

MENDEL UNIVERSITY IN BRNO

Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies

**Political Participation of Indigenous Peoples -
Recent Developments in MAS Era Bolivia**

Bachelor Thesis

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Siru Pauliina Laine

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of the actions of the current Bolivian government on the country's indigenous population and their opportunities for political participation. The theoretical part defines factors affecting political participation in general and presents political theories that have had an important role in both, the formation and the current policies of the ruling party, Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). The analytical part concentrates on various factors influencing the position of the indigenous peoples and their political role in Bolivia and on the legislative changes that have shaped the situation bringing it to its current state. In the discussion the different aspects of the issue are combined in order to understand the challenges that the indigenous people face in the present context, after which possible future actions are suggested. The thesis concludes by arguing that the legislative changes and the other actions of the MAS government have affected the indigenous people of Bolivia in positive and negative ways. Their political participation has increased and situation of human development has improved, but at the same time issues exist because of incomplete rights to autonomy and problems with protecting indigenous territories from natural resource extraction.

Key words: Bolivia, MAS, Evo Morales, indigenous people, political participation

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Abbreviations

AIOC - Autonomía Indígena Originario Campesina (Indigenous First Peoples' Peasant Autonomy)

ALBA - Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America)

CONAMAQ - Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (The National Council of Markas and Ayullus of Qullasuyu)

CIDOB - Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia)

ECLAC - United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

FPIC - Free Prior Informed Consent

ILO - International Labour Organization

INE - Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National statistical office of Bolivia)

LPP - Ley de Participación Popular (Law of Popular Participation)

MAS - Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement for Socialism)

OTB - Organizaciones Territoriales de Base (Territorially Based Organizations)

TIPNIS - Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Secure (Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory)

UNDRIP - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the thesis

In the end of the last century, the indigenous people in several Latin American countries started to mobilize in order to end the centuries of injustice that they have experienced. These movements had various demands concerning their autonomy and right to their territories, recognition of the languages, cultures and norms and the possibility to participate in the political processes as equal citizens. This thesis will analyse the developments that these movements started in Bolivia and discuss their success in terms of increasing meaningful political participation of the natives.

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the development of the role of the indigenous people in the recent and current political sphere of Bolivia and reflect that against the chosen political theories as well as compare it with the history of the country and the general situation in other Latin American countries.

The aim of the thesis is to gain a better understanding of the recent political history of Bolivia, specifically the political role of indigenous citizens of the South American state. The central theme will be the influence of the current ruling party Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) that has been in power for the last decade and therefore has had a large role in shaping the Bolivian society and the place of the indigenous peoples in it. The research will be done by studying the recent history of the country and the political history of the indigenous people and by analysing the effect of the past events to the current situation. Especially the legislative framework and its changes will be considered, as well as a variety of other major factors influencing political activity. To present a complete picture, political theories that have shown to be of significance in recent Bolivian history will also be studied in some detail.

It will be necessary to study the existing literature on the different aspects that affect the political participation of the indigenous people in general and in particular in the chosen country in order to highlight the most important factors in comprehending the role that the indigenous people have played in the political sphere of Bolivia. It will also be essential to take a close look at the current MAS-dominated government and legislation and the recent history of the country to understand what are the events that resulted in the

current situation and how the different historical steps have shaped it. This will not only provide a solid knowledge of the status of the indigenous people of the country, but will also allow for a deeper understanding of how Bolivia is unique in the region of Latin America.

1.1.1 Methodology and research questions

Considering the Bolivian situation as described above it is clear that MAS and their policies have been a major factor influencing the position of the indigenous people in the country over the last years. This is particularly because MAS has a strong indigenous agenda and is led by an indigenous president. Because of this, I choose to base my research questions on the effect of MAS and the legislative changes they have conducted on the Bolivian society. Also, the theoretical background of MAS as a socialist and populist movement is an interesting aspect that I consider important to study. I believe this combination will be the best foundation for examining the political participation of the indigenous population in Bolivia.

The research I will conduct will therefore answer the following questions:

- What is the effect of MAS on the political situation of the indigenous people of Bolivia?
- How have the recent legal changes been implemented and have they had an impact on the political participation of the indigenous people in practise?
- What impact have socialist and populist movements had on the position of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia?

For this thesis I will use comparative method. First I will study the situation of Bolivia before MAS came to power and compare it to the current situation. This will be done by empirical-analytical approach meaning that I will examine the recent historical events as the basis of my analysis and discuss the findings in order to answer the research questions. The thesis will concentrate on using information from variety of academic literature sources including a number of books, journals, studies and academic articles as well as data from different national and international databases. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be considered in order to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the topic.

1.1.2 Choosing the topic

At first it is relevant to discuss the factors that led to choosing Bolivia as my case study. As the goal of this thesis is to take a look at the political participation of indigenous peoples, I wanted to choose a country with a significant indigenous population, because in these countries the indigenous peoples are more likely to be a considerable political power (when allowed so by the legislation). The significance of the indigenous population can be based on their percentage of the total population of the country, their absolute amount, or both.

Based on this criteria I could exclude most of the Central America and the Caribbean as in this region only Mexico, Guatemala and Panama have significant indigenous populations. In South America, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela do not have a significant percentage of natives even though the absolute amount ranges from 76 000 in Uruguay to over 1.5 million in Colombia (ECLAC 2014: 38).

Out of the Central American countries with significant indigenous populations Panama and Guatemala are quite small by size and population. In addition to this Panama has significant continuous foreign influence because of the Panama Canal, and Guatemala has not completely recovered after the long civil war that ended in the 90s. These things would affect the development of the political participation level in a quite unique way, which might make relevant comparisons on a local and global scale difficult. Similarly, I found the history of Mexico to set it as too different from the more Southern Latin American countries. The remaining countries worth considering after this conclusion were Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile.

Originally I would have preferred to make a direct comparison between two of these countries, for example Bolivia and Peru or Bolivia and Ecuador, but in order to study all the aspects of the topic in depth I decided to limit the study subject to only one country. Bolivia was finally chosen as the case study because it has the largest indigenous population by proportion in the region and because of the recent historical events that have led to significant changes in the legal position of the indigenous peoples.

1.1.3 Issues with the source material

While conducting my research, I run into several problems regarding the source materials. One of the first steps of the research was trying to find out the amount of indigenous people in Latin American countries, and in Bolivia in particular. However the numbers and estimates of both, the absolute amount and percentage vary widely depending on source and year. This can be caused by several factors: for example as the indigenous people are more likely to live in remote areas accurate censuses might be harder to take. Also, Bolivia has some uncontacted indigenous tribes (even though these are not relevant to my research as they do not participate national politics).

Another factor is self-identification, as it is hard to define as an outsider who actually is an indigene. Individuals might identify to different groups differently depending on the situation. The answers might vary based on how the questions and possible answering options are set. One significant issue that should be noted is the fact that in the census of 2001 when asking about ethnicity, the option of “mestizo” was not provided, which undoubtedly led to more people identifying as one of the mentioned indigenous groups (CIA World Factbook). The issue was repeated in the census of 2012 where 39 different options of ethnicity were given, but the options for mestizo and European ancestry were missing - one could only choose to not belong to any of the mentioned groups (Census form of Bolivia 2012). This might even be the reason for Bolivia being commonly known as the Latin American country with highest percentage of indigenous peoples, even though more than half of the population does not speak an indigenous language (CIA World Factbook).

Finding recent literature and articles on some issues was challenging. The political and social situation of Bolivia has changed enormously during the ten years of Morales administration so I had to discard most articles published before 2006 as the situation studied then would be too different to the current one. This was a problem in particular with quantitative data as even most recent studies and reports still use data from the census of 2001. Another problem with hard data was the fact that the census of 2012 and the website of the Bolivian National Statistical Office (Instituto Nacional de Estadística - INE) do not make a difference between indigenous people and other ethnicities in the case of most of their statistics. A declaration by the Statistical Office explains that this is because the various indigenous groups should not be placed under

one term as their cultural identities, languages and traditions differ from each other so much (INE 2012). However, this makes it difficult to identify how different indicators have changed over the years for the indigenous people in particular.

Also, another issue is the lack of consistent reliable resources that would have given an unbiased view of the current government. The right wing scholars (especially ones from the United States) tend to demonize them completely while the left wing scholars sometimes praise them without questioning (Webber and Carr, 2013: 149-150). Sometimes the bias was so large that it led to omitting articles from my research as I wanted to prioritize the more objective works to get an accurate understanding of my topic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this part of the thesis I will discuss the theoretical aspects of my topic. I will try to define political participation and discuss factors that according to previous literature and research influence the level of political participation in a society positively or negatively. I will also mention the international agreements that attempt to increase the possibilities for political participation of the indigenous peoples and write about certain political theories that have been central to recent political movements in Bolivia. These theories will then be mirrored against the events of the last decades and the current situation in Bolivia in a later chapter of this thesis.

2.1 Defining political participation

When considering the ability of people to participate in their society in different ways, the first significant achievement is simply being allowed to participate. This is important especially for a democracy. At the same time, it alone might not be enough, because individuals in a society are always restricted by certain material and cultural structures that define their behavior. (Desai and Potter 2013: 48-49) In reality in a society there are always some people who do participate and some people who do not. The reasons for participation or non-participation vary, however.

