

BOLIVIA



COUNTRY ANALYSIS

I SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND



FORMAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK — POLITICAL SYSTEM

Bolivia's politics takes place in a framework of a 'Presidential representative democratic Republic', in which the President is head of state, and also head of government and head of a diverse multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government and legislative power is vested in both the government and the Parliament. The latter consists of the Chamber of Senators¹ and the Chamber of Deputies.² Presidential and legislative electoral-terms are both five years. The Judiciary as well as the electoral branch are independent of the executive and the legislature. The Electoral Organ is established as a fourth power.

After the 2014 elections, winning over 61% of the vote, Evo Morales' Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) holds 88/130 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and 25/36 seats in the Chamber of Senators. In doing so, it maintained an important two-thirds majority, the share necessary to pass constitutional reforms in the Plurinational Legislative Assembly. Over 53% of Bolivia's legislators are women and a fifth of Parliamentarians are aged 30 or under.³ The second biggest party became Samuel Doria Medina's Democratic Unity, a center right party popular in the urban area's and under entrepreneurs, winning over 24% of the vote. The three remaining candidates shared less than 15 percent of the votes.

President Evo Morales' political career originated from protest movements against President Sánchez de Lozada (in 2003) and his

¹ 36 seats; members are elected by proportional representation from party lists to serve five-year terms

² 130 seats; 70 are directly elected from their districts, 63 are elected by proportional representation from party lists, and 7 are elected by indigenous peoples of most departments, to serve five-year terms

³ Laurence Blair, "Evo forever? Bolivia scraps term limits as critics blast 'coup' to keep Morales in power", 3 December 2017, online via theguardian.com

RECENT DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENTS

successor Carlos Mesa (in 2005). These movements evolved around the grievances caused by two decades of so called “pacted democracy”, in which three main political parties governed the country in changing coalitions.⁴ Their market reforms, involving liberalization, deregulation and privatization, had an exclusionary bias that caused most of Bolivia’s poor and indigenous people to feel excluded and marginalized. The grievances associated with neoliberal reforms added to this. Already during the 1990s, indigenous and social movements increasingly challenged the system of agreements between elites.

Between 2000 and 2005, a series of political crises caused massive social protests and forced two Presidents out of office. In this era, a close relationship between social movements and the New Leftist government was initially forged. A broad-based coalition of movements — with peasants, workers and indigenous groups at the forefront — was instrumental in defining Morales’ platform as a union leader and coca grower, even before he was first elected to the presidency.⁵

The protest movement then also paved the way for Evo Morales’ Presidency. After losing his first Presidential race against De Lozado in 2001, Morales was elected President of Bolivia in late 2005, “on a wave of a popular and indigenous rebellion against neoliberal privatizations and for popular (Bolivian and indigenous) sovereignty”.⁶ He thus became what the country believed to be its first head of state of indigenous origin. This idea is, however, part of the very well managed propaganda created by the government around Morales’ image. He was not the first indigenous president of Bolivia; that title belongs to former president Andrés de Santa Cruz Calahumana.⁷ The political propaganda created to legitimize Morales’ image has taken advantage of Bolivia’s poor education system to repeat this lie enough times that it has become an accepted fact by the general public, and the few historians that have dared to challenge this idea have been silenced by state media. Since then, the President has led a process of decisive political change that has included a profound reshaping of the country’s political system through constitutional reform as well as a change of course in economic, social and coca/drug policies.

The opposition against Morales’ rule came from those who were in power before 2006: a right-wing opposition, rooted in its control of large landed estates and petro-carbon resources in the eastern lowlands. During their rule, these elite put Bolivia on the neo-liberal path; privatization of public corporations, land and natural resources; the

4 Willem Assies, “Bolivia: A Gasified Democracy”, April 2004, *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 76

5 Tanya Kerssen, “With Victory, Morales and Social Movements Confront New Challenges in Bolivia”, December 2009, online via nacla.org

6 Anna Krausova, “(Re)imaging the future of Bolivia”, 21 November 2017, online via intercontinentalcry.org

7 Luis Cino Álvarez, “First indigenous President of Bolivia”, July 15 2013, online via cubanet.org (<https://www.cubanet.org/articulos/primer-presidente-indigena-de-bolivia/>)



withdrawal of the government from social protections and regulation of private capital; and Bolivia's alignment with the United States and the dominant international financial institutions.

But in Morales' first two terms in office, these opposing forces could not keep the government from its new successful Leftists' course. A new constitution was drafted and a broad majority (61%) adopted the new document in a referendum in early 2009. The constitutional assembly held in the city of Sucre, however, engaged in a number of democratic violations during its creation process that caused protests and hunger strikes around the country. The official party, which held a majority of the seats in the Constitutional Assembly, yet not two-thirds of them, disobeyed the two-thirds minimum required to approve laws and also changed the location of the assembly to keep opposition representatives from participating. In November 2007, the Constitutional assembly moved location to military facilities and held session with MAS members only. Protests ensued, mainly by university students, and violent repressions took place, causing three deaths by gunshot and injuring more than three hundred people. No authorities or security officials have been tried over these deaths to date. There are videos of Venezuelan security officers who were shooting students at the scene.⁸

By significantly increasing the role of the state in the economy, Morales was able to boost economic growth at an average rate of 5.15% a year between 2006 and 2016. His social policies significantly improved several aspects of Bolivian life; more attention for indigenous rights and autonomy; increasing State reach, mainly over the oil and gas industries; the advance of agrarian reform; and reduced poverty and inequality.

⁸ Correo del sur Newspaper, "Death students from la calancha classes remembered in solitude", 25 NOVEMBER 2015, via correodelsur.com (http://correodelsur.com/seguridad/20151125_recuerdan-a-los-muertos--de-la-calancha-en-soledad.html)

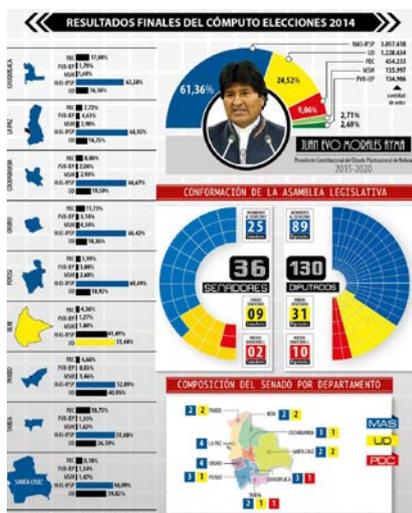
**CONTENTIOUS
POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS**



