

Bolivia's Perfect Storm: Pandemic, Economic Crisis, Repressive Coup Regime

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Introduction

The rising toll of diseased and deceased from the COVID-19 pandemic has hit Bolivia particularly hard, in a continent that is now in the lead in global contagion rates. As of August 8, more than 100,000 cases were officially confirmed or suspected in that country, with 3,600 deaths among a total population of just over 10 million.

The coup government, installed in November, has mismanaged the crisis from the outset. Hospitals are understaffed and ill-equipped, testing is minimal, and the main response by the *de facto* authorities is to threaten lengthy jail terms for those who circulate “inaccurate” information about the pandemic – in a country where only a minority of workers are employed, the vast majority eking out a living in the “informal” economy of street markets and self-employment.

Typical of its approach, the interim regime headed by President Jeanine Añez was quick to expel more than 700 Cuban healthcare workers who, under the previous government, had provided needed services in remote areas and helped to train new medical staff.

Aggravating the misery is an unprecedented economic crisis. The coup regime paralyzed state development projects initiated by the previous government, privatized key state enterprises, and brought the IMF back with a \$327-million loan. These policies, [writes Bolivian journalist Oliver Vargas](#), have had “dramatic consequences for the ability of the country to weather the economic impact of COVID-19. 38% of the country has lost the entirety of their income, while 52% have lost a part of their income. The deliberate retreat of the state has meant that the 90% who are suffering during quarantine haven’t received any income support, the only gesture has been a one-off universal payment of US\$70. In April, to last four months of lockdown.”

Remittances from relatives working abroad – crucially important for many families – have fallen by more than 30% in the first six months of this year, as many of the 3 million Bolivians living abroad in economic exile have lost their jobs.

“Bolivians are again experiencing shortages,” tweets deposed president Evo Morales from his Buenos Aires exile. “Long lines to buy food, drugs and gas amidst uncertainty and pandemic. The people have to struggle not only against the #Coronavirus but to survive as best they can, totally abandoned.”

“In the face of this desperate situation,” says Vargas, “voters were looking forward to ending the eight month coup experiment at the ballot box in

September. Polls show that the MAS [the party led by Morales] is on course for a first-round victory, with Añez trailing behind in distant third. It might have been a peaceful end to a violent period. However, determined to cling on to power whatever the cost, the regime is using COVID-19 as an excuse to postpone those elections. Claiming that elections would spread the virus, even as public transport and most of the economy re-opens, they have pushed for further delays.”

When the new elections tribunal, the TSE, arbitrarily postponed the election to October 18, overruling the legislated date of September 6, mass protests broke out throughout the country, initiated by the Bolivian Workers Central (COB) and the Pacto de Unidad, the coalition of organizations allied with the deposed government party, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS). Starting August 3, more than 100 roadblocks were set up, with only vehicles delivering medical supplies being allowed through. Thousands of Bolivians have taken to the streets demanding the national elections be held September 6.

COB leader Juan Carlos Huarachi stated:

“We need a democratically-elected government so as to discuss new policies, not just for social issues, but also for economic issues... in eight months we’ve seen the collapse of our country. Sadly, this is the reality, with recipes from the IMF, by blackmailing the people, by blackmailing the legislature.”

The Añez regime has responded by charging MAS leaders with “terrorism, genocide, sedition” and “offenses against public health.” And it has supported demands that the TSE disqualify the MAS candidates from the election. The TSE has referred the matter to the Supreme Court.

The following article by Cochabamba-based journalist Fernando Molina, published before the most recent events, describes the political climate, the MAS reactions to its overthrow in November, 2019, and the difficult perspectives it faces, whether it wins or loses the elections. I have translated it from the July-August 2020 issue of the magazine *Nueva Sociedad*, edited by Pablo Stefanoni in Buenos Aires. I have supplemented Molina’s notes with a few of my own, for clarification, –signed R.F.

What Outcome for Bolivia’s Crisis?

Elections and Political Reconfiguration

by Fernando Molina

Bolivia is heading toward presidential and legislative elections amidst a new political scenario. After the fall of Evo Morales and the blow suffered by his political force, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) has regained ground and could win again. Will it succeed? If so, can it return to power? Whatever the case, a polarized battle looms between the MAS and its adversaries.