Herbert McClosky, a significant researcher of political behavior, has defined political participation as “voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy” (c2008). There are various ways of such participation, including but not limited to voting, attending public meetings, joining a party, protesting, campaigning, supporting a party financially, communicating with representatives on local levels and being active in civil society organizations (McClosky c2008). The right to participate is considered essential in a democracy in order to assure the accountability of the government and the equality of the system. It is the way in which the residents give their consent to a certain leader, which they can then withdraw any time, making participatory democracy an effective defense against tyranny (McClosky c2008).

Political participation is globally problematic, however, as even today not everyone is allowed to participate equally, and as McClosky points out, not all of those who have the right to participate exercise that right. On a general level, this might be for several reasons, voluntary or involuntary. Some people might be politically indifferent, while some might be incapable to participate or excluded from political processes (McClosky c2008).

Having a portion of the population not participate politically causes a variety of problems in the society. Firstly, those who are not able to participate are not represented either. This can cause the leaders to ignore their interests, as they are only accountable to those who voted them to power. McClosky points out that usually those who most need to be represented - the poor and the socially excluded - will be the ones being unrepresented (c2008). Secondly, if a large portion of the population is not politically active, the government does not have to respond to anyone and it will be likely to serve only itself. Widespread participation keeps the rulers in check and makes sure they serve the electorate. Strong political activity also makes sure an opposition exists and therefore may help to prevent governments from misusing their political power (McClosky c2008). In addition to this, political participation is educational and increases an individual's awareness, responsibility and the sense of their political effectiveness. This can give the people a feeling that they are important and meaningful members of their society and their voices are being heard (McClosky c2008). The last argument for the importance of political participation is the fact that when a significant amount of the population is excluded from the political system, unable to affect the decisions that have an impact on them, the political atmosphere of a country may become unstable, leading to protests and possibly violent conflicts (McClosky c2008).

Leonard Binder talks about the diversity in the way different theorists understand political participation and its positive and negative sides. There are theorists who believe that everyone in the society should be encouraged to participate in order to have truly representative leaders, and that inequality decreases the political freedom of the people with lower socioeconomic status. There are, however, also those who believe the decision-making should be left to the educated and responsible citizens and who do not see it as a problem that the people from lower socioeconomic classes are not participating in politics - usually voluntarily (Binder 1977: 751). Still, both schools usually agree that

too much non-participation is harmful to the society because it undermines the legitimacy of the parliamentary democracy. Binder writes in particular about Samuel Huntington's and Joan Nelson's ideas as they argue in favor of the second view. They believe that political participation should be allowed to increase by itself through economic development as having more people with higher economic status and education makes people more likely to vote responsibly. Huntington and Nelson consider this to be safer than encouraging expansion of participation of the people who are now not participating because of a lower socioeconomic status, as these people might be more likely to participate in illegal or revolutionary ways (Binder 1977: 757).

2.2 Main factors affecting political participation

Legislation can be seen as a kind of basis for all other factors that influence political participation. Making even basic participation like voting illegal to a certain group of people is an efficient way to prevent them from having a role in political decision making. Even if universal suffrage has been established, the political system of a country will determine what kind of power individuals have. There can be different party systems that allow for more political freedom or limit it. In the end however, even in the case of equitable and inclusive legal environment there are numerous other factors that may encourage or hinder political participation.

When listing things that increase or decrease participation when there are no significant legal barriers, three main themes can be laid out according to McClosky (c2008). These are the social environment the individual comes from, the individual personality traits and the political environment they function in. For example, according to various studies people are more likely to be politically active if they are educated, socially responsible or living in central areas as opposed to low levels of education, lack of social responsibility and living in remote areas (McClosky c2008).

Similarly Binder mentions scholars that have connected the increase of political participation to modernization or to civic culture and points out that these are things that people with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to have an access to. He argues that in general, people in poverty might not be usually inclined to vote but that they might participate in other ways (Binder 1977: 753). Binder also refers to Sidney Verba and

Norman H. Nie who believe that group solidarity, group awareness and group consciousness increase political participation (Binder 1977: 755).

Connection of the economic status and inability to participate can be also seen in how especially in the developing countries, poverty correlates strongly with other things that can influence civil participation negatively such as bad health, low levels of education, and living in remote and rural areas with bad infrastructure. The lack of education and the lack of knowledge caused by it can lead to a situation where the people might not be aware of their rights and possibilities when it comes to political organization (Selekman c2013: 139). Unsurprisingly in contrast to this, people with high education and sufficient financial resources can easily organize themselves politically and ensure their interests are being heard. In addition to physical aspects there are also social and cultural factors that have an effect on the political participation of different groups, such as racism and discrimination (Selekman c2013: 139).

Carew Boulding writes about the positive correlation between Non-governmental organization (NGO) activity and political participation and how it manifests especially in weak democracies (2010: 456-457). She argues that the correlation arises because NGOs provide opportunities for the people to come together and bring resources to the community which then leads to the residents discussing political issues in their society. Boulding continues that in weak democracies where the people feel that the traditional methods of political participation are not effective means of expressing their views, the NGO activity might cause more radical forms of participation like protests, even if that would not be the intention of the organization. (2010: 456-457) This is because by bringing the people together, the NGOs give them a space where they can get politically organized, even if that would be in a “negative” way (Boulding 2010: 460).

2.2.1 The role of international agreements

In a global world, international treaties have a growing impact on the internal affairs of states particularly in cases where human rights might be endangered. The two major global agreements influencing the legal and social position of indigenous people are the Indigenous Tribal Peoples Convention (Also known as ILO-Convention 169) from year 1989 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

(UNDRIP) from year 2007. ILO-Convention 169 is the only international agreement about the status of the indigenous peoples that is somewhat legally binding for the countries that have ratified it. It is meant to guarantee the indigenous people equal rights to the rest of the population and enable them to participate in decision-making about issues that affect their lives. This is important in order to preserve their culture and way of life and to guarantee their right to land and natural resources (ILO 2013). UNDRIP is kind of a follow up of the Convention 169 and is further meant to protect the rights of the indigenous people and ensure their sovereignty. The declaration highlights the right of the indigenous people to determine their own political status and stresses especially the indigenous rights to their cultures and traditions. Even though the UNDRIP is not legally binding it is considered to be globally significant and it has been adopted by majority of the members of the United Nations (UNA Finland n.d.).

2.3 Socialism

Socialism is a political and economic theory that has varied over the years in the way it is understood and in the attempts to implement it. Its central idea is built around the concept of common ownership. This means that all the resources in the society are owned by the whole population together, and that the decisions of how those resources will be used are made by everyone together. Democracy is essential to socialist society in order to ensure that everyone is able to participate in the decisions affecting them. In socialism the objective of production is to meet human needs, instead of economic profit and growth, which is the main difference between it and the current capitalist and neoliberal systems (World Socialism Movement n.d.).

Scott Arnold describes socialism as a political form of society based on equality, social justice and solidarity. The key feature of the society is the fact that the collective has the highest decision-making power (1994: 7-8). He explains how traditionally, socialism sought to put an end to the class society by evening out the inequalities between the rich and the poor. Modern interpretation, however, usually does not consider complete leveling like that necessary in order to achieve a fair society. Arnold also points out that most socialist theories suggest a strong government, that would work to solve social problems, and that would oppose a free market, making the model a traditional opponent

of capitalism and liberalism. Furthermore, he presents the main conflict within the socialist movement, which is the question of whether the society should be shaped by government intervention or by initiatives of the individuals. (Arnold 1994: 7-8)

A more historical look at the political theory is offered by Robert Kolb, who goes back to the beginnings of socialism as how Karl Marx interpreted the philosophies of G.W.F. Hegel and J.G. Fichte in order to create a theory according to which every social system develops through a number of stages and will end in communism - a society where private ownership and leadership will not exist (2007: 134). More socialist schools developed during the 19th and 20th centuries, and Orthodox Marxism is today rarely followed (Kolb 2007:134). The experience of the communist Soviet Union during the last century gave the extreme form of socialism a bad reputation. However, many of the ideas of traditional socialism are now incorporated into modern political movements and large number of moderate socialist political parties exist across the world. Kolb describes these to be characterized by skepticism towards deregulation and small government, and by a commitment to a strong welfare state (Kolb 2007: 134).

In traditional Marxism, the term socialism is used to describe the communist society that forms the transition between capitalism and pure communism. Marx made a distinction between the first phase of communist society and a higher phase of communist society, and later named the first phase “socialism”. On this first stage wages would still exist and production mechanisms would be owned by a state, and the society would function as a sort of dictatorship of the proletariat. The highest state of communism would mean a stateless, classless society based on common ownership (Bockman 2011: 20). Based on this distinction Bockman observes that the communist countries the world has historically and currently experienced (e.g. Central and Eastern Europe, China and Cuba) are actually socialist, not communist (2011: 20). The communist parties of these countries believed that a dictatorship should be formed for the socialist transitional phase until the structures of capitalism would be demolished, and the true communist society could be created. (Bockman 2011: 20)

2.4 Populism

Populism inherently means the struggle of the common people against a privileged elite. It is a term with heavily negative connotations in the political discourse of today. As the concept of populism is quite controversial, it has been defined in many ways and writers tend to emphasize different aspects of it. For example, populism can be seen to consist of three elements that are used to attract people to the movement. These are: Political mobilization, recurrent rhetoric and inspiring symbols (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991: 9). The populist paradigm usually targets the working class but includes middle class supporters and leaders as well, and promises to respond to problems like underdevelopment (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991: 9). Traditionally, populist programs often promote socialist policies like income redistribution. Dornbusch and Edwards summarize three common features of populism to be: A similar initial situation, ignoring constraints of macroeconomic policy and similar policy suggestions (1991: 9-10). The described initial situation arises in times of low economic growth or depression and when the income distribution is uneven. By ignoring the possible constraints of economic policy the populists can suggest radical programs that have three central points: Reactivation, redistribution of income and restructuring of the economy (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991: 10).