MAS' 2005 electoral victory and their constitutional reforms leave a controversial legacy in Bolivia. MAS no longer holds majority support nationwide, and not even among the poor sectors of the country any more. While there have been advancements indeed when it comes to representation of minorities in government institutions, corruption cases have echoed in Morales' last term. Narcotics trafficking is also more easily recognizable in a small society that was formerly not used to seeing murders on the streets in broad daylight for no apparent reason, and poor administration of state resources leading to collapsing infrastructure have hurt MAS' popularity. This was clearly reflected in the re-election referendum in 2016, where Morales' reelection was denied with 51% of the votes,⁹ as well as in the judiciary elections of 2017 where citizens voted null or blank to show their discontent with the current government, amounting to the 68,93% of the votes.¹⁰ A more recent poll, conducted by the vice-president, shows that only 26% of the Bolivian population would vote for Morales in the 2019 elections, and that 46% of the population believes he governs only to benefit coca-growers.¹¹

Morales is particularly popular among the so-called "popular sectors", which includes the country's diverse indigenous majority (Bertelsmann 2016: 29). The President was re-elected for a third term in 2014, with more than 60% of the vote, allowing the governing Movimiento al Socialismo to maintain its two-thirds majority in Parliament. There are several doubts as to whether this elections were free and fair, however, given that a considerable amount of voters registered were already deceased.¹²

The MAS achieved these victories, in part, by incorporating significant elements of the lowlands agribusiness and ranching elite into its ranks, as well as former conservative neoliberal party militants.¹³ Morales was able to unite his ranks with those opposing him and create a "big tent" rooted in a more centrist political agenda, which seemed to unify all regions of the country. Where the narrative might still be very nationalist/leftist, towards the 2014 elections, MAS' (economic) policies



9 Evan Collins, "Bolivian referendum goes against Evo Morales as voters reject fourth term", 24 February 2016, via the guardian.com (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/22/bolivia-evo-morales-president-national-referendum-fourth-term>)

10 Nelson Peredo, "Nule vote imposes itself on judiciary elections", 3 December 2017, via lostiempos.com (<http://www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/pais/20171203/voto-nulo-se-impone-elecciones-judiciales>)

11 Gonzalo Flores, "MAS convulsions: its own polls say NO", 18 March 2018, via <http://gonzalofloresopina.over-blog.com/2018/03/el-mas-convulsiona-sus-propias-encuestas-le-dicen-no.html>

12 Marco Chuquimia, "Supreme Electoral Tribunal cleanses over 25,000 dead registered citizens", 8 January 2016, via eldeber.com.bo (<https://www.eldeber.com.bo/bolivia/TSE-depura-25.000-fallecidos-y-el-padron-es-de-65-millones-20160108-60659.html>)

13 Emily Achtenberg, "How Evo Morales's Third Term Will Challenge Bolivia's Social Movements", 28 March 2015, online via nacla.org

turned more and more pragmatic; more market-friendly approaches emphasizing technological innovation fueled by a robust extractivist economy.¹⁴

Nevertheless, and maybe exactly because of this change of course, much has changed since Morales came to power late 2005. The current administration faces increasing opposition. Over time, it becomes more and more clear that many of the expectations of the early 2000s, reflected by the radical 2009 constitution, have not been met. One of the biggest sources of disappointment is the continued reliance of Bolivia's economy on the extraction of natural resources. The Morales-administration has expanded its hydrocarbons exploration into the national parks (overlapping with indigenous territories), adopted new mining laws that permit water diversion from peasant farming communities to mining operators, and begun studies to identify Bolivia's shale gas deposits for potential fracking-operations.



The Morales-administration has been burdened with the task of balancing the constitutionally codified rights of 'Mother Earth' and indigenous people on the one hand, and fighting persistent inequality and poverty on the other (McKay 2017: 17). Continued economic growth has led to success on the latter part, but also causes critics to claim that the new MAS worldview is a betrayal of radical indigenous and socialist ideals. MAS' new economic approach has largely sidelined the popular sectors that were critical to Morales's first victory in 2005. The sharpest criticism on Morales has come from former allies. Felipe Quispe, an indigenous leader branded MAS-policies "capitalism with an Indian face", and has said that MAS is a "soulless, disgusting corpse" that "stinks" of corruption.¹⁵ The viability of MAS's political strategy

¹⁴ Pablo Stefanoni, "Elections in Bolivia: Some Keys to Evo Morales's Victory", 18 December 2014, online via boliviarising.blogspot.rs

¹⁵ See endnote 3/iii



of restricting the political right through fragmentation and cooptation might be over, as popular movements continue to struggle for land, economic security, environmental justice, true gender equality, and the rights of peasant, indigenous, and urban communities.

With time, Morales seems to have developed an understanding of democracy that did not apply to him. Despite the fact that the Bolivian Constitution only allows for a President to serve two terms in office, Morales' 2014 electoral victory was the start of his third consecutive term.¹⁶ In early October 2017, Morales launched his bid to extend legal term limits, clearing the way for him to run for a fourth term in 2019. On November 28, 2017, the Bolivian Constitutional Court annulled Constitutional articles that forbid Morales to run for a fourth term in the 2019 presidential elections, allowing indefinite reelection.

This decision is all the more salient, as the Bolivian people had already decided against that exact possibility in a 2016 referendum.¹⁷ The "No" option won nationwide with 51.3% of the votes. Nevertheless, in the middle of 2017 Morales' Movement to Socialism ignored the will of the people, and asked the country's highest court to rescind legal limits barring elected authorities from seeking re-election indefinitely. The party argued that the term limits violate human rights, and claimed that the outcome of the referendum did not represent the will of the people.¹⁸ With the Constitutional Court ruling in favor of that (first) argument, Morales might have gone a step too far.

¹⁶ Main argument for allowing Morales to already serve a third term was the fact that his first Presidency took place before the 2009 Constitutional reform. Following this train of thought, the 2014 electoral victory was the start of only Morales' second term in office

¹⁷ See endnote 3/iii

¹⁸ Linda Farthing, "Bolivia Says Goodbye to Term Limits", 15 December 2017, online via nacla.org

PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENTS



Already in October 2017, thousands of people across the country participated in protest-rallies against Morales' bid for re-election in 2019.¹⁹ Two months later, as the decision of the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of Morales and his Movimiento al Socialismo, the protest movement revived. According to Jhanisse Vaca Daza, "citizens took to the streets to protest on the day the Constitutional Court ruling was announced, and have stayed active through different means of protest since."²⁰

Several new action groups have appeared in Bolivia over the last year, characterized by certain features not seen before in the Southern-American state. Where male actors used to dominate the Bolivian political space, several activist groups strongly empower females and project them as the new leaders in society.²¹ Protests are also turning increasingly creative. A group of female protesters brought eggs to the Chamber of Industry and Commerce as an offering of encouragement to have the "balls" to stand up against the government in early December.²² Around that same time, activists from the Kuna Mbarete group staged a symbolic funeral for the Civic Committee, which had failed to pronounce itself against the Constitutional Court ruling.²³

