

***Evo es Pueblo: Indigeneity and Socialism in the Foreign
Policy of Bolivian President Evo Morales***

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Evo Morales, an Aymara man, was the first Indigenous President of Bolivia, a majority-Indigenous country. However, he seemed to carry the burden of many worlds at the 61st Session of the General Assembly on September 19, 2006.¹ In his first speech at the United Nations (UN), Morales proclaimed that he represented “peoples once considered savages and animals — peoples who in some regions were condemned to extermination.” Morales placed himself in a broader Indigenous movement. He declared that he had come “to right the wrongs of 500 years.”

Morales critiqued the UN, US foreign intervention, and neoliberalism in the same speech. The Indigenous leader detested the UN’s criminalization of the coca leaf, a “[symbol] of Andean culture.” He characterized US attempts at combatting drug trafficking in his country as “an instrument for the recolonization or colonization of Andean countries.” Morales promised to recover the natural resources that “were stolen, plundered, sold off and delivered to transnational corporations by neo-liberal [Bolivian] Governments.” The head of state advocated for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, a global response to climate change, and a movement toward “defending life and saving humanity.” He spoke for “life, not war...people, not empire.”²

This speech is indicative of how Morales foregrounded his foreign policy. He critiqued capitalism, neoliberalism, the US, the UN, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. The struggle for legitimizing indigeneity and Indigenous interests in Bolivia and Latin America had indeed been one that spanned 500 years, and Morales saw his presidency as an opportunity to advance Indigenous interests. He echoed the voices of his Indigenous constituency and the “rights of the Indigenous peoples of the world.” The Indigenous President saw himself as speaking to a world of nations and leaders whose economic and political interests in Latin America trumped “the right to self-determination, the right to live in communities, and the right to live a life based on solidarity and reciprocity.” Morales argued that the US and international institutions contributed to the plight of Bolivia, so he saw foreign policy as a critical aspect of his presidency.³

A llama herder as a child, Evo Morales came from humble beginnings. He noticed the marginalization of poor and Indigenous people in his country and worked to champion their cause. Before he ascended to the presidency, Morales

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¹ Jon Lee Anderson, “The Fall of Evo Morales,” *The New Yorker*, March 23, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/23/the-fall-of-evo-morales>.

² Evo Morales, “A/61/PV.11,” United Nations Digital Library, September 19, 2006, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/589608?ln=en>.

³ Evo Morales, “A/61/PV.11.”

gained the trust of his large Indigenous base when he led a coca-growers union.⁴ In his three terms as President from 2005-2019, Morales nationalized natural gas, ratified a constitution that strengthened Indigenous rights and declared plurinational status, and increased protections for coca growers. Morales addressed social inequality through programs such as a universal basic pension and a cash-transfer system in the healthcare sector. He built schools and hospitals, and at times “theatrical,” as Jon Lee Anderson noted, Morales visited impoverished towns and gave money to children.⁵ Morales would say he was “married to Bolivia.” He advanced Indigenous interests in a country where roughly 62 percent of the population self-identify as Indigenous, thus making it the nation with the highest percentage of Indigenous people in Latin America.⁶ Morales and his political party, *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS), aimed to transform the nation. Fundamentally, he envisioned a plurinational and democratic state free from foreign intervention.

At the transnational level, Bolivia was an actor in what scholars and other observers have termed the “Pink Tide,” a shift from conservative and neoliberal rule to leftist governments in Latin America in the 2000s.⁷ Neoliberalism is an economic development model that turns countries towards globalization, and its policy prescriptions include pro-market stances, such as the privatization of state-owned sectors and openness to foreign investment.⁸ Bretton Woods Institutions, the IMF and World Bank, recommended that Bolivia and other Latin American nations implement neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s. Their policies failed to bring prosperity and increased income inequality. With the political victories of various leftist leaders—Evo Morales in Bolivia, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Christina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina—some in the region celebrated the beginning of what looked to be a reversal of neoliberalism and the passing of redistributive policies.⁹ It was a political opening, especially for the Bolivians who had fought the prior decade against the privatization of natural resources in the Water and Gas Wars.

⁴ Xavier Albó et al., eds., *The Bolivia Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2018), 627; Anderson, “The Fall of Evo Morales.”

⁵ Anderson, “The Fall of Evo Morales.”

⁶ Nancy Postero, “The Emergence of Indigenous Nationalism in Bolivia: Social Movements and the MAS State,” in *The Indigenous State: Race, Politics, and Performance in Plurinational Bolivia* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 25-40, 26.

⁷ Jeffery R. Webber, *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia: Class Struggle