Bolivia’s elections, scheduled at this point for next September 6, will express a huge political and social polarization. It is not unique in this: so will the US election in November. But while this is standard in the bipartisan US electoral system, it is unusual in Bolivia. Several parties

will be participating, but the electorate will be divided according to a single alternative: for or against the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS).

We still don't know which party will manage to represent the anti-MAS voters. Various Center and Right-wing parties are competing, encouraged by Bolivia's electoral laws, which allow for a second round of voting if no party wins a sufficient plurality. This opens space for the parties to make individual calculations – a practice that many MAS opponents consider outrageous, since it jeopardizes what was achieved with the overthrow of President Evo Morales last November, that is, the abrupt departure from office of the socio-political bloc that had managed the country since the early 20th century.

This is now the main concern of Bolivia's economic, intellectual, and media elites: to prevent dangerous games between the old opponents of Morales (who resist yielding to each other and are unable to form a united front against "public enemy number one," as a *La Paz* daily calls the former president¹) evoking the most terrifying specter for the upper classes: the "return of the MAS."

Image on the right: Jeanine Añez receiving the presidential sash from a representative of the Bolivian military (photo: EFE).



These parties respond to their critics with claims that each is not only the very opposite of the MAS but has the unique ability to guarantee a definitive and sustainable victory over it.² At the same time, each of them seeks to show that their rivals are not trustworthy because their actions bring water to the mill of the MAS. The common accusation is that they are "functional to the MAS." This was the tone adopted, for example, by the *de facto* government, which is running interim President Jeanine Añez as the presidential candidate of the Juntos group, toward opposition candidates Carlos Mesa and Luis Fernando Comacho, when they criticized Añez's handling of the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.³

Conversely, the other opposition parties have accused the interim government of promoting the return of the MAS through its mismanagement of the crisis.⁴ The media are playing the same game, as indicated by this headline in *El Deber*, the main daily in Santa Cruz, when reporting on the former president and current candidate Carlos Mesa: "Mesa shares a forum with the President of Argentina Alberto Fernández, who gave refuge to Evo."⁵

Hatred of the MAS

Abhorring the MAS is the dominant passion of the country's traditional elites. The roots are found in a mix of memories of grievances suffered (the loss of spaces of power due to the dissolution of the technocracy of the 1990s and the devaluation of their "genealogical capital" for 14 years), ideological differences (liberal-republicanism versus national-

caudillismo), and racism against the Indigenous and *mestizo* plebeians or “*cholos*.”

Hatred of the MAS began even before the coming to power of the “first Indigenous president” and the installation in the government of social movements that brought together Indigenous peoples, peasants and workers. This could already be felt in 2002, when the MAS became a serious alternative for office. Between 2006 and 2008, during the first two years of Morales’s government, it came close to unleashing a civil war between the north-western and south-eastern regions of the country. If this did not happen, it was due to the weight of the president’s popularity, although he did not manage to consolidate himself in government without first blunting the more radical edges of his program of state reforms and reducing to the minimum his program of redistribution of agrarian property.

Despite this, the abhorrence of the leftist party and its leader did not disappear. Even during the boom period, 2009-2015, while the country was experiencing the best economic moment of its history – the majority of Bolivians had more income, and social welfare increased – the animosity smoldered like a votive candle on the secret altars of the business organizations, social clubs, lodges, fraternities of the Santa Cruz carnival, the card games of wealthy women, and ultimately, in the multiple settings of private life in which the traditional white elites had not lost their primacy. Even if some bourgeois leaders “went over” to the MAS government or pretended they were fraternizing with it, or if most of the intellectuals and journalists were careful not to “overly criticize” the powerful regime, the class and racial enmity was always there, awaiting a better time in which to express itself.