Finally, the nature of the protest-movement opposing the Morales-administration has also fundamentally changed. In the past, movements have backed particular individuals and their battle to facilitate Morales'

¹⁹ Reuters, "Bolivians protest Morales' new bid to extend term limits", 11 October 2017, online via reuters.com

²⁰ Jhanisse Vaca Daza, "Future of Democracy still uncertain in Bolivia", 4 January 2018, online via theslotimes.com

²¹ See endnote 6/vi

²² Pablo Ortiz, "Mujeres llevan huevos a la Cainco en senal de Protesta", 6 December 2017, online via eldeber.com.bo

²³ El Dia, "Las Kuna Mbareta llegan con marcha funebre al Comite", 6 December 2017, online via eldia.com.bo

fall from the throne. But the Bolivian population has turned its eyes to younger generations looking for new leaders, with new developments mainly concentrated in the city of Santa Cruz. Currently, citizen platforms are organizing themselves in a singular, horizontal group of social coordinated movements, which seek to “empower not any one individual but the message of struggle for democracy itself,” according to Vaca Daza.²⁴

In line with this new strategic direction, over 15 platforms and independent activists united themselves with a manifesto on December 29, 2017. A broad coalition of student unions, female civic resistance groups, health workers, environmental groups and democracy activists pledged to build on the active and interventionist tactics of nonviolent resistance to “resist the tyranny” and called on fellow citizens to join them in making their voice heard. Morales’ once insurmountable approval ratings have been dropping. Ex-president Carlos Mesa is seen as the most viable opposition candidate at this moment, although he denies he will run in 2019. A poll conducted in November last year showed that Mesa would win against Morales in the case of a run-off between the two.²⁵ The case with Carlos Mesa is quite complex, however. It is known among political elites that he has said he will not be running for office in the 2019 elections, despite knowing that he would be the only viable option. At the same time, however, some speculate that he is only pretending he will not run, so that the pressure asking for his candidacy increases, and he ensures a larger portion of the vote.



²⁴ See endnote iv (the oslo times)

²⁵ Pagina Siete, “La Primera Vuelta es para Evo y la segunda para Carlos Mesa”, 30 July 2017, online via paginasiete.bo

II POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, NATIONAL ISSUES, AND VULNERABLE GROUPS



RULE OF LAW, ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPUNITY

The separation of powers is clearly reflected in the 2009 Constitution, and according to Bertelsmann, Bolivian democracy is also characterized by strong vertical checks and balances, with subnational governments and strong social organizations that monitor and balance the power of the central government (2016). In practice, however, the separation of powers continues to be limited. Besides the habit of the executives to meddle in legislative and judicial affairs, this is due to the simple fact that the ruling party has had a two-thirds majority in both chambers of the new parliament, already since the general elections in December 2009.

Evo Morales' bid for the 2019 elections also slightly contravenes the rule of law in Bolivia, to say the least. The recent Constitutional Court decision to allow indefinite re-election does not go directly against the law, but de-facto bypasses the outcome of the 2016 referendum on the topic. More than the judicial decision, the fact that Morales' own party sought to overrule this "decision of the people" is not a good sign for the rule of law in Bolivia.

**POLITICAL
ORGANIZATION
AND PARTICIPATION
RIGHTS – FREE AND
FAIR ELECTIONS**

Impunity in relation to corruption is widespread in Bolivia. Bolivian law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government has not implemented the law effectively, and officials can often engage in corrupt practices without facing punishment. Partially due to low salaries and lack of training, police corruption also remains a significant problem. Inconsistent application of the laws and a dysfunctional judiciary further exacerbated the impunity of security forces in committing abuses (USDS 2016).

Two controversial 2015 Supreme Decrees threatened indigenous peoples’ right to free, prior, and informed consultation and consent in cases of natural resource extraction. These rights are established in international legal provisions recognized by Bolivian law. The opposition and independent investigators criticize these developments, as they endanger Bolivia’s indigenous peoples and their protection against land exploitation and fossil fuel extractions (Freedom House 2017).

Finally, according to Human Rights Watch, impunity for violent crime also remains a serious problem in Bolivia, leading to mob attacks, or lynching, of alleged criminals.²⁶ The drug economy, over which the state has little control, clearly influences state institutions and policies, but its organizers largely escape prosecution.²⁷



Citizens have the legal right to freely organize political parties, and this right is fully respected in practice. After its observation efforts in the October 2014 general elections, the Organization of American States (OAS) praised the high level of civic participation in Bolivia. However, the ruling MAS-party is a very strong force in the political field, which does not particularly favor or welcome opposing voices. Opposition

²⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Bolivia, Events of 2016”, online via hrw.org

²⁷ Jeremy McDermott, “Why Bolivia could be the new hub for regional drug trafficking”, 21 October 2014, online via csmonitor.com and Linda Farthing, “Bolivia sees coca as a way to perk up its economy – but all everyone else sees is cocaine”, 15 March 2017, online via theguardian.com

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION



politicians have claimed that the Morales administration has persecuted them through the judiciary. They stated that only opposition leaders were prosecuted in connection with the Indigenous Fund scandal.²⁸ According to Bolivian rights organizations, there were over 70 cases of politically motivated judicial cases in the first six months of 2016 (Freedom House 2017).

People are also free to make their own political decisions without influence from any state or non-state actors outside of the political spectrum. Political participation in elections in Bolivia is high. The same electoral observation mission conducted by the Organization of American States (OAS) as mentioned above has claimed that the 2014 elections reflected the will of the people. Nevertheless, it recommended that Bolivia strengthen its electoral institutions and campaign finance system. Equal media access for all parties and polling station vandalism will have to be spearheaded to guarantee fair elections in the future (Freedom House 2017).

The Bolivian Constitution and laws provide for the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association in the country. Labor organizations and peasant unions are an active force in society and wield significant political influence. As the law protects freedom of movement, protesters often disrupt internal travel by blocking highways and city streets.

However, protest does not always remain peaceful in Bolivia, with state forces using violence. According to Freedom House, several people involved with government spending on disability stipends were attacked while traveling to La Paz to meet with officials in the middle of 2016, and police have been said to use pepper-spray against similar protesters in April and June of that year.²⁹ The protests continued throughout 2017.³⁰ At least two protesters were killed in August amid unclear circumstances, as demonstrating miners clashed with police.