Francisco Panizza also points out the difficult to define nature of the concept of populism. It is hard to argue who is a populist because the term is something politicians would not voluntarily identify with (2005: 1). Because of this, the definition comes from outside, based on empirical analysis. Panizza describes the main three approaches to define populism as the empirical, historical and the symptomatic ones (2005: 1). The empirical approach observes supposedly populist movements and attempts to extract certain characteristics that can be used to generalize what populism really is. The historical approach connects populism to certain historical circumstances or a period, which does not include the modern populist movements at all. The last approach, symptomatic reading, combines features that define populism in the empirical and historical approaches but has its own central theme as people as the main political actor (Panizza 2005: 2-3). Panizza explains how populism simplifies political sphere by dividing the society to “people” and “the others” and presenting people as the oppressed underdogs and “others” as the antagonists who exploit them. This setting also makes

populism inherently a temporary state as these movements are aiming to “defeat” the “the other” that is preventing the people from achieving prosperity. After overcoming the enemy the conflict will be gone and the “people” will assume control (Panizza 2005: 3-4).

The most recent attempt to explain populism is by Jan-Werner Müller. He holds to the common consensus that a definite “theory of populism” does not exist. Sometimes populism is defined as political movements that want to appeal to the “people”, but in modern democracies that is what all politicians want (Müller 2016: 2). Müller even suggests that sometimes it seems the word “populist” is simply used for a successful politician one does not like. According to him, there are two defining factors of populism. These are anti-elitism as being against the current ruling power and anti-pluralism as the belief of representing the only true voice of the people. The latter is the reason why populism might endanger democracy, as democracy requires pluralism to function (Müller 2016: 2-3). Müller also points out the worrying undertones of the intentional confrontation where the opposition to the populist ideas is considered invalid or even immoral and therefore any kind of criticism is not considered (Müller 2016: 3).

3. HISTORY AND THE SITUATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN BOLIVIA

3.1 Indigenous peoples of Bolivia

Out of all the Latin American countries, Bolivia is the one with largest percentage of indigenous people. A total of 62% of the population identify as a member of some indigenous group (ECLAC 2014: 38). The largest groups are Aymara and Quechua but there are also other large and significant groups like Chiquitano and Guaraní. Because of this diversity, since the implementation of the new constitution in 2009 the country's official name has been Plurinational State of Bolivia, and the constitution recognizes 37 languages. There is a huge variety when it comes to the cultures and traditions of these indigenous groups because of the different environments they come from. The majority of the indigenous population lives in the western highland region "Altiplano", while the groups from the eastern lowlands are smaller. These different groups have distinct life styles that determine their culture. Even though in the last years Bolivia has urbanized rapidly, the majority of the people who still live on the countryside are indigenous (Gigler, 2015: 89). In the western departments of the country the indigenous people form a majority while in the eastern departments they are a minority. The eastern departments are ruled by non-indigenous elite and the political divide between the highlands and the lowlands is striking. It is also important to note that the eastern part of the country creates most of Bolivia's Gross domestic product (GDP) which is one of the reasons contributing to the fact that the white minority still has so much political and economic power. The confrontation between natives and the eastern non-indigenous elite is one of the defining factors of the political struggle in Bolivia (Hammond 2011: 652-653).

Historically, the indigenous peoples have always fared worse on social and economic measures when compared to the white-mestizo population. Studies have shown that being indigenous increases the chance of being poor even when other common factors causing poverty were being controlled for (Hall and Patrinos 2004: 4). Also it is visible that the regions of Bolivia with the largest amount of indigenous people are the poorest ones (Gigler 2015: 92). In 2005, the poverty ratio of the indigenous people was 64% compared to the 48% for the non-indigenous population. Even though in 2011 the ratios

had fallen to 39% versus 32% respectively, the inequality still exists (Gigler 2015: 91). The GINI index of Bolivia decreased from 58.47 in 2005 to 42.26 in 2011 but then increased again to 48.40 in 2014 (World Bank). It should also be pointed out that even when the inequality has been as a general trend decreasing in the whole country, it still remains the same on the rural areas, which indicates that the differences between the urban and rural areas are increasing. This negative development has had an impact on the indigenous majority of the rural areas specifically. Likewise, Bolivia has a Human Development Index of 0.667 which implies a medium Human development, but at the same time there are municipalities with low or extremely low HDI in the western highlands where large numbers of indigenous people live. Similarly, such regional inequalities can be seen also in the cases of infant mortality and mortality of children under five (Gigler 2015: 98-101).

When it comes to education in 2009 the literacy rate of the indigenous peoples was 87.04% compared to the 95.87% of the non-indigenous population. If the data is divided between the rural and urban populations and between men and women, the disparities grow even larger, with non-indigenous urban men having literacy rate of 98.84% compared to the nearly 30 percentage points lower 69.28% of indigenous rural women. Also, having an indigenous language as a first language correlates strongly with illiteracy, especially for women (INE). In addition, the indigenous peoples usually go through almost three years less of official schooling than the non-indigenous people. On the average, an indigenous child goes to school for 7.6 years while a non-indigenous child stays there for 10.3 years. One of the main reasons for shorter schooling is the fact that indigenous children are significantly more likely to drop out of school in order to support their families financially than their non-indigenous counterparts. Bad quality of the education in the rural areas also adds to the problems as the schools might lack educated teachers and proper materials (Gigler 2015: 103-105).

In the case of health care the indigenous people continue to have limited access to even basic health services. They also have lower incomes and are more likely to work in low skilled jobs. As the last major issue, the indigenous people have no access to most of the agricultural land and the government use of natural resources has a negative impact on them and their societies (Gigler 2015: 105-108).

3.2 Historical Background

Regardless of the majority of the population being indigenous, for most of the country's history Bolivia has been ruled by the white elite who are predominantly of Spanish descent. The political situation has been marked with significant instability for the majority of the country's time as an independent state. By the 20th century this had not really changed as the country was under several military juntas and suffered consequent coups d'état (Lehouq 2011: 345). One of the most significant seizures of power from the point of view of the indigenous people was the revolution of 1952 in which a leftist MNR party took over and established universal suffrage and conducted agrarian reform. However, as the government failed to develop the country, they did not stay in power for long (Hudson and Hanratty 1991: 35-37). The economic situation continued to be bad and when democracy was achieved in the beginning of the 1980s, the first elected presidents assumed a neoliberal economic policy in order to stabilize the economy and induce its growth (Lehouq 2011: 350-351). These policies were started by Victor Paz Estenssoro and continued by the following presidents like Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and Hugo Banzer Suárez in particular. The capitalization and privatization of essential resources led to protests in the country during the 1980s and 1990s.

Civil unrest and demonstrations continued and escalated to more violent confrontations especially in the case of the "Water War" in 2000 and the "Gas War" in 2003 (Perrault 2006: 150). The conflict over water in Cochabamba started when the city's water supply was privatized. The price of water increased dramatically and tens of thousands locals started protesting. The clashes led to one civilian death and many others injured, and the privatization was eventually reversed (Perrault 2006: 158).

Only couple of years later a new clash developed because of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada's government's plans to export Bolivian natural gas to other countries, including to the United States (Postero 2004: 190). The state had privatized its hydrocarbon industry some years earlier and plenty of people now saw the government policy as a continuation to hundreds of years of foreign exploitation of Bolivian land. The demonstrations escalated to blockages that seized parts of the country, and the confrontations got increasingly violent, leading to 68 deaths of unarmed protesters in September and October of 2003 (Farthing and Kohl 2006: 174-175, Farthing and Kohl 2014: 43). Sánchez de Losada was forced to resign and flee the country and his vice

president Carlos Mesa assumed presidency (Perreault 2006: 163-164). He made some reforms but did not manage to satisfy the demands of the demonstrators. In 2005 Mesa resigned as well as the protests intensified again, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Eduardo Rodríguez became the president until an election could be organized (Farthing and Kohl 2006: 11).

Aymara leader Evo Morales had a significant role in the protests, as he was active in different social movements ranging from the Coca-growers union to the newly founded MAS at the time (Postero 2004: 189-190). His role as a vocal opponent of the traditional political parties and their economic policies during these years brought him a lot of visibility and popularity. Morales ran for president for the first time in 2002 and came second with only a minimal gap to the winner Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada, having clearly caught the attention of the public (Postero 2004: 190). With the success of the MAS, Morales was also now the head of the country's political opposition (Farthing and Kohl 2006: 171).