The same thing occurred with racial prejudice. Although public expressions of this prejudice were tempered by fear that the government would implement the legal and moral sanctions it deserved, the country continued to be weighed down by the vestiges of the estates of the colonial order. The MAS even had to make *realpolitik* concessions to racism, for example, by appointing figures that were more picturesque than persuasive in the newly created Vice-Ministry of Decolonization intended to direct egalitarian policies, or by allowing the Armed Forces to maintain a rule that discriminated against sergeants and corporals, most of whom are of Indigenous origin.⁶

Those longing for the old powers and the old relations between the classes were gradually strengthened as the MAS government was weakened by the natural wear and tear of its prolonged stay in power, the errors it was making, and the limitations it revealed. Being “anti-MAS” became a sign of social and racial status, and therefore, began to be internalized by the lower middle classes as an “aspirational” element, that is, as a mechanism for social advancement.

What were the mistakes made and the limitations that the MAS government revealed? Its “electoralism,” which ended up reducing the social process to a succession of triumphs at the ballot box and the retention of power at all costs, even with authoritarian methods; its “peasantism,” which must be understood as a relative indifference to the demands of the urban sectors; its cooptation of unconditional “Evistas” as a part of the leadership; its corruption and bureaucratization; its ideological unclarity between extreme pragmatism and “national-Stalinism;”⁷ and above all, its *caudillismo*.

With his political, economic, and governmental success, Morales became the most important *caudillo* in a country that had been full of them; a country in which, as its most creative sociologist, René Zavaleta, put it, “the *caudillo* is the way that the masses organize.”⁸ The

centrality of the president and the state cult of his personality attained levels as high as those achieved by other great national leaders, such as Victor Paz Estenssoro or José María Linares. If, at first, the official flattery of Morales corresponded in part to reality, it later became a mirage and a mechanism for ratification and manipulation of the Bolivian president's narcissism to such an extent that he believed he was even strong enough to turn his back on the source of his power, the electoral majorities, if they were to oppose him.

That was what happened with regard to the constitutional referendum of February 21, 2016, which ruled out his re-election,⁹ and perhaps also with regard to the result of the elections of October 20, 2019, which, as most Bolivians perceived it,¹⁰ he had arranged to alter in order to avoid a second round (a notion, however, that Morales and the MAS deny and that is now a subject of dispute in the election campaign and the courts).¹¹

In any event, to assume that the undeniable strength of his figure was superior to Bolivians' attachment to the vote – which in this country is key because it serves to resolve the everlasting disputes over the rents derived from natural resources – was a very serious misstep. It ended up confusing and fragmenting the social bloc that had backed the MAS government and which was already weakened by its long incorporation within the ruling party, with all the advantages and temptations that this situation implied.¹²

In the end, in the final hours of his government, the MAS, which had arisen from social struggles, was unable to mobilize its adherents. It had been transformed into an electoral machine that could still get out the vote but which no longer aroused any progressive fervor. Only the ultra-loyal *cocaleros* of the Chapare, the residents of the most Indigenous neighborhoods of the Aymara metropolis of El Alto, and certain groups of state functionaries, were willing to fight effectively to prevent Morales from falling.

After his overthrow, the burning of buses, factories, and homes of opponents of Morales in La Paz, as well as the “siege of the cities” ordered by the ex-president from exile, aroused the age-old terror of the Bolivian whites of the “Indian thug” and raised the hatred of the MAS to the level of collective hysteria. It was then that there arose the ferociously anti-socialist narrative that still prevails today.

Pablo Stefanoni has singled out “three key words in it: ‘hordes’ (the MAS members are reduced to mere criminal shock troops); ‘waste’ (the widely praised macroeconomic management [of Morales] was simply virtual reality; and ‘tyranny’ (the last 14 years are said to have been pure state despotism).”¹³ This narrative has served, in part, as the motive and, in part, as the cover for the repression of the MAS carried out by the interim government. Groups that mobilized in support of ex-president Morales were dismantled by the combined forces of the Police and the Army, costing the lives of more than 30 people. Almost 1,000 leaders were temporarily detained. Several dozen former officials, among them Morales and his vice-president, Álvaro García Linera, had to leave the country for Mexico and Argentina. Hundreds have been investigated for corruption. Two ex-ministers were arrested and remain in jail. Seven MAS leaders took refuge in the Mexican embassy in La Paz, where they are stranded, having been denied safe conduct to leave the country.