Morales strongly antagonizes his political opponents and critics, framing them as imperialists and “agents of the empire”. These polarizing efforts run the risk of placing the strong civil-society into a more and more repressive environment, where they also answer with violence. Felipe Quispe, an indigenous leader and one of the fiercest critics of the Morales’ administration, was forced to go into hiding after police quashed recent anti-corruption protests this year.³¹ In late August 2016, a mob abducted and murdered then Vice Minister of Interior Rodolfo Illanes, as he was traveling to speak with the demonstrators amid a protest of mining sector workers in Panduro.

28 Telesur, “Bolivian President Condemns Major Fraud Scandal”, 14 February 2015, online via telesurtv.net

29 On Demand News, “Disabled protestors tear gassed and pepper sprayed by Bolivian police”, 28 April 2016, online via youtube.com

30 The Guardian, “The Fight: disability rights protestors in Bolivia on the barricades”, 5 May 2017, online via theguardian.com

31 See endnote 3/iii

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BELIEF



The freedom of association is also said to be under pressure in Bolivia. In July 2015, the Constitutional Court upheld the constitutionality of Law No. 351, which grants legal operating status to NGOs in the country and allows the government to close any NGO working in the country that “does not meet the standards of the law.” Government officials employ a rather anti-imperialist narrative towards foreign NGO’s. Vice President Garcia Linera has stated the government would expel NGOs that receive international financing and “get involved in politics” (USDS 2016).

The new constitution guarantees freedom of expression, and private discussions are free from surveillance or other state interference. The independent media is very active, and Human Rights Watch finds the public debate to be “robust” (2016). However, the media are biased and subject to some limitations. Most media outlets are privately owned, and these newspapers, television- and radio stations feature opinion pieces that favor the opposition. The opposite holds true in state media, which accounts for 33 percent of all broadcasts. According to Freedom House, journalists and independent media frequently encounter harassment, including from public officials, in connection with their critical or investigative reporting (2017).

Media outlets might risk facing reprisals from government when expressing dissenting opinions.³² As pressure on President Morales rises, warnings that press freedom in the country is under threat increase correspondingly. Withholding of government advertising and imposing steep taxes are some of the tactics used, especially against independent journalists and media, favoring media that comply. The government is also said to censor journalists, and journalists in turn practice self-censorship due to fear of losing their jobs, fear of prosecution, and fear of losing access to government sources (USDS 2016).

Since the 2016 Gabriela Zapata corruption scandal involving the President that took a dramatic turn in 2016, journalists have been threatened with arrest for investigating the issue. The frame used by the Bolivian government, in which the whole saga (including Morales’s defeat in February’s referendum on) is portrayed as a “conspiracy” mounted by the opposition and the US embassy, also ways heavy on critical journalists.³³

The Bolivian government, the country’s main internet and telecom provider, does not restrict access to or block particular content on the internet. The government is also not known to restrict or monitor the internet. Nevertheless, after the loss of the February 2016 referendum, government officials proposed two different initiatives aimed at regulating social networks, blaming social media attacks against the

³² Reporters Without Borders, “RSF decries mounting hostility towards media in Bolivia”, 27 May 2016, online via rsf.org

³³ Dan Collins, “Sex, lies and paternity claims: Bolivia’s president reels amid tumultuous scandal”, 24 June 2016, online via theguardian.com and Committee to Protect Journalists, “Bolivian officials threaten journalists with jail”, 16 June 2016, online via cpj.org

CORRUPTION

government as a major reason for Morales' defeat in the referendum. It has also been recorded that in some cases right before violent repression there is a loss of phone signal in the areas where repression takes place, as was the case with the Chaparina repression to indigenous groups' march in 2012.³⁴ While these initiatives failed, the government managed to pass a supreme decree that established the General Directorate of Social Networks, tasked with directing the government's "dissemination, consultation, and interaction" with cyber communities. Halfway through 2016, Bolivia officially rejected a UN Human Rights Commission resolution affirming the right to a free, uncensored internet (Freedom House 2017a).

Corruption in Bolivia affects a range of government entities and economic sectors, such as law-enforcement bodies and the extractive industries. The Justice system and the police are beset by corruption. Where the former is overburdened by their workload, the latter receives inadequate training and is poorly paid. The country ranks 113th on the Corruption Perceptions Index, hardly having improved this position over the last five years. New anticorruption legislation was introduced in 2009/2010, establishing an Anti-Corruption Ministry that outlined policies to combat corruption, and opening investigations into official corruption cases. However, these efforts have been criticized for permitting retroactive enforcement.

Corruption in Bolivia reaches as high as the upper-tiers of government. Officeholders who engage in corrupt practices are regularly held to account, but are not systematically prosecuted. Most charges follow after corrupt behavior becomes public knowledge. During the Morales presidency, selective anti-corruption campaigns have targeted not only current and former officeholders from opposition parties, but also MAS party-members and close collaborators (Bertelsmann 2016: 8).

According to Freedom House, legislators voted to prosecute former presidents Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and Jorge Quiroga in 2011 for approving hydrocarbon contracts alleged to have contravened national interests. In February 2016, the U.S. government accepted an extradition request for Sánchez de Lozada, who is also facing genocide charges in Bolivia for his role in the killing of dozens of indigenous protesters in 2003 (2016). Efforts have been directed at these prosecutions rather than attempting to address the lack of transparency and the structures of patronage behind the scandals.

In February 2016, Gabriela Zapata—a former manager of the Chinese company CAMC who at one point had been in a romantic relationship with President Evo Morales—was imprisoned on corruption charges linking CAMC with contracts with state institutions. Subsequently, Morales was accused of influence-peddling involving the Chinese construction firm, as CAMC received lucrative government contracts.

³⁴ Human Rights Report made by Ombudsman, page 38. http://www.defensoria.gob.bo/archivos/Informe_Defensorial_Intervencion_Marcha_Indigena_DP.pdf

Analysts have said that the scandal, involvement in which Morales firmly denies, must have had a decisive influence on the outcome of the February 2016 referendum.³⁵



ORGANIZED CRIME

Bolivia borders with countries that are among the main consumers (Brazil, Argentina) and producers (Peru, Paraguay) of illegal drugs in the world. At the heart of the South American drug trade, organized crime in Bolivia evolves mostly around the production and trafficking of coca-paste, which is the raw material used to produce cocaine.

With smart policies, working with rather than against coca-farmers, the Morales-administrations has made significant gains in the struggle against drug-production and trafficking. “Over the past decade, supported by the EU, the Bolivian government has sought to gradually curb the cultivation of coca, by establishing a tightly regulated market for its consumption as a nonnarcotic stimulant.”³⁶ By doing so, the country has been saved from the lethal consequences of the “war on drugs” in countries like Mexico, Colombia and several central-American states. With a murder rate of 12.1 per 100,000 citizens (in 2012), Bolivia is a relatively safe nation for Latin American standards.