After the events of the previous years, it was not surprising that Evo Morales won the presidential elections of 2005 in a landslide victory and assumed office in January 2006 (Webber 2011:50). In his inauguration speech Morales talked about putting end to the colonial state and the neo-liberal model. His election was celebrated by indigenous peoples all over Latin America. The rest of the world, especially USA, was more suspicious about Morales as his leftist views were believed to be unfavorable for foreign companies.

During the first years of his presidency, Morales started changes to the economic and political systems of the country. He forced the international companies in hydrocarbon industry to renegotiate their contracts in a way that more of their profits would flow to the government (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 38-39). This led to the country experiencing economic growth which made increasing social spending possible.

Morales also increased cooperation with leftist leaders of Venezuela and Cuba while taking significant distance to USA, which to some western right-wing politicians proved that they were correct about him being a troublemaker. In 2008 the USA ambassador Philip Goldberg was expelled from Bolivia as Morales accused him of conspiring a right-wing revolt against the government with the opposition. In 2013

Bolivia discontinued cooperation with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 4-5). This kind of actions by Morales and his administration have ensured the position of Bolivia as a stand out in the region already for more than 10 years.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE BOLIVIAN SITUATION

Above I have laid out where Bolivia stands historically and what is the general situation of the indigenous people of the country at the moment. I have also described the theoretical framework for my topic based on what political ideologies have had a background influence on the recent changes in Bolivia. In this chapter I will further describe the state of affairs in the country, and apply the introduced theories to practice in order to find out what factors influence the indigenous people's political position in Bolivia in particular.

I will start the analytical part with a description of the current Bolivian legislative situation in the framework of the rights of the indigenous people. After this I will discuss different aspects of the current legal system in detail. I will be paying attention especially to issues that relate to the political representation of the indigenous peoples, the ability to influence legal processes that affect the natives and the positive and the negative aspects of the current pluralist judicial system.

I will continue by a combined analysis of how the previously introduced theories form the political basis of MAS and what effect this has had on the actions of the party. Together with the legislative framework, this is what defines the real current position of the indigenous groups and helps understand what the possible future implications are.

4.1 Developments of the legislative framework of indigenous political participation

4.1.1 Development before MAS

Bolivia ratified the ILO Convention 169 in December 1991 (ILO n.d.) and made the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People a binding national law in 2007 (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 124). These were popular moves that gave the indigenous people hope of a better future with more sovereignty and increased decision-making power. However, in reality the major weakness of these international agreements is the fact that their implementation is left to the ratifying country itself (ILO 2013). Failure in following them does not lead to sanctions and the UN and ILO do not have

resources to monitor their implementation so it can be questioned how binding they really are and if they ever have been anything more than kind of “guidelines”. Therefore, in order to truly understand the social and political environment that the Bolivian indigenous people live in, we have to take a look at the country’s own legislation and its development.

The first instance of significant legislative change in the favor of the indigenous people was the universal suffrage that was established after the national revolution of 1952. The law change gave even the illiterate indigenous population the right to vote. Lohman Pacino talks about how the suffrage in particular was an act of changing the exclusionary nature of the political system at the time. (2013: 4) To this day, it can be seen as the first practical step towards including the indigenous majority to the political life of the country.

The next major reform happened in 1994 in the form of Ley de Participación Popular (LPP - Law of Popular Participation). The most important aspect of this law was the decentralization of political power. Hundreds of new municipalities were created in rural areas with mostly indigenous population (Montambeault 2008: 114). In these areas people had previously been so excluded from the formal political structures that they still had traditional political and social systems that were separate from central power (Montambeault 2008: 118). The new law was intended to increase political participation of the residents of these previously excluded areas, but failed to have a significant impact as Montambeault (2008: 125) and Postero (2010a: 62) argue. On the other hand, LPP established new grassroots-level institutions to increase participation and recognized local peasant and indigenous organizations known as *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTB - Territorially Based Organizations). These institutions, however, may have inadvertently empowered a traditional local elite that benefits from the decentralization and that did not have a reason to encourage further political participation of the poor people (Montambeault 2008: 119, Postero 2010a: 69). One of the major faults of the LPP was the fact that it was planned and implemented by the ruling class without much consultation from the population whose situation it was supposed to affect the most (Montambeault 2008: 122). Montambeault concludes that decentralization laws like LPP may indeed be of help in the process towards more participatory democracy and that it is possible that the law was what helped the current president Evo Morales and his party to gain support, starting from the local level (2008: 125). Postero also shares the view about

the 1990s legislation helping in the formation of MAS (2010a:62). However, Montambeault points out various issues that still exist in the political sphere as LPP may have caused the weakening of some types of civil society organizations. Furthermore it has failed to include women in a way that their voices could be heard as well. (2008: 125-126) At the same time, white and mestizo led political parties remained in the control of the councils of cities and municipalities until MAS started to gain support. (Postero 2010a: 69) LPP also was unable to battle racism that is prevalent on all levels of Bolivian society. (Postero 2010a: 62)

Lucero mentions the Law of Popular Participation as well when discussing the issues with the authenticity of certain organizations that claim to represent indigenous peoples in Latin America. The Bolivian example of CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayullus y Markas del Qullasuyu - The National Council of Markas and Ayullus of Qullasuyu) represents indigenous political units called Ayullus, which have existed in the Andean area even before the Europeans arrived to America (2006: 37). In the 1980s, the ayullus only held local power but in the early 1990s their importance as organizations truly representing the indigenous peoples was realized and the LPP finally gave them the right to register as OTBs (Lucero 2006: 44-46). Lucero writes about local opinions on the change and found that in general the people considered the ayullu system better than the previous forms of organization as it was seen as less corrupt (2006: 47-48). The official establishment and acceptance of a traditional system of political organization like the ayullus as one of the paths of indigenous participation was an important move even though Lucero mentions that it did not necessarily guarantee possibility to participate on national level (2006: 48).

4.1.2 The New Constitution of 2009

The most recent legislative change intended to have large impact on the political participation of the indigenous peoples was the new constitution that was put to effect in 2009. The process of drafting the law was several years long and it created tensions between MAS and the opposition. In the end, the constitution that was established was at least partly a compromise as that had been necessary to have the opposition to agree to the draft. According to some groups these compromises undermine the law (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 41).

Regardless, the new constitution was a great historic step, especially for the indigenous peoples of Bolivia. The country was officially announced “Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia”, a Plurinational state, giving all indigenous languages and cultures an equal status. Plurinational state would ideally be one where the central government shares power with multiple nations that live within a country (Tockman and Cameron 2014: 49). This means equal rights to all religious faiths and to all different indigenous justice systems. Vice president Álvaro García Linera introduced the new constitution as a change from plurinational society to a plurinational state. He declared that the plurinationality means recognition of the diversity of the country’s peoples, languages and cultures as a cross-cutting theme in the work of all public institutions (García Linera 2008). For the first time since the colonization Bolivian indigenous nations finally had political and judicial power in their own hands.

The new constitution also limited land ownership and made redistribution of land mandatory. This allowed plenty of the poor indigenous people to obtain legal rights to land that had previously belonged to owners of large estates (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 41-42). A new system of indigenous autonomy was created in the form of *Autonomías Indígena Originario Campesinas* (AIOCs - Indigenous First Peoples’ Peasant Autonomies). According to the new legislation the AIOCs have a certain level of self-governance similar to the municipal governments, but with the distinctive feature of authority over indigenous justice. Furthermore, they were given the power to shape the design of the institutions of governance with some limitations (Tockman and Cameron 2014: 51). However, as some indigenous groups attempted to begin the process of converting into an AIOC they were faced with the restrictions and the excessive bureaucracy of the procedure. Years later, only a portion of the municipalities were actually at the point of the process where they could legally begin the conversion (Tockman and Cameron 2014: 53).

One of the central themes of the 2009 constitution was the concept of *Vivir Bien* - that can be roughly translated as “living well”. *Vivir Bien* (also known as *Buen Vivir* in other Latin American countries) means a certain alternative to the concept of continuous development (Käkönen n.d.). It rather could be seen as a kind of idea of collective wellbeing that has its roots on the other hand in the postcolonial critique of development, and on the other hand in the worldviews of the indigenous peoples of the Andean region

(Käkönen n.d.). Vivir Bien is in particular against the idea that “development” should mean economic growth or access to material goods. According to its ideology a perfect society lives in balance with all its members and the nature around it (Käkönen n.d.). Nature is not seen as something separate from the community, and if the community uses something that comes from the nature (or Pachamama, Mother Earth), they should in return protect it (Käkönen n.d.). The concept also refuses capitalism and colonialism and considers basic services to be a human right (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 100).

However, this takes us to the major conflict of the new constitution as pointed out by several authors: Protecting the environment and the Pachamama in the name of Vivir Bien and indigenous rights to their land and territory on one side, and the extraction of natural resources like hydrocarbons and minerals that the state’s economy depends on the other. The new constitution incorporates an inclusive public policy that invests in social programs and education but all these projects need funding which requires the government to extract more and more natural resources (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 91). Because of the state dependency on the extractivism, MAS made sure the constitution would maintain state control over all natural resources, no matter where in the country they are. However this contradicts the part of the constitution that ensures the rights of the indigenous people on their own land, and in addition is against the UNDRIP (Tockman and Cameron 2014: 55, 61). The inability to keep its promises about protecting the untouchability of the indigenous territory and the environment has led the government to clashes with some of the indigenous groups in the country which has eroded the popularity of MAS.