At the same time, the public sphere has been taken over almost completely by the

spokespersons – genuine and upstarts – of the “revolution of the pititas,” as the press called the protests that preceded the overthrow of Morales.¹⁴ Even intellectuals who had been linked with, and thrived from, the previous government have begun to practice target shooting against Morales, making him the “punching bag” of anyone who knows how to string together a few phrases to produce an opinion piece. The most important left-wing academics have been careful not to go against this climate of opinion, and have sought to exonerate themselves.¹⁵ From the outset, the Añez interim government has enjoyed hegemony over the mass media,¹⁶ and only recently has this begun to lessen due to the rapid erosion in the government’s management, although it is still unanimous if invoked against the MAS.

In this context, one would have thought that the MAS’s days were numbered, that its future would be that of a secondary political group and exclusively rural. However, early in the new year, notwithstanding the adverse conditions we have described, the MAS appeared to be heading the first surveys of voting intentions, even before it had named any candidates. The acronym attracted “hard-core” support – ideological and sociological – of massive scope. In January, 21% of the electorate was prepared to vote for it regardless of who its candidates were or what they were offering.¹⁷ In March, with its candidates now chosen, 33% of the population supported it.¹⁸

The workers, the plebeian sectors of the population, the Indigenous peoples, and even the *cholos*, who still are not upwardly socially mobile,, continued to see the MAS – although it had made no consistent self-criticism of its errors – as the only force capable of representing them and defending the statism, nationalism, and racial egalitarianism that the return to power of the traditional elites seemed to have put at risk. In addition, MAS rule is associated with a period of unusual prosperity and political stability. That is why, among other reasons, the initiative of the most radical “pititas” to use the charge of fraud hanging over the MAS to veto its participation in the election went nowhere. This outcome was counter-intuitive. Despite everything that had occurred, the MAS continued to be at the centre of politics, and the other forces had to position themselves in relation to it. Not even the defeat of historic scope that the party had suffered last November had displaced it from this focal location. It was a surprising example of political resilience that no doubt expressed, as we have said, simultaneous processes of class and racial identification.

The MAS Response Since Its Fall

“Evismo,” or the admiration and loyalty – not always healthy – manifested for Evo Morales, on the one hand, and on the other, the possibility of obtaining an electoral victory in the coming elections are the two forces that have preserved the unity of the MAS after the terrible earthquake that its violent departure from government meant for this party. For those who suppose that its fall was due solely to the action of an external force (the “empire’s conspiracy to appropriate Bolivian lithium,” or the “police and military coup”), the unity of the Masistas may seem an obvious premise. But this is not the case because, as we have seen, the overthrow of the Morales government was the result of both external and internal causes. Furthermore, the MAS has never been an ideological party; it is “*sindicalista*,” and part of its appeal has been its ability to enable the social ascent of the most awakened and ambitious elements of the unions and the plebeian middle classes. So, the expectation of an early return to power has influenced its unitary behaviour.

Morales has also played a fundamental role in this by becoming the only reference for groups that without him would probably seek to compete with each other to express that 33% or more of the electorate that today leans to the left. This has always been the role of Morales. If the MAS managed to fulfil one of the most cherished hopes of the 20th century progressives, the “unity of the left,” it did this not on the foundations predicted (ideological hegemony, defensive front, etc.) but in the Bolivian style, around a guardian figure.¹⁹ Morales articulates the three main wings of his party, all of which are “Evistas.” This ensures that “they stay in the Political Instrument,” while at the same time avoiding the emergence of dangerous competitors for his charismatic leadership.

The three major factions of the MAS, each of which includes many minor groups, are as follows:

(a) The one formed by the workers and peasants’ organizations of the so-called “Unity Pact.” This is led, on the one hand, by David Choquehuanca, an Indigenous leader in the Altiplano who served as foreign minister between 2006 and 2018 and is now the MAS vice-presidential candidate, and on the other, by the young Andrónico Rodríguez, the effective leader of the cocalero union federations that Morales continues to head.

(b) The one formed by the numerous groups of militants that come from the traditional left; radical and “national-Stalinist” leaders predominate in this wing, although it also contains the more moderate candidate for President, the former Minister of Economy and socialist activist Luis Arce.