³⁵ Dan Colllyns and Jonathan Watts, “Bolivian referendum goes against Evo Morales as voters reject fourth term”, 24 February 2016, online via theguardian.com

³⁶ New York Times, “How Bolivia Fights the Drug Scourge”, 14 September 2016, online via nytimes.com

INDIGENOUS POPULATION

This is a critical element to understand the Morales administration. Morales began as a coca-grower, not as an indigenous leader, and only took the indigenous flag upon himself when instructed to do so by his political advisors.³⁷ He does not even speak any indigenous languages.³⁸ Furthermore, his alliance to coca-growers is directly to those who grow coca for cocaine production. Geographically, there are two areas in the country where coca can grow due to climatic conditions: One is Los Yungas in La Paz, and the other is El Chapare in Cochabamba, where Morales leadership of coca-unions began. The coca grown in Los Yungas equals almost the exact amount of coca needed for traditional consumption: Coca tea, coca medicine, coca for chewing, coca candy, etc. On the other hand, 94% of the coca grown in El Chapare goes to illegal activities as reported both by investigative journalists and a UN Investigation.³⁹ Morales' alliance to the coca-growers in El Chapare has led him to focus only on that area and even boycott, through government policies, coca-growth in Los Yungas. This is why the association of coca-growers in La Paz has declared him an enemy of the coca-unions and declared themselves in complete opposition to the government,⁴⁰ taking part in the national strike this past February 21st and burning Evo Morales' and Alvaro Garcia Linera's membership cards to the coca-union in La Paz recently on live television.



37 <http://www.abc.com.py/edicion-impres/opinion/el-falso-indigenismo-de-evo-morales-1215517.html>

38 <http://eju.tv/2015/07/evo-no-habla-idiomas-nativos-pero-anuncia-que-despediran-a-funcionarios-que-no-lo-hablen/>

39 https://www.unodc.org/bolivia/es/press/entrevista_erbol.html

40 <http://www.lostiempos.com/actualidad/pais/20180219/cocaleros-inician-bloqueo-vias-yungas>

Most of Bolivia's indigenous people felt excluded and marginalized before the turn of the century. Partly because of this sentiment, a new leader stemming from the labor and coca-movements could come to the fore. In a majority indigenous country, and with Evo Morales being Bolivia's first indigenous President, one might think that the rights of the indigenous peoples in the country are fully guaranteed. The President is hailed for having passed a new constitution in 2009 encompassing comprehensive rights for Indigenous communities and an entire chapter dedicated to Indigenous rights.⁴¹ Indigenous people are now much better represented at the highest level of the judiciary and in Parliament than ever before.

Since the MAS came to power, the political factions have always been divided along those lines; MAS support comes mainly from the rural people, with a high concentration in the western highlands; opposition revolved around white and multiracial Bolivian elite concentrated in the lowland regions. But despite Morales' strong and supporting narrative around the country's majority, he needs to balance continued economic development with the continued protection of his main support base. The outcome of this balancing act is not always in favor of the latter. The alienation of part of the country's indigenous people and their environment came to a head in the 2011 protests against the plan to build a road through the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS).⁴²

These incidents apparently have not significantly weakened electoral support for the government. The political divide outlined above has become less salient, as Morales and the MAS also won in all but one of the lowland departments, including in Santa Cruz, in the 2014 elections. According to Bertelsmann, the victories in what used to be opposition-strongholds and the home to powerful regional autonomy movements might reflect the rapprochement and further consolidation between the government and the (agri-) business sectors.

Economic improvements notwithstanding, dramatic inequalities persist, and socioeconomic discrimination, besides women and rural areas, in particular affects indigenous peoples. According to Bertelsmann, members of indigenous peoples, especially from rural areas, have significantly fewer opportunities than their non-indigenous counterparts to receive higher education, get a job in the formal economy and escape poverty (2016: 19). Although the 2010 antiracism law contains measures to combat discrimination and impose criminal penalties for discriminatory acts, racism is rife in the country according to Freedom House, especially against indigenous groups.

41 Val Reynoso, "Indigenous Rights in Evo's Bolivia Versus Bachelet's Chile", 26 December 2017, online via telesurtv.net

42 See Bertelsmann 2016: 20 for more examples



WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Over time, Bolivia has made lots of progress on the front of equal rights for women, as they are now much better represented at the highest level of the judiciary as well as in Parliament. After the 2014-elections, more than 53% of Bolivia's legislators have been women. Social safety nets also increasingly support vulnerable women with cash transfer programs, and pregnant women and young mothers can seek medical care during and after pregnancy. Nevertheless, discrimination in Bolivia especially affects women, as can be seen in data in literacy rates and enrollment in further education (Bertelsmann 2016).



Conflicts around gender issues and patriarchal practices are still deeply rooted in Bolivian culture. Bolivia has one of the highest rates of violence against women in Latin America. A 2014 law increased the penalties for rape and abuse, and included the recognition of spousal rape; created a specialized police force for crimes against women; and categorized violence against women as a public health issue. Nevertheless, according to Freedom House (2017) the justice system does not effectively safeguard women's broader legal rights. More than half of Bolivian women are believed to experience domestic violence at some point during their lives, and only a small percentage of reported cases get solved. Therefore, the lack of enforcement and allocation of resources for the implementation of legislation protecting women should to be of continued concern.⁴³

⁴³ Peter Lykke Lind, "Can Bolivia's new measures counteract gender violence?", 28 July 2016, online via Aljazeera.com

LGBT-RIGHTS



ETHNIC & IDENTITY - CLEAVAGES

The 2014 national elections spawned a new feminist movement, *Machista Fuera de La Lista!* (“male chauvinists off the ballot!”) that forced two candidates accused of domestic violence—including a prospective MAS senator—to withdraw.⁴⁴ Other women-led movements, both within and outside the MAS umbrella, are mobilizing around abortion⁴⁵ and LGBTQ rights, domestic violence and femicide, and the general demand for “depatriarchalization” of Bolivian institutions and society.

Bolivia has laws in place that prohibit discrimination against LGBT-people. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, but it reserves marriage as a bond between a man and a woman, and makes no provision for same-sex civil unions. Transgender individuals by law can change their name and gender identity on government forms, but judicial discrimination makes the process very difficult. LGBT people experience widespread societal discrimination, as most of these laws prohibiting discrimination are rarely enforced. No laws condemn hate crimes against LGBT people. According to Freedom House, transgender people often resort to sex work in dangerous conditions because of employment discrimination and groundless rejection of their credentials. There are LGBT-focused civil society organizations working in Bolivia, such as the Bolivian Coalition of LGBT Organizations (COALIBOL).⁴⁶

In Bolivia, political tension often involves some kind of social-inclusion question of the indigenous peoples, capturing a central dichotomy in two competing standpoints. The one holds that control of the state should be in the hands of the indigenous population, which forms the majority in Bolivia. The opposing view is that any such reforms would threaten the peace and the country’s territorial integrity. Although they don’t cause high impact conflict, this ethnic or identity fragmentation and a long history of ethnicity based discrimination have added to the erosion of trust and make it difficult to reach a consensus on questions of national development. Civil society is also said to be fragmented along ethnic lines and regional identity lines (Bertelsmann 2016: 22). See the sections on Bolivia’s indigenous population for more on this matter.