Hence, even though the constitution admittedly is a sign of significant development, it has been criticized for lack of consistency, for being open to multiple interpretations and for contradicting itself, as well as for its allegedly undemocratic creation process. Opposition parties accused MAS of dominating the drafting the law completely in order to push their interests forward and of attempting to impose the new constitution rather than negotiate it through a democratic process (Lehouq 2011: 356). After appointing the constituent assembly in 2006, MAS resorted to a number of questionable practices as the negotiations with the opposition party, Podemos, dragged on. For example, MAS replaced the requirement for two thirds majority with a requirement for absolute majority in a session that was held at night without the presence

of the opposition. This led to the opposition boycotting the assembly meetings and organizing strikes until the government had to reestablish the rule for two thirds majority in 2007 (Lehouq 2011: 356). Regardless, the fundamental differences of interests of MAS and the opposition led to further protests for and against the government. For instance, in February 2008 MAS pushed through a part of the law restricting land ownership against parliamentary procedures while its supporters threatened the opposition. This led to the opposition attempting to establish autonomous areas in the country's Eastern provinces through referendums, which the government then deemed illegal (Lehouq 2011: 356-358). In an attempt to ensure the legitimacy of the government, MAS and Podemos agreed to a recall referendum about the support of the president and the prefects. The opposition had to admit its defeat when MAS secured its position with clear majority and could therefore be certain that it was truly representing majority of the population (Lehouq 2011: 358).

When looked at objectively, drafting the constitution was not exactly democratic, as MAS kept dominating the process and changed rules unilaterally. On the other hand, The Vice President Álvaro García Linera argues that certain opposition groups were purposely dragging the process for years because they knew the new constitution would be the end of the many privileges they held. He even referred to the resistance of the MAS draft as a “conspiracy against the Constituent assembly” (Garcia Linera 2008). Nancy Postero discusses in detail if the actions of MAS can be seen as justifiable considering the valid motives they had (liberation and empowerment of the indigenous peoples) and the circumstances they had to operate in (resistance of the opposition) (2010a: 67-68). The residents of the eastern provinces were concerned about the MAS behavior and its seemingly authoritarian tendencies, and even accused the government of acting upon “reverse racism” or revenge. However, at the same time, the supporters of MAS saw the acts of the party as acceptable on the grounds of challenging the white elite that had been ruling Bolivia for so long, assuring the government's legitimacy (Postero 2010a: 67). Postero also points out that the main aim of MAS was to ensure greater equality by abolishing the neo-liberal economic model, and asks if such a “worthy” goal is enough to justify breaking the law and other dubious acts. While not directly answering the question or excusing the acts of Morales and his government, the writer lists the reasons behind the behavior of MAS. She argues that the main reason for MAS to bend the law during the creation of the constitution was the deep aspiration to

make a change that would allow for more meaningful participation of the indigenous and poor majority of the Bolivian people (Postero 2010a: 67-70). Postero concludes that the complications of the Bolivian political field are caused by conflicts that are both historical and ongoing, and that the liberal democratic system might not be able to solve the situation completely. Still the positive developments like the inclusion of previously marginalized peoples to the political sphere and the expansion of political rights should be seen as a success of the current government and the new constitution (Postero 2010a: 75).

4.2 Implementation of new legislation - positives and negatives

The implementation of the new constitution has been a process with variable outcomes. Despite plenty of positive developments, there are many issues that are for now unsolved and that have at least partly negative implications on the indigenous peoples. Firstly, the expropriation of lands in order to return them to the indigenous peoples has taken place but not on the scale that was promised in the land reform. Some of the expropriated land is now government property but has not been redistributed, and compromises with the landowners led to them being able to own more than the indigenous organizations had suggested. (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 123)

Similarly, the excessive bureaucracy has been crippling the attempts of the indigenous groups to establish autonomous communities. This is directly related to the previously mentioned conflict between the official MAS agenda of protecting indigenous culture, land and environment, and the extractive economic system. While AIOCs now exist, they have no ownership over the natural resources on their territories, because the government stated that all natural resources belong to state. This has left open the possibility for the government to step forward and extract natural resources from seemingly autonomous indigenous territories, which is a direct violation of UNDRIP. The first large scale example of a clash between the Morales administration and the indigenous people trying to protect their land occurred in 2011. The government decided to build a road through Isiboro Sécore National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS), even though the area is home to several native groups, including Moxeños, Yucarés and Tsimanés. (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 52-53) The plan was eventually abandoned because

of vocal opposition of both local and international actors, but these kinds of actions may raise questions about the legitimacy of MAS as a voice of the indigenous peoples.

The conflict over TIPNIS was a failure to follow the recommendation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) which is present in ILO Convention 169 and in UNDRIP. While ILO Convention 169 calls for a consultation process before acts that have impact on the indigenous peoples, it does not expect that the process would always end in consent (Fontana and Grugel 2016: 252). UNDRIP, however, is more clear about requiring FPIC in various situations including law changes, relocation of people, exploitation of lands and territories and issues with impact on indigenous culture (Fontana and Grugel 2016: 252). The attributes “free”, “prior” and “informed” are also defined; “free” meaning without forcing or manipulation, “prior” meaning well in advance before action is taken and “informed” meaning that information is provided in a transparent way throughout the process (Fontana and Grugel 2016: 252). Along with the UNDRIP and ILO Convention 169 the FPIC is part of the Bolivian constitution and, as Fontana and Grugel explain, is a possible source of social conflict in the country because it clashes with the government plans to use the country’s natural resources (2016: 253). If implemented well, FPIC could be an important instrument of indigenous political participation as it is specifically designed to ensure their participation on all issues that may have impact on their communities. However in the case of Bolivia Fontana and Grugel argue that FPIC might not work as intended under all conditions. They point out that not all indigenous communities necessarily have institutions or political structures that would be participatory, democratic, non-authoritarian or inclusive. In some cases, FPIC might be used as a strategic tool to drive one’s own interests rather than the good of the community (2016: 257). The writers express concern of FPIC being capable of becoming the mechanism for democratic inclusion and political participation that it claims to be in situations where the society is very ethnically politicized. For example, they argue it is difficult in Bolivia to identify who are the groups who have the right to be consulted and to participate and that in some cases FPIC might even increase new forms of inequality (Fontana and Grugel 2016: 258). The main issue, therefore, lays in the conflicting interests of different groups within the Bolivian society that are sometimes not tied to ethnicity. The road through TIPNIS was a government project that would have had positive impacts on the regions of Beni and Pando that are currently disconnected from the capital La Paz. Many indigenous people support the government and the

Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia (CIDOB- Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia) split in two because of internal conflict related to the case (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 52-53). FPIC is one of the many examples of failure to implement the new laws in a way that would truly increase indigenous political participation in a meaningful way.

Voting is often considered to be the most basic form of political participation in a democracy. As mentioned above, all citizens of Bolivia have been allowed to vote since 1950s. In addition to this, voting is compulsory, which causes a relatively high turnout. Traditionally, however, the turnout has been lower in areas where the majority of the people are indigenous (Madrid et al. 2008: 3). This was changed when MAS rose and gave the indigenous people a viable option to represent themselves. It could be said that the main issue for the indigenous peoples in the elections is not being allowed to vote, but rather who to vote for. If the people feel there are no candidates who represent them, their political input becomes less meaningful, as they either might not vote at all, or will have to vote for someone who they do not really trust to work for their cause. Because of this, MAS has been appointing indigenous candidates in order to target native Bolivians which has contributed to their success. An increasing amount of the natives in the country now feel that they are represented politically and have some trust in the government attempting to work in their favor. A strong indicator to prove this was the increase in satisfaction with democracy after Morales was elected (Madrid et al. 2008: 4). The amount of indigenous representatives in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly (Congress) has increased significantly and is higher than what has ever been achieved in other countries with a substantial indigenous populations (Ecuador, Peru, and Guatemala). For example during the first administration of Morales it was 17 percent and during the second administration it increased to 25 percent (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 65). Still, the percentage is low when comparing to the whole indigenous population of the country and especially the smaller groups are not represented.

One of the parts of the new constitution to receive praise is the article 179 that states that the native indigenous jurisdiction system is considered equal to the ordinary jurisdiction of the country. Furthermore, in article 190 it is specified that the indigenous peoples can practice their own juridical functions through their own authorities and that they can base said functions on their principles, cultural values, norms and procedures.

(Bolivian constitution) This empowers the indigenous populations to organize their societies in a way that feels natural for their culture, instead of following the national Bolivian model, which has been largely adapted from the western world. The supporters of the new system praise the pluralist legal system to be suitable for a pluricultural country.