(c) The one formed by the neo-Marxist, post-modern, left-wing humanists and progressive democrats who joined the MAS just before and after it came to power and who, given their educational capital, played an important role in government management. A minority part of these middle-class elements have links with Choquehuanca, while another larger part is linked with García Linera (whose future role is uncertain).²⁰

The Indigenous and *sindicalista* wing read Morales’s departure from power in a purely racial key. In part, this sentiment was turned against the middle-class members of the MAS, whom the two wings considered opportunists who had taken advantage of the “government of the Indians” to build their fame and fortune. This was the context for the resurgence in popularity of Choquehuanca, who had been “in the freezer” for a couple of years after Morales kicked him out of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when he was considered a possible successor for the Presidency just at the time when the Chief of State was seeking the unconditional support of his party for his third re-election. Choquehuanca had actually played an important role, as the coordinator of several rural-based NGOs, in promoting the rapid rise of the young “brother Evo” from peasant syndicalism to national politics.

When the MAS was founded, Choquehuanca was its main operator in the Aymara area of the country (the altiplano that includes La Paz and Oruro), while Morales, despite his Aymara origin, dominated the valleys of Cochabamba where the population was primarily of Quechua origin. Choquehuanca is a cultural Indianista and therefore a moderate, but he tends to gather political strength from the opposition between the Indigenous and the middle class of the MAS. Within the cabinet, he found himself in muted conflict with García Linera. In accordance with his racially-shaded view of the balance of forces within his party, Choquehuanca accused the then vice-president of being guilty of all the government’s failings, including his own departure from power, while absolving Morales, at least in public.

After losing control of Foreign Affairs, Choquehuanca's supporters were removed from the government, and Choquehuanca himself was sent into "golden exile" in Venezuela as executive secretary of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). After Morales's ouster, the Unity Pact nominated him and Andrónico Rodríguez as candidates for President and Vice-President, respectively. The party approved this nomination along with the list of candidates determined by the Unity Pact – demonstrating which of its wings was the strongest. However, Morales objected to this formula, and instead, imposed a middle-class figure who was close to him, Luís Arce, shifting Choquehuanca to second position. Unlike Choquehuanca, Arce has no social base of his own, and if elected, would be dependent on Morales. Characteristically, the former foreign affairs minister accepted Morales's decision in public but was reluctant about it in private and attributed it to an intrigue by García Linera. His compliance, hypocritical or not, prevented a clash between the Unity Pact and the exile in Buenos Aires, which would have been very dangerous for the MAS.

However, the tensions among "workers," "professionals," rural "founders," urban "guests," "nationalists," and "communists" continue to exist and will surely be expressed more openly in the future, whether the MAS wins or loses the elections.[...]

Another political figure who has emerged from the social organizations is the President of the Legislative Assembly, Senator Eva Copa, who has upheld the Indigenista claims and has led the MAS parliamentarians with a certain independence from both Arce and Morales. She can not easily be classified among the Choquehuanca supporters. Shortly after the November overthrow of Morales, Copa reached certain agreements with the Añez government that she did not coordinate with her comrades in Bolivia or, in some cases, with those in Buenos Aires. And she has criticized publicly middle-class leaders like Senator Adriana Salvatierra despite the fact that she was in a difficult personal situation.²¹

None of this has been disavowed by Morales. He, like so many other *caudillos*, maintains relations with all groups and individuals that he can use to achieve his plans. Evo's attitude – and, on the other hand, the interim government's lack of interest in or commitment to achieving this – has prevented the defection of the MAS caucus in the legislature. After the most crucial moment of the repression, when this defection seemed imminent, had passed, the parliamentarians regained the initiative and launched what some observers have viewed as a counter-attack by the national-popular bloc.²²

The extreme tolerance and even the ideological neglect of the MAS are due to the fact that this party is profoundly electoralist. At the same time, these characteristics determine that it remains as such: amorphous, and thinking that the solution to all its problems – or, better yet, that its only problem – lies in winning the coming elections. Obviously, this has forestalled any systematic debate on the causes of its political defeat, learning from its mistakes, or improving.... If Morales, very reluctantly, came to accept that he had been wrong in trying to re-elect himself for a third time,²³ he has now changed his mind in view of the slight improvement in his situation in Bolivia, owing to the problems of administration confronting Añez, among them those related to the health crisis. Morales has just [said](#), once again, that he was not mistaken in running once again.