⁴⁴ See endnote 7/vii

⁴⁵ Myles McCormick, “Bolivia women’s rights groups hope revised law is step toward legal abortion”, 7 July 2017, online via theguardian.com

⁴⁶ See “Coalicion Boliviana de Colectivos LGBTI” via Facebook

DISABLED PEOPLE

The rights of disabled people in Bolivia are not a main priority of the MAS-administration, to say the least. The country lacks public services required for disabled people to access suitable work, and does not support them with allowances for healthcare or basic commodities. A big part of this group lives in extreme poverty. Bolivia's disability rights campaigners have a relatively strong presence in Bolivian society. For several years now, activists have been campaigning for the enforcement of basic equality legislation and monthly allowances.⁴⁷ The police response has been very harsh, involving water cannons and tear gas. If nothing else, the protest and the government's crude reaction has sparked a debate in the country, and might be damaging President Evo Morales' reputation as a defender of the poor and oppressed.⁴⁸



47 Amy Booth, "Why is the Bolivian government turning water cannon on disabled protesters?", 21 June 2016, online via theguardian.com

48 Jonathan Watts, "Bolivia's caravan of courage leaves a bittersweet legacy for disabled protesters", 5 May 2017, online via theguardian.com

III PILLAR ANALYSIS



To influence society using nonviolent strategies, one should identify the institutions and organizations that support the existing power structure and social functions, and those that could support your vision of social change. Derived from Gene Sharp's work 'Waging Nonviolent Struggle' for the purpose of this analysis, we define pillars of support as "institutions and sections of the society that supply the existing regime with sources of power required for maintenance and expansion of its power capacity" (2005). The other two categories described below then list similar institutions and sections of society, who are ambivalent or even possible allies to counter the existing power structures. For the use of these concepts, it should be noted that a pillar-analysis should not particularly list social functions (such as the "economy" or "religion") but rather "the institutions that create and carry out social functions" (Canvas Core Curriculum 2007: 34). In describing these entities, this part of the country report heavily builds on the broad analysis in the first part of this report.

PILLARS

SUPPORTING

CURRENT POWER

STRUCTURES

A. POLICE AND MILITARY

Where the military stands in high regard amongst most Bolivians, the police force is widely perceived as ineffective, corrupt, and repressive. There is a traditional rivalry between both state forces, as the military is better paid and equipped. A key issue in both institutions is the lack of representative channels for lower-ranked recruits to advance their grievances, as union activity will not be tolerated. Bolivia's military has been deployed on the streets in a policing capacity several times over the last few years, which is permitted in the constitution if the police's capacities have been "surpassed."⁴⁹ Both the military and the police are said to have ties to organized crime, mainly related to drug trafficking.

Where the 1980s knew military coups as a regular practice, in recent years the military has explicitly refused to consider coups. According to Bertelsmann, police strikes and other expressions of strained relations between the state and security or military forces may temporarily pose a challenge to the state's capacity to exercise its monopoly on the use of force. Especially leading up to the 2014 elections, Bolivia witnessed dramatic rebellions in the ranks of its national security forces.⁵⁰ However, these protests mainly involve basic labor grievances, racism and unequal opportunity. Protests are not directed towards the Morales administration, and the police and military in Bolivia remain under firm control of the state.

B. JUDICIARY



With the ruling of the Constitutional Court allowing indefinite re-election for Evo Morales, effectively overturning the 2016 referendum results, what can we say between the relation between the Bolivian Judiciary and the ruling MAS-party? According to Freedom House, "the judiciary is politicized and overburdened, and the justice system is beset by corruption" (2017). Human Rights Watch claims that the Bolivian justice system has been plagued by corruption, delays, and political interference

49 International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT), "Bolivia Country Report", 12 January 2015, online via issat.dcaf.ch

50 Emily Achtenberg, "Bolivia's Military and Police Protests: The "Children of Evo" Speak Out", 25 July 2014, online via nacla.org

for years.⁵¹ Overall, the highest judicial tribunals are perceived as close to the government and the MAS-party. Nevertheless, the judiciary has demonstrated certain independence in individual rulings, and women and indigenous people are now much better represented at the highest level of the judiciary (as in parliament) than ever before (Bertelsmann 2016: 8).

Five days after the Tribunal's decision to allow Morales to run in 2019 and beyond, Bolivia held its second judicial elections. Since 2009, judicial elections have replaced the old system in which court positions were divided among political parties in the legislature. The 2017 judicial election became a litmus test of the country's political climate, as an effort spearheaded by a coalition of former presidents, vice-presidents, governors, and political party leaders to urge Bolivians to cast null votes. 51% of the ballots cast were nullified, leading the right-wing opposition to declare a victory and declare the result as evidence that support for Evo Morales is declining.⁵²

C. REGIONAL LEFTIST ALLIES

The Morales government is critical of free trade agreements and uses the term "imperialist" to demonize everything and everyone opposing the country's leftist course. After a crisis in bilateral relations that included mutual expulsion of their respective ambassadors, Bolivia ended trade negotiations with the United States and the European Union. On the other hand, Bolivia joined the "Peoples' Trade Treaty," originally negotiated between Cuba and Venezuela, in 2006 (Bertelsmann 2016: 16).



⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, "Bolivia, Events of 2016", online via hrw.org

⁵² Carlos Corz, "Las Autoridades Judiciales son elegidas con el 35.02% de los votos, el nulo llega al 51.35%", 7 December 2017, online via la-razon.com



These three countries have jokingly been called the three amigos, as they always vote in sync with each other in international and multilateral forums such as the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Bolivia is the only remaining country in South America that is still considered a strong ally and defender of president Nicolás Maduro.⁵³ During the MERCOSUR meeting in Argentina in July 2017, Bolivia refused to sign the joint letter condemning violence in Venezuela, proving its strong tie to this with ideological alliance. Bolivia and Cuba have a long lasting medical exchange program. These bonds compensate for tense relationships with mainly Chile and the United States.⁵⁴

SPLIT ALLEGIANCES

A. MEDIA



According to Bertelsmann, the importance of the pro-government state media has grown throughout the Morales era. The government operates several television stations, a news agency, a weekly newspaper, and community radio stations. The government news agency (Agencia Boliviana de Información), now also has a strong online presence, where it likewise competes with private and “social” media. The government tries to curb and bend the level-playing field in its favor, by using licensing processes, public advertising campaigns and legal provisions to favor government friendly outlets (Freedom House 2017a).

