonization appears to

be carried over from the nationalist left goals and perspective within the MAS government, the emphasis on cultural recuperation and strengthening indigenous identity as a form of decolonization can be seen as stemming from the influence of post-colonial studies and decolonial scholars, particularly Mignolo, Dussel and Quijano. In conclusion, then, a few final points can be made. First, projects resembling the post-colonial understanding of decolonization that focuses on recuperating and revalorizing indigenous culture and identity must be recognized as essentially different from political processes of decolonization that may be characterized as a struggle towards political self-determination. Second, state sponsored projects aimed at recuperating indigenous culture in the name of decolonization require further scrutiny to see if they are done with the participation and support of indigenous communities themselves and to see if the discourse and rhetoric celebrating indigenous culture does not cover up and mask continued systems of marginalization and forms of subjugation for indigenous peoples and communities.

APPENDIX A

Bolivia's population according ethnic self-identification (15 years or older):

Indigenous nation or peoples	Pop.	Region
Afroboliviano	16,329	Lowland
Araona	910	Lowland
Aymara	1,191,352	Highland
Ayoreo	1,862	Lowland
Baure	2,319	Lowland
Canichana	617	Lowland
Cavineño	2,005	Lowland
Cayubaba	1,424	Lowland
Chacobo	826	Lowland
Chipaya	786	Highland
Chiquitano	87,885	Lowland
Esse Eja	695	Lowland
Guaraní	58,990	Lowland
Guarasugwe	42	Lowland
Guarayo	13,621	Lowland
Itonama	10,275	Lowland
Joaquiniano	2,797	Lowland
Kallawaya	7,389	Highland
Leco	9,006	Lowland
Machinerí	38	Lowland
Maropa	2,857	Lowland
Mojeño	31,078	Lowland
Moré	155	Lowland
Mosetén	1,989	Lowland
Movima	12,213	Lowland
Murato	143	Lowland
Pacahuara	161	Lowland
Quechua	1,281,116	Valley and Highland
Sirionó	446	Lowland
Tacana	11,173	Lowland
Tapiete	99	Lowland
Tsimane (Chimán)	6,464	Lowland
Weenayek	3,322	Lowland
Yaminahua	132	Lowland
Yuki	202	Lowland
Yuracaré	3,394	Lowland
Yuracaré - Mojeño	292	Lowland
Other groups	42,188	Varied
Non-specified	4,419	
Non-Bolivian residents	73,707	
Total population of persons self-identifying with an indigenous nation or people	2,806,592	
Total population or persons not self-identifying with an indigenous nation or people	4,032,014	
Bolivia's Total Population	6,916,732	

*Data from the 2012 Bolivian national census (See Bolivia Características de Población y Vivienda, 2012). Elaboration by the author.

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