Can the MAS Return to Power? Is This Advisable in the Medium Term?

Can the MAS return to power in September? Technically, yes. It needs to win more than 40%

of the votes – not impossible, given that it now polls between 33% and 35% – and hope that Mesa and Añez, running separately, do not rise far above the 20% support they now have. The major obstacle lies in the possibility that the anti-MAS electorate, on the eve of the elections, turns massively in favour of either of those candidates. This is what happened in October 2019, and the polling does not discount it. Should the MAS be forced into a run-off second round with either Mesa or Añez, the intense polarization would probably result in a slim victory for the anti-MAS candidate.

Should the MAS win, could it take office? In Bolivia's history, there is a period with similarities to the current one. In the late 1940s, the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), which had co-governed with nationalist military officers between 1943 and 1946, likewise faced the hatred of the elites. In the 1951 elections, Mamerto Urriolagoitia, the outgoing president, did not accept the victory of Paz Estenssoro, and instead, handed over power to a military junta. This maneuver went down in history as the "mamertazo."

Is there room for a new "mamertazo" in Bolivian history? Today, of course, the international situation is quite different. However, very powerful forces could resist with all the resources at their disposal the return of "[Bolivia's cancer](#)" – as a columnist has called the MAS, among them, a section of the Army.²⁴

At that time, Urriolagoitia argued that the MNR victory could not be recognized because the "communists" could not be allowed to take power. Today some might argue that it should not be given to "narcoterrorists," or that the rise of a party that tried to cheat the country with a fraudulent election should be prevented, perhaps by banning it before the elections are held. Morales has warned of this possibility, referring to it as their "Plan B."²⁵

The more democratic section of the Bolivian elites, however, would see a re-edition of a "mamertazo" as the repetition of an error. Bear in mind that a few months after Urriolagoitia's action, the National Revolution exploded, and Paz Estenssoro returned from his Argentine exile to take office as President. An even more interesting (if naïve) question is whether an immediate return to power is advisable for the MAS. It is conceivable that in such a case it would not have time or space to overhaul itself, recover from its wounds, establish a healthier relationship with its "President Evo," that is, it could not avoid making the same errors and suffering the same damage as before. On the other hand, it is also true that as a party now hemmed in by the state security services, staying out of government could end up decimating and dividing it. One can be certain that such a thing as the "advantage of losing" is not in the mind of Morales, Arce, and the other MAS leaders, and much less in the minds of the Masistas involved in trials, imprisoned, or exiled.

What would Arce and Choquehuanca do if they came to govern? What would they have to face in 2020-2025? Some forecasts: they would face resistance, at least initially, from the state security agencies; the relentless campaign against them by the economic, social, university and media elites; the constant mobilization of certain sectors of the middle class that would not want to retire to their winter quarters after having tasted again the fruits of power; a divided parliament; a MAS agitated and eroded by the battle between "revanchists" and "conciliators"; and above all by the blows of the pandemic and one of the worst economic crises in the country's history.

In this context, there is no doubt that Arce would be lucky if he could stop the restoration process that his enemies have begun, and administer the state from the perspective of

those below. Assigning him any other objective would be unrealistic. And if he failed in this, it would probably compromise even further the possibilities of mounting a far-reaching leftist project in the future. In any case, as the annals and epics testify, the generals have never heeded the fortune tellers when they have already decided to go into battle.