Although some tensions between the Morales-administration and the private media persist, these private media are pluralistic, tending to privilege opposition views. According to the 2011 telecommunications law, television and radio-frequencies are equally distributed between the state, the private sector, and community-based platforms. Independent media remains very active in Bolivia.

Essentially, the MAS administration has successfully achieved what many Competitive Authoritarian Regimes do to control media: government allies have bought independent TV channels, who remain independent in paper, but whose line of reporting heavily bends towards the government. This past February, the Inter-American Journalists association expressed concern about the Bolivian government’s decree indicating that all channels (private and state-owned) must broadcast state campaigns from the Ministry of Justice⁵⁵.

⁵³ Dom Phillips, Sibylla Brodzinsky, David Agren, Dan Collyns and Uki Goñi, “‘Totally divided’: how Venezuela’s crisis split the Latin American left”, 10 August 2017, online via theguardian.com

⁵⁴ Gabriela Keseberg Dávalos, “Bolivia’s current foreign policy: A primer”, 1 September 2017, online via theglobalamericans.org

⁵⁵ Editorial, “Threats to Freedom of Expression in Bolivia”, via latercera.com (<http://www.latercera.com/opinion/noticia/amenazas-la-libertad-express-ion-bolivia/67621/>)

B. INDIGENOUS GROUPS



Over the course of the last twenty years, Morales and the MAS have built a formidable support base, partly tied to the loyalty of the country's indigenous peasant. Morales emphasizes his status as the country's first indigenous President where he can, polarizing between himself and the former political elite. Overtime, however, a dichotomy has evolved. On the one hand, there are the indigenous social groups that remain loyal to the MAS party. These groups are rewarded with government funding and investment in their communities. The US State Department has reported that government affiliated actors have tried to promote divisions within indigenous organizations to ensure the organizations remained allied with government interests (USDS 2016: 31).

But opposed to this group, there is a growing part of the indigenous population that is defecting in their support of Morales. Morales' macro-economic success has come at the cost of increased dependence on extractive industries.⁵⁶ Particularly in the eastern lowlands, controversial projects to expand extractive industries have driven opposition to Morales. The government has for example accelerated hydrocarbons exploration into national parks, which overlap heavily with indigenous territories.⁵⁷ Another case in which the "alienation of part of the country's indigenous people" came to a head was the 2011 the plan to build a road through the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS), which led to intense protest efforts (Bertelsmann 2016: 2).

Within the indigenous groups, fragmentation remains paramount, and it seems to be key to unite the urban indigenous groups and the younger generations with those (indigenous) groups that are more experienced in popular rebellions. Finding a central issue to mobilize those different actors around will prove to be very important.

C. THE UNITED STATES



The United States of America have been highly involved on the sidelines of Bolivian politics for the last two decades. Bolivia's relationship with the United States has traditionally been very close, but since Morales won the elections in 2005, these relations have turned sour. Relations became openly hostile shortly after Morales' election, and since 2008, the U.S. and Bolivia have not had ambassadorial relations.⁵⁸ The US has been funding had been one of the principal funders and fomenters of the separatist projects by regional governments in Eastern Bolivia in the past.⁵⁹ The United States has several stakes in the southern American country, such as the production of coca-paste and international trade. Especially the latter would motivate the American's to support political forces which oppose Morales' continued rule. Cutting economic relationship with the United States has in turn severely damaged the Bolivian economy, giving the US leverage in an economic sense.

⁵⁶ See endnote 12/xii

⁵⁷ See endnote 43/xliii

⁵⁸ See endnote 43/xliii

⁵⁹ Eva Golinger, "USAID's Silent Invasion in Bolivia", online via nacla.org

POTENTIAL ALLIES (FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM)

A. POLITICAL OPPOSITION



On the other hand, the overt and covert American influence in Bolivian political spheres also functions as another means for the MAS to capitalize on anti-imperialist sentiments. The conspiracy narrative that, in combination with anti-imperialism, has proven to be a very effective tool for Morales, is largely based on the idea of American meddling. The Bolivian government claimed that the 2016 referendum, which resulted in a close win for the “NO”- camp, should have been invalid due to an opposition smear campaign directed by Washington.⁶⁰ And when Washington expressed a deep concern over the November 2017 Constitutional Court decision, Morales stated that the U.S. reaction was what actually convinced him to run.⁶¹ In this way, United States influence on the democratic process in Bolivia could work both ways.

The political opposition against Morales’ MAS mainly comes from (center) right parties, and their leaders are all rooted in upper-class, mostly white (non-indigenous) elite families. In large part, those who were in office before 2006 now form a right-wing opposition, their power rooted in control of large landed estates and petro-carbon resources in the eastern lowlands. During their rule, these elite had put Bolivia on the neo-liberal path. According to Diego von Vacano, a Bolivian political scientist at Yale University, these politicians have been “unable to generate a discourse that would appeal to a broad base of Bolivians.”⁶² Several opposition leaders have been implicated in corruption-scandals over the last years.⁶³

For their part, the Morales government does everything it can to discredit the political opposition. They are portrayed as imperialists and “agents of the empire”.⁶⁴ These accusations have not been completely false, as the United States is known for its involvement in the Bolivian political spheres since the turn of the century.⁶⁵ Then, Morales often dismisses nonpartisan protests as political rallies disguised as a grassroots movement, framing some kind of political plot of the right-wing opposition wanting to ensure Morales cannot run in the 2019 race.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ See endnote 3/iii

⁶¹ Reuters, “Bolivia’s Morales says he’ll seek fourth term, spurs protests”, 30 November 2011, online via reuters.com

⁶² See endnote 3/iii - also see: Bertelsmann 2016: 10

⁶³ Telesur, “Bolivian Opposition Leader Admits Election Plotting with US Embassy”, 8 June 2016, online via telesurtv.net and See endnote 12/xii

⁶⁴ See endnote 3/iii

⁶⁵ Eva Golinger, “USAID’s Silent Invasion in Bolivia”, online via nacla.org and Telesur, “Bolivian Opposition Leader Admits Election Plotting with US Embassy”, 8 June 2016, online via telesurtv.net

⁶⁶ See endnote 13/xiii



In the 2014 elections, the MAS won in all but one of the lowland departments, including in Santa Cruz, which used to be strongholds of the opposition. According to Bertelsmann, this partly reflects the rapprochement between the government and the (agri-) business sectors (in Santa Cruz, in particular) (Bertelsmann 2016: 2). In March 2015 subnational elections, the MAS won control of more departments and municipalities across the country than any other party, but the opposition won key mayoralties and governorships, including those of La Paz and Santa Cruz (Freedom House 2017). The political opposition played a relatively successful role in the February 2016 referendum, when a slim majority of 51.3% voted against changing the constitution, and the 2017 judicial election showed its organizing power.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, given the continued weakness and fragmentation of the opposition parties, their political leaders will have to form a broader coalition with regional autonomy movements. As recent challenges to the government and its political agenda have come mainly from conflicts with and between social and indigenous organizations that traditionally supported Morales and the MAS (Bertelsmann 2016: 2), the opposition might also be able to include these entities in a popular movement. Morales' 2019 re-election bid might prove to be the right contentious political issue to mobilize and unite around.

B. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS /CIVIL SOCIETY



Bolivia has a vibrant civil society. According to Bertelsmann, the country is characterized by an unusually broad and active range of civic associations (2016: 22). The 2009 Constitution even assigns an important role in deliberating and determining policies to "organized civil society". Besides organizations representing the established urban elites, economic associations and to some extent the unions, the Morales administration has focused its attention to various groups within the so called "popular sectors": indigenous movements, small trade and farmer unions and more issue-based social movements. Civil society mobilizes in various groups, among which are miners, peasants, women, youngsters and indigenous people.

Within Bolivia, a wide range of social movements, interest groups and NGOs form a part of society which is famous for its ability to influence domestic politics. Morales' rule originated in those movements, as they brought the country to a standstill and deposed president after president in the early 2000s (McKay 2017: 1). Essentially this fact is what makes for the current fragmentation of social movements and civil society in Bolivia. The MAS still partly operates as an umbrella organization of social movements. As with the indigenous pillar described above, this causes a strong dichotomy between those who support Morales and those who oppose his administration in general or some of its particular policies.

The common enemy of neoliberalism, combined with the identification of common problems and challenges, united those who were those people and groups in Bolivian society that were excluded and marginalized

⁶⁷ See endnote 12/xii



before the early 2000s. The new social movement alliances which were formed at that time then developed their new political agenda under the Unity Pact. Evo Morales and the MAS then gained support from the Unity Pact while “discursively ostracizing the oligarchic and economic elites” (McKay 2017: 9). By promising to restore Bolivia’s sovereignty over its natural resources and redistributing the country’s wealth to the marginalized majority, Morales politically capitalized these new strong societal forces, and at the same time forged the strong bond between his administration and the social movements that remains until today.

But twelve years after Morales became President of Bolivia, the bond of support between the social movements and the MAS-administration is no longer undisputed. Recent years have been characterized by a myriad of single-issue, labor and local conflicts involving mineworkers, trade unions, the military and police as well as local communities and regional movements. Former civil-society allies of the MAS openly challenged the Morales government. Its policies of continued exploitation of natural resources and the raw-material based economy seem to be diametrically opposed to the Unity Pact agenda. According to McKay, extractivism has replaced neoliberalism as the injustice frame uniting (parts of) civil society.



A big part of the social movements opposing the Morales government seems to revolve around “indigenous resistance to continued exploitation of natural resources.”⁶⁸ The Morales government has increasingly ignored, and at times repressed this resistance. In this way, social movements, indigenous people, and environmental preservation efforts are inextricably interlinked.⁶⁹ The TIPNIS Highway project represents the new dichotomy in the civil-society landscape. The construction of a highway through the protected national park was met with fierce resistance and mobilizations of many of the indigenous communities affected, and of their environmentalist allies, starting from 2011. At the same time, some indigenous and peasant communities and pro-government organizations (such as coca-farmers) remained in vocal support of the project.⁷⁰

These and other issues and scandals⁷¹ have essentially split the social movements in two camps. This polarization has also come to reflect a deepening clientelism, as social groups that remain loyal to Morales and the MAS have begun receiving injections of government funds.⁷² Morales clearly recognizes the possibility of Bolivian civil society to use its force against his administration, and tries to curb its influence in different ways. President Morales signed a law and adopted a decree granting the government broad powers to dissolve civil society organizations in 2013. Under the decree, any government office may request that the Ministry of Autonomy revoke the permit of a nongovernmental organization

68 Also see – McKay 2017: 14

69 See endnote 6/vi

70 See endnote 6/vi

71 See McKay 2017: 12 and onwards, and See endnote 12/xii

72 See endnote 12/xii

(NGO) if it performs activities other than those listed in its bylaws, or if the organization's legal representative is criminally sanctioned for carrying out activities that "undermine security or public order." The decree also allows the Plurinational Assembly to request the revocation of an NGO permit in cases of "necessity or public interest." According to Human Rights Watch, these measures give the government inappropriately wide latitude to interfere with the operation of independent civil society groups.⁷³

These contradicting opinions and interests fractured the Unity Pact, and without a unified Unity Pact, the state's legitimacy becomes threatened (McKay 2017: 11). By the time of the 2016 MAS congress, several of the social movements that had once backed Morales had defected in their support of him.⁷⁴ Morales is also including these new "opponents" in the narrative of conspiracy against his rule. In March 2016, President Morales said that "some NGOs" were "conspiring" against his government but did not specify which ones. In September, the minister of the Presidency said that "some NGOs" sought to carry out a coup and "subdue the Bolivian People," but he neither named the NGOs nor presented evidence to support his claim.⁷⁵



⁷³ Human Rights Watch, "Bolivia, Events of 2016", online via hrw.org

⁷⁴ See endnote 12/xii

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Bolivia, Events of 2016", online via hrw.org

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- ii 130 seats; 70 are directly elected from their districts, 63 are elected by proportional representation from party lists, and 7 are elected by indigenous peoples of most departments, to serve five-year terms
- iii Laurence Blair, “Evo forever? Bolivia scraps term limits as critics blast ‘coup’ to keep Morales in power”, 3 December 2017, online via theguardian.com
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- ix See endnote 3/iii
- x Main argument for allowing Morales to already serve a third term was the fact that his first Presidency took place before the 2009 Constitutional reform. Following this train of thought, the 2014 electoral victory was the start of only Morales’ second term in office
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- xii Linda Farthing, “Bolivia Says Goodbye to Term Limits”, 15 December 2017, online via nacla.org
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- xlvii Eva Golinger, “USAID’s Silent Invasion in Bolivia”, online via nacla.org
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- liv See endnote 13/xiii
- lv See endnote 12/xii
- lvi Also see – McKay 2017: 14
- lvii See endnote 6/vi
- lviii See endnote 6/vi
- lix See McKay 2017: 12 and onwards, and See endnote 12/xii
- lx See endnote 12/xii
- lxi Human Rights Watch, “Bolivia, Events of 2016”, online via hrw.org
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