The indigenous justice system, also known as community justice, is different from the ordinary justice system in a number of ways. Firstly as it is part of the community, it does not separate between judicial and executive branches and rather just works according to the “cosmovision” or worldview of the community. The legislative power is not held by educated specialists but usually the leader of the community. Secondly, community justice is oral and has no written rules. The people often consider this to be a benefit because the system is more responsive, meaning that cases are solved faster than they would be in the ordinary system. It is also cheaper because people do not have to travel to cities and do not have to pay for a lawyer. Thirdly, these justice systems are based on the Andean saying “Ama qhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa” which means “Do not be lazy, do not lie, do not steal.” Following these rules, the individual shows respect to the other members of the community and demonstrates responsibility to the community (Hammond 2011: 658). The most common issues solved by the community justice are conflicts over land, destruction of crops, marital disagreements, robberies and aggressions. The sanctions vary from fines to physical punishments like whipping. Immediate sanctions are preferred over imprisonment (Hammond 2011: 658-659). However, it is important to point out that in the indigenous justice system, the main aim is not to punish the violator but rather to compensate the damage done to the victim, reconcile between the parties and then reintegrate the violator back to the community. The system is built this way because maintaining social order is considered its most important goal (Hammond 2011: 660).

In the last decade, lynching as a form of immediate punishment has increased in Bolivia. Dozens of people were killed in 2007 and in 2008 this trend has been rising. Many blame the lynching on the indigenous justice systems (Hammond 2011: 671). As the indigenous justice is unwritten, it is open for interpretation and a mob can decide what they consider to be rightful punishment and execute it immediately. Representatives of the indigenous justice systems claim that lynching is not an acceptable form of

community justice and most scholars who have studied the systems agree, but such cases continue to exist and taint the reputation of the true indigenous systems. John Hammond explains, however, that lynching mostly happens in areas with little or no justice and police at all rather than in indigenous communities with established community justice system (Hammond 2011: 672).

Hammond does, however, point out other contradictions of the implementation of the indigenous justice (2011). Firstly, when more than one legal system exists within the state, it cannot be ensured that all are treated equally. However as a counterargument Hammond immediately admits as well that a universal law cannot be imposed on a variety of peoples from above. Secondly, when the law of the community is unwritten and the local authority has the power to judge without justifying their decisions, there is space for using the law for personal gain. Third, Hammond mentions that the physical punishments that are still used, such as whipping, are against the global human right norms. Defenders of the practice, however, see it as just a symbolic act of authority and consider it a moral punishment instead of a physical one. Fourth issue is the self-identification that is related to the fluidity of the indigeneity in the Bolivian society. There could be cases where an individual is being judged through the indigenous system even though he does not feel affiliation to a certain indigenous group. If community justice is the norm in the area, the options may be limited. As the final issue, Hammond points out the aim of the community justice, which is the harmony of the community. Because of this, there can be a clash between the good for the individual and the perceived good of the group (Hammond 2011: 677-680). Regardless of the shortcomings, the positive aspects of the indigenous legal system make it more suitable for the native communities than the ordinary system. Taking the justice in their own hands is empowering for the indigenous peoples and a significant step towards equal participation in the society, politically and otherwise.

4.3 Social and cultural factors of political participation in Bolivia

As mentioned before, equal political participation is unfortunately not guaranteed by having a legal framework that seems to give indigenous people sufficient rights regarding equality, autonomy and possibility to represent themselves when it comes to issues influencing them. In Bolivia, the indigenous peoples are more likely to be

affected by negative factors that hinder political participation than the white or mestizo citizens, who are more likely than the natives to have at least some education, to live in cities, and to have access to some kind of health care. As explained earlier, some natives, especially in rural areas, still suffer from illiteracy and therefore might not have access to information about their rights. This can be seen in Bolivia with the LPP, as its existence did not reach all people it would have benefitted. For example many Guarani Indians live in virtual slavery in the Chaco region without knowledge of their legal rights as individuals and as indigenous peoples. (Selekman c2013: 139)

Considering the social and cultural factors that cause difficulties for the indigenous people in Bolivian politics, there is one that stands out as the most significant. Racism and discrimination are embedded in the Bolivian society in complex ways that cannot be solved by changing legislation. The divide between the white people and the indigenous population is deep and Morales' administration has not been able to fix it. Extremely racist discourse is present on official and unofficial levels. Indigenous people are considered to be backwards, while the whites of the eastern provinces represent modernity and economic growth (Kohl 2010: 109-110). In addition to insults and structural discrimination, brutal violence towards indigenous people still occurs as well (Kohl 2010: 110-111). MAS has had a large role in changing the attitude towards the natives across Bolivia. The election of Morales was an important sign to the indigenous peoples and proof that they finally could have real political impact by participating. However, even the current administration has faced problems when trying to ensure meaningful indigenous inclusion, as when indigenous cabinet members and ministers were appointed, they faced discrimination and lack of respect because of their origins and lack of formal education. This eventually led to Morales replacing a lot of the original cabinet with leftist mestizos and whites from middle class, reducing the indigenous participation on the higher levels of political sphere (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 57-58). In addition to this the indigenous peoples of Bolivia are not homogenous and some issues have been caused by the differences between the various indigenous nations. Even though the participation of the Aymaras in the political bodies may have increased, the other groups, especially those from the lowland regions, still do not feel they have many opportunities (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 65).

The connection between NGO activity and political participation could also be seen in Bolivia clearly according to the research of Carew Boulding (2010). She considers Bolivia to be one of the “weak democracies” where the said correlation induces even more radical forms of political participation, which her research confirmed. However, Boulding also noticed another interesting correlation, as in addition to the NGO activity, she found that the rise of MAS increased voter turnout and that municipalities where Evo was widely supported had less protests. This indicates quite clearly that when people have electoral options that they are willing to support, they are less likely to protest. High literacy rate was also recognized as a factor increasing turnout (Boulding 2010: 463-464).

4.4 Political foundations of MAS - putting theory into practice

The political basis of the MAS government can be seen to consist of three main elements: indigenous, socialist and populist (Postero 2010b: 25). The indigenous connection has been prevalent since the very beginning of the movement and the party can still claim the support of large part of the natives especially in the western highlands. The other two tendencies, however, have raised some discussion and it is important to see what kind of impact they have to the Bolivian society, to the indigenous people and their political interests.

4.4.1 Rise and fall of Socialism

There should not be much doubt that Evo Morales and his party are socialist, especially considering that the name of the party translates to Movement towards Socialism. The calls for nationalization of natural resources, a large role of the state and promises of programs related to health care and education all tell of a typical social democratic agenda, which MAS has stood behind for all the years it has been in power. An interesting thing to note is the fact that the success of MAS has taken place in a context where several Latin American countries have chosen leftist governments or at least shifted their policies to a more socialist direction. This phenomenon, which started towards the end of the 1990s, is usually referred to as the “Pink tide” or “Vuelta hacia la izquierda” (Turn to the left). Webber describes how in Bolivia in particular the increasing support of socialist and anti-capitalist ideas was caused by the oppression of a significant part of the population by a small upper class (2011: 49). The rise of the left could be seen

as a combined liberation struggle against both, the racial and class exploitation. This was also the cause of the Water war, the Gas conflict and other protests in the early 2000s. The people were fighting for their political rights and for necessary structural changes of the political and economic systems. In this context, MAS was able to express the views, feelings and thoughts of the masses (Webber 2011: 49-50). Webber also explains how MAS has helped to define the new Bolivian left, which calls for indigenous solidarity as a contrast to the individualism of neoliberalist and capitalist societies (2011: 62).

Shortly after the inauguration of Morales, Bolivia joined the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA - *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*), which had been founded by Venezuela and Cuba couple of years earlier. The organization can be considered as a noteworthy anti-imperialist initiative to strengthen socialism regionally (Webber 2013: 11). Until 2009, the name of the group was “Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America”, contrasting with the neoliberal governments of the area and offering a local “South-South” cooperation alternative to the regional dominance of the United States. The organization’s anti-capitalist discourse calls for recognizing regional inequalities and implementing measures to overcome them in order to solve problems like poverty and social exclusion (Hernández and Chaudary 2015: 5-6) Challenging the continental hegemony of USA is the main reason for the organization’s creation, and it has managed to at least lessen the grasp that United States has over the Latin American affairs.

The concept of *Vivir Bien* that was mentioned earlier is also essentially a socialist concept, and many Bolivians see it as such. Karen Bell interviewed a MAS secretary of international relations Leonida Zurita Vargas who described *Vivir Bien* as an Andean cosmo-vision that is opposite to capitalism - a path of the people and restoration of “all that had been lost and forgotten” (2014: 169). On a slightly different note, Juanita Anciana Orellana, the Executive secretary of a significant indigenous women’s organization, Bartolina Sisa Confederation, defined it as food sovereignty, right to water, electricity and basic services to all population (Bell 2014: 169). Both of these ideas were more or less integrated in the official government agenda and mirror ideals of modern socialism such as people having a central role in the decision-making and everyone having rights to the common resources.