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Notes

1. Robert Brockmann, "[El enemigo público No 1](#)," *Brújula Digital*, June 18, 2020.
2. "[Carlos] [Mesa: mi responsabilidad es ganarle al MAS en elecciones para evitar que siga gobernando el país](#)," ANF, June 24, 2020.
3. "Samuel [Medina Dorado, Junto's vice-presidential candidate] [accusa a 'Camacho, Mesa y el MAS' de conformar un bloque contra el Gobierno](#)," *Correa del Sur*, May 26, 2020.
4. Erika Segales: "[Camacho, Mesa y Tuto pasan a la 'ofensiva' contra Añez](#)," *Página Siete*, May 26, 2020.
5. Marcelo Tedesqui, "[Mesa comparte foro con el presidente de Argentina, Alberto Fernández, qui dio refugio a Evo](#)," *El Deber*, June 20, 2020.
6. For example, they were not allowed to eat in the same canteens as the officers. See Fernando Molina, "[Patria o muerte. Venceremos. El orden castrense de Evo Morales](#)," *Nueva Sociedad* No. 278, November-December 2018.
7. That is, a stereotypical anti-imperialism, inclined to fantastic conspiracy theories, with little attachment to democracy and a tendency to organize internal purges.
8. Zavaleta, "La Revolución Boliviana y la cuestión del poder [1964]," *Obras completas* Tomo I, (Plural, La Paz), p. 112. [See also Moira Zuazo, "[The MAS government in Bolivia: Are the social movements in power?](#)"]
9. After its narrow loss in the effort to overrule the constitutional re-election limitations, the MAS chose not to select other candidates for president and vice-president but instead to devote its energies to finding ways to circumvent the popular verdict. In the end it got the Supreme Court to adopt a dubious international legal precedent ruling out re-election limits for *all* elected positions in the country. – R.F.
10. Katuska Vásquez, "[El 70% cree que Evo se fue por revuelta y 62% que hay fraude](#)," *Los Tiempos*, December 23, 2019.
11. Claims of fraud have been refuted by several studies. See, for example, "[New York Times and New Report Confirm CEPR Analysis Refuting OAS Claims of Flawed Bolivian Election Results](#)," CEPR, June 7, 2020. – R.F.
12. Pablo Stefanoni, "[Las lecciones que nos deja Bolivia](#)," *Sin Permiso*, March 14, 2020.
13. Pablo Stefanoni, "[Bolivia: anatomía de un derrocamiento](#)," *El País*, January 21, 2020.
14. An allusion to the strings and thin ropes used to block streets, obviating the need to mobilize many demonstrators – a custom of the Bolivian middle classes ridiculed by Morales in one of his last speeches as President.
15. For example, see Luis Tapia, "[Crisis política en Bolivia: la coyuntura de disolución de la dominación masista. Fraude y resistencia democrática](#)," CIDES-UMSA, November 19, 2019.
16. Fernando Molina, "[Hegemonía instantánea: la prensa en la crisis boliviana](#)," *Contrahegemonía*, on-line, December 3, 2019.
17. Paula Lazarte, "[Ciesmori perfila al candidato del MAS como ganador en encuesta](#)," *Página*

Siete, January 2, 2020.

18. "[Arce aumenta ventaja y Mesa afianza el segundo lugar, según encuesta de Ciesmori](#)," *Página Siete*, March 15, 2020.
19. Fernando Mayorga, [Mandato y contingencia. Estilo de gobierno de Evo Morales](#), Fundación Friedrich Ebert (La Paz, 2019).
20. The exiled García Linera has accepted an academic position in Argentina. – R.F.
21. Salvatierra, Senate president at the time of the coup, was next in line for President following the resignations of Morales and García Linera. She promptly resigned too, alleging later that she was instructed to do so by her party leader Evo Morales. – R.F.
22. Fernando Mayorga, ["Elecciones ya': ¿el MAS recupera la iniciativa?"](#), *Nueva Sociedad*, June 2020.
23. Deutsche Welle, [Evo Morales: "Fue un error volver a presentarme"](#), January 17, 2020.
24. Isabel Mercado, ["El plan del MAS es «sacar esta ley, maniatarnos y crear milicias»"](#), Interview with Añez's Minister of Defense Fernando López, *Página Siete*, June 29, 2020.
25. Natalio Cosoy, ["Evo Morales cree que puede haber un 'golpe' si el MAS gana las elecciones en Bolivia"](#), *France 24*, March 17, 2020.

Featured image: COB mobilization marches through El Alto. [Photo by La Razón]

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