Regardless of strong claims and some practical evidence of having socialist goals, various actions of MAS have led to critics doubting their socialism. Webber argues that in practice, the new government has not done enough to completely free Bolivia from its neoliberalist past (2013). While during the beginning of Morales's first term, MAS conducted some readjustments, the proper change has not taken place, as the general economic functions within the country remain capitalistic. Webber talks of the Vice President Álvaro García Linera as a Marxist writer who regardless of this does not consider that Bolivia is ready for transition to socialism and therefore the government is implementing "Andean-Amazonian capitalism" (2013: 9). García Linera describes first developing industrial capitalism through an intermediary phase and creating a national indigenous bourgeoisie, only after which the country will be able to aim for true socialism (Webber 2013: 9). This sounds effectively like adding another phase before socialism in the original two phased system of communism that Marx created and that was discussed earlier in this thesis. In relation to the situation an Aymara political leader Felipe Quispe has accused MAS of practicing "neoliberalism with an Indian face" rather than socialism (Farthing and Kohl 148). Webber also mentions that most of the scholars in the field seem to think of the Bolivian structural reform as a profound and successful one (2013: 177). This is, despite the fact that empirical evidence is against such claims and it could be argued that the development during Morales terms has been ambiguous to say the least (Webber 2013: 177). For example, it has been celebrated that the social spending has grown in absolute terms in the last decade but at the same time, it has actually decreased proportionally when calculated as a percentage of the GDP (Webber 2013: 186). For these reasons, Webber partly accuses the MAS administration for abandoning the promised transition towards socialism. He suggests that MAS should stop the attempts to compromise with the right-wing oligarchy of the eastern part of the country and instead confront the capitalism and imperialism that protect the elite class and their interests when it comes to large landholdings, low wages and literal enslavement of certain indigenous groups. He also reminds that the liberation of the indigenous peoples and peasants cannot happen under capitalism (Webber 2011: 70, 131).

Webber is not the only one criticizing MAS for their interpretation and implementation of socialism. For example, when it comes to extracting natural resources, MAS differentiates between the extraction processes that support social development and increase welfare, and those processes that only benefit foreign corporations (Bell 2014:

177). Bell sees this kind of rhetoric contradicting to the ideals the party claims to have as the extractive economic processes like mining have high social costs and are harmful to the environment. She also agrees with Webber in arguing that it seems Bolivia is having difficulties when it comes to separating from neoliberalism completely. Because of this, many leftist politicians and scholars in Bolivia, as well as globally, have been dissatisfied with the actions of MAS as they are calling for more profound changes (Bell 2014: 177).

In addition to the criticism, it is currently unsure what kind of role socialism will have in the Latin American region in the future. For example, it is uncertain how successful ALBA will be in the long run. Honduras left the organization in 2010 following its coup d'état. This was seen as stagnation point for ALBA, caused by radical socialism (Hernández and Chaudary 2015: 7-8). In addition, the death of the Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez has led to a political crisis in the country, which can have serious implications on the stability of ALBA in the future. This is largely because most of the cooperative projects of ALBA are dependent on the funding that comes from the Venezuelan oil revenues, but also because of the role Chávez had as a foremost leader of the whole block (Hernández and Chaudary 2015: 19). The even more recent death of the Cuban leader Fidel Castro may further erode the power of ALBA and has left Morales to be the strongest socialist leader in the region. It is yet to be seen what this means to socialism in Latin America as a whole and if this will be the end of the Pink tide.

4.4.2 Ethnopolitism

Ever since MAS first started gaining popularity until now, the party and especially Evo Morales as its leader have been accused of populism. When referring back to the common attempts of defining populism that I discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis, it is easy to see some similarities between them and the agenda of MAS. As is typical to traditional populist parties, MAS rose to oppose the elitist ruling class and claimed to represent the true Bolivian people in a political situation where the majority of the population was discontent with the extreme inequalities in the society and wanted a profound change. MAS responded by promising to solve the problems of poverty and inequality that had defined the country and majority of its population since its independence. MAS also divided the society in the typical populist way of antagonizing the opposition. This is shown in the way the Vice President saw the opposition efforts to

participate in the drafting process of the new constitution as “conspiracy”. The legitimacy of the opposition is denied.

More reasons of why MAS can be considered a populist party are their confrontational approach, anti-institutionalism and their reliance on a personalistic leader that is central to their agenda (Mayorga et. al. 2008: 7). Populist strategy was important for MAS to succeed nationally to begin with. The combination of anti-establishment attitude, redistributive and nationalistic policies and charismatic down-to-earth leader gained MAS unprecedented support (Madrid 2008: 491). As is typical to populist parties, MAS gained popularity because it was offering an alternative (Madrid 2008: 493). Most Bolivians were disappointed with the existing political parties and fed up with the neoliberalist economic policy that had hurt particularly the poor rural population and had not been able to deliver its promises about economic growth. MAS was an outsider as it was still more of a social movement than a party and it managed to appeal to a large group of people and bring together different ethnicities (Madrid 2008: 493-494).

Madrid argues that appealing to a diverse group was what shows that MAS does not represent traditional populism but rather ethnopopulism that has appeared in some other Latin American countries as well (2008: 481). Ethnopopulist parties are like traditional ethnic parties in the way that they make ethnic appeals to gain the support of a certain ethnic group, which in the case of MAS is the indigenous peoples of Bolivia (especially the Aymaras of the western highlands). However, at the same time they combine this strategy with populist techniques and reach out to a larger group of people (Madrid 2008: 481). Madrid describes ethnic parties as exclusive while ethnopopulist parties are more inclusive (2008: 481). MAS has since the beginning appointed candidates from different ethnic backgrounds, including mestizo and even white. Also combining indigenous symbols to the traditional leftist rhetoric has worked in the party’s favor. Madrid points out that most Bolivians are mestizos with a fluid ethnic identity, meaning they identify as indigenous or mestizo based on circumstances (Madrid et al. 2008: 2). MAS and Morales have managed to attract the attention of this majority on an unprecedented level.

Levitsky and Loxton take the discussion a step further and argue that populism in Latin American countries, including Bolivia, has led to emergence of competitive authoritarianism (2013: 107). They describe Evo Morales as a “movement populist”, as

his connections to grassroots organizations are what his success is largely based on (Levitsky and Loxton 2013: 117). MAS's anti-system and anti-establishment attitude is mentioned again as a sign of populism (Levitsky and Loxton 2013: 126). However, the process of personalization where Evo is the main - if not only - representative of MAS, their agenda, and the whole indigenous population has made the process less participatory. The writers conclude that populism erodes democracy even in the case of "bottom-up" movements (Levitsky and Loxton 2013: 126). This claim seems valid in light of Müller's idea that populism is inherently anti-pluralist, which once more can be reflected against the events of the last years with MAS intentionally trying to extinguish all opposition. This may cause a threat to the democracy in the country in the future if MAS continues to refuse dialogue with the other parties in the country.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Challenges

In order to express the current Bolivian situation, it is necessary to consider the different components that have led to it. The populist behavior of MAS is what caused them to gain power in the first place. Their socialist agenda of equality and inclusiveness was attractive for the traditionally disenfranchised and poor indigenous peoples. However, it seems to be the same populism that is leading MAS to its potential downfall. The government and the president have clung onto the perception that they are and always will be the only true representatives of the Bolivian people. They have been dismissing all opposition as invalid because of this, and have refused to listen to those who disagree with them. As argued before by the literature, this behavior has undermined democracy and led Bolivia towards a more authoritarian model. This approach could have been successful if Morales's administration would have actually managed to solve all the problems that they promised to solve before gaining power. While this is obviously not a realistic expectation, it is understandable that if the people do not feel the change they will be disappointed. With the insufficient changes, the people are now starting to see through the populism and are asking for more tangible results.

A clear indicator of populism losing its credibility is the result of the most recent referendum in Bolivia. Evo Morales has been the president already for three terms and hoped to continue for a fourth one, but in February 2016 referendum the people voted against the constitutional reform that would have allowed it (The Guardian 2016). This is the first official defeat for the man and the party as whole. Even though the difference between those who voted for and against the reform was only a few percentage points, it was a clear message of a drop in support that MAS has not seen since its beginnings.

The above said shows the vulnerability of populism as a political ideology. It is true that populism has made it possible for larger groups of Bolivian society, including the indigenous peoples, to feel more included and represented within the political system but some limits seem to be emerging as to what populism can deliver politically. Populist parties tend to ignore their own shortcomings and rather point fingers at outside evils. Latest example is the fact that regardless of the results of the referendum, MAS still

intends to nominate Morales as their candidate in the presidential elections of 2019, and blames the loss in the referendum on US funded smearing campaigns of the opposition (Telesur 2016). Ignoring criticism may cause the party to fail developing with time and circumstances.

These issues aside, during the decade that MAS has been in power, they have managed to develop the country significantly, especially on social indicators. Poverty rate, illiteracy and infant mortality have all decreased (INE n.d.). These developments have touched the natives in particular as they were the poorest to begin with. But has MAS done enough? Should there have been more improvement during the years? As mentioned before, especially socialist or left-leaning scholars have recently started to criticize MAS for not remaining faithful to their original ideals and goals of demolishing neoliberalism completely. However, in a way certain economic structures (such as contracts with foreign hydrocarbon companies and large industrial farms for producing soy export) can be seen as necessary as the state is dependent on the income from its exports. The social programs supporting the sick and the poor are central to the Bolivian government's agenda but they could not afford to invest in them without the income flows from abroad. This, however, will not comfort those indigenous groups whose territories are directly affected by the destructive side effects of the hydrocarbon extraction. In some ways, it seems as if MAS has forgotten the values of the new constitution such as the concept of *Vivir Bien*, which promoted development without the need for economic growth. The challenges of implementing the MAS type of idealistic socialism can be seen here, as hard economic dependencies will always supersede the ideologies of sustainability and "development without growth". Morales' government pushed forward "The Law of Mother Earth" which gives the nature itself rights for the first time in history (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 93). At the same time, the president has made it clear that he considers having more oil, gas and industry a necessity (Farthing and Kohl 2014: 91). Bolivia is struggling with the seemingly unsolvable conflict of using its natural resources to their fullest potential but doing so without harming the nature irreparably in the process. With the current actions of MAS, the country is far from living in harmony with Pachamama.

From the indigenous point of view, the new constitution seems to hold a lot of potential but ultimately, the implementation is flawed. I would even argue that on many levels, the recognition of indigenous rights seems only symbolic, as in practice most

things that are given to the natives with one hand are taken away with the other hand (as in the case of promising indigenous autonomy but retaining the right to the land and resources). The same issue is with the recognition of Indian culture and traditions, which often seems to end up being tokenism rather than true inclusion of the indigenous customs and practices into the society on a larger scale. The inconsistency between the law and its implementation is seriously compromising the policies of the MAS government towards the indigenous populations. Instead of enhancing hope for increasing political as well as social and cultural inclusion, it endangers to estrange these peoples from the Bolivian politics again. For example, the natives are pushed aside always when their needs contradict with those of the government, and are allowed to present their views only when it does not threaten any larger state interests.

Currently, MAS has assumed a hegemonic position in the political sphere of Bolivia with little opportunities for other parties to influence policy making. The right wing opposition parties like Podemos are relatively strong and mostly supported by the mestizo-white population of the eastern districts. As MAS is falling, the opposition will probably gain more power (even the referendum of February 2016 can be seen as a victory of the right). Apart from MAS, the parties on the left are quite small and are unlikely to ever catch the attention of as wide audience as MAS has. Still, some MAS supporters might start to look for alternatives amongst those parties that are more adamant with their indigenous and socialist agendas.

The most likely outcome considering the current political situation seems to be the one where the fall of MAS leads to a victory of the current right-wing opposition. These groups, however, are not likely to be favorable towards the indigenous people, which is easy to see in how they have stood against all the policies of the current government that have taken power from the traditional elite and given it to the indigenous people. It is even possible that if the opposition was to gain power they would try to repeal the whole new constitution and establish a new one, dismantling all that MAS has fought for, including the new systems that support indigenous people's autonomy and participation. Also it is possible that influence from the United States would grow again, because the right wing parties of Bolivia have close relations to USA.

If MAS wishes to stay in power, they need to change their agenda and go back to their roots. The party got to power with a certain appeal of socialism, indigenous rights

and protection of environment, and drifting away from these values has had a cost. Also the behavior of MAS is not currently very democratic (as shown yet again with the nomination of Morales for 2019 elections). By allowing space for more debate the government could start to truly address the concerns of different groups (even if they are opposing ones) and build a more united country. It might be, however, that it is already too late for MAS. It is still unsure if Morales can run legally for the fourth term. Most probably another referendum would have to be organized, and if MAS fails again the party has to find another candidate. But who could fill the shoes of the current president who has been immensely loved and cherished for most of his time as a leader?

5.2 Possible solutions and future suggestions

The new constitution creates a decent base for a society where the indigenous people would truly be equal and active members of the society. However, it is not being implemented in a way that would empower the indigenous people to fully be able to represent themselves. I believe that an important step would be directing efforts into strengthening the local political and judicial institutions of the indigenous people and educating the people about the meaning and the possibilities of political participation. This would be done in order to make these institutions more democratic and more representative. From such strong local basis it would be easier for the indigenous people to move to regional and national politics as well.

As studies show the positive impact of NGO activity, I believe it should be further encouraged. Social movements have had a large role in the development of the Bolivian society in the last decades, but in the last years, the existence of MAS has drained some of them as the government tends to fund only the organizations that support their agenda. It would be important to give more space to independent indigenous organizations that would be allowed to bring up voices of those who are not being heard in the current system. This would be especially important in order to increase meaningful participation in the eastern lowlands, where the native groups are smaller and less influential.

The indigenous people will never truly be equal unless the Bolivians are able to abolish the pervasive racism in their society. There is no quick solution for something

that is so deeply rooted in the individuals and the structures, but the constitution that recognizes all nations as equal is the first step. I suggest the second one should be education. Bolivia is now a plurinational, pluricultural and plurilinguistic society on paper, but not yet in practice. It might take a full generation to fix the divide, but if different groups recognize the issues and are educated in cross-cultural understanding, significant development in battling racism can be made. The education should be targeted equally at all groups because even though the white and mestizo population is in a certain position of power, they are not alone responsible for the cleavage between the different ethnic groups. The schooling system has a big role in how the next generation will grow up to be and can also provide opportunities for children of different ethnicities to learn about the cultural richness of the Bolivian society. When people stop seeing the natives as backwards and uneducated, their possibilities to participate on larger scale get better and they can rise to higher economic, judicial and political positions without the non-indigenous people feeling threatened by it.

6. CONCLUSION

My first research question was concerning the effect of MAS on the political situation of the indigenous people in Bolivia. Being the first party with strong indigenous agenda, the success of MAS has a strong symbolic meaning and especially the election of Evo Morales as the country's first indigenous president encourages the idea that even indigenous people are able to rise to high political positions and have an impact on their communities. The effects Morales and MAS were not only symbolic, as they have also promoted the importance of indigenous cultures, values and traditions in Bolivia. Giving native languages equal status with Spanish was important in helping the indigenous people get educated.

Yet the most important impact of the MAS era has undoubtedly been due to the new constitution of 2009 and other legislative changes. They address several issues that are central to the indigenous people's rights and their possibilities to participate and express themselves locally, regionally and nationally. This is firstly by incorporating the UNDRIP and the ILO Convention 169 into the national law in a way that the indigenous people and their issues should be considered as a cross-cutting theme of all national projects and acts. Creation of AIOCs provides the indigenous communities a new platform for autonomy and accepting indigenous justice systems as equal to the ordinary one gives the native communities right to solve their conflicts according to their values and customs.

However, there has also been a clear negative impact on the indigenous communities by the MAS policies that have aimed to intensify extraction of natural resources that often are located in indigenous territories. Ignoring the indigenous people's rights to free, prior and informed consent on such activities is a crude violation of the promises MAS made and to the trust of the natives who voted for them.

The second research question goes to the next level and asks if the new legislation has been implemented and if it has had a practical impact on the political participation of the indigenous people. The answer to this is slightly more complicated. In general, it can be said that the implementation leaves a lot to be desired. Yet some practical effects can definitely be seen. Successful programs for education, health care and poverty reduction have helped many indigenous communities. Even with the obvious

faults some AIOCs are now functional and many communities are able to use their own justice systems. These kind of developments have had positive impact on the political participation of the indigenous people as they are starting to take control of their own decision-making processes.

Unfortunately, the process of implementation is only in the beginning and it has been slow and inconclusive. The new constitution is contradicting itself in way that ensures that even if the rights of the indigenous people are recognized, the state is able to restrict them whenever it suits their interests. This is particularly visible with the government efforts to limit the indigenous rights to territory and land. Also implementing the ideals of *Vivir bien* and harmonic relationship with the nature is done only when it does not conflict with the economic interests of the government or other projects they wish to pursue.

The third research question concentrates on MAS as a socialist and populist movement and the impact of these theories on the natives. As the core idea of socialism is based on equality and participation, the leftist agenda was one of the main reasons MAS gained the support of the indigenous people in the first place. The natives were among those most harmed by the neoliberalist and capitalist system that had dominated the previous decades. As is typical to socialism, MAS has invested in social programs that have benefited the rural and poor indigenous population. However, at the same time it can be questioned how socialist MAS really is as it has not been able to completely cut ties with the neoliberalism. This failure has an impact on the indigenous people as it feeds the inequalities within the country. Also not redistributing the expropriated land that was promised to the indigenous people and not being able to protect the environment can be seen as failures of socialism. The leftist governments have been in decline throughout the Latin American region and as Bolivia cannot rely on financial support from unstable Venezuela anymore, it is unclear what will happen to ALBA and to socialism on the continent in general.

Populism, and especially combining it with ethnic issues (ethnopolitism), is a significant reason to why MAS gained support of the indigenous groups in the first place. The indigenous people felt that they are being represented and that their concerns are being heard for the first time in the history of the country. However, populism has taken Bolivia towards a less democratic model where MAS has obtained a hegemonic position

and denies all opposition. The government does not listen to criticism or suggestions and is moving away from a participatory model. This has a negative impact on the possibilities of political participation for everyone in the country, including the indigenous people. The right-leaning whites and mestizos still have an option in the opposition that has slowly gained strength, but MAS has suppressed those leftist parties that it did not include in itself.

In conclusion, there has been clear positive development when it comes to the indigenous peoples' opportunities for political participation during the MAS era. However, even though the situation is better, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Because of the conflict of the government's interests and the indigenous rights it seems unlikely there would be political will to change the situation unless there is more pressure on the leaders. This might, however, lead to a situation where the indigenous people feel they are not being represented again and resort to different forms of political participation, like protests or riots. Bolivia has a long history of political instability and the future might be similar unless the government takes concrete action in order to create an equitable society where the indigenous people are able to live and participate equally with the non-indigenous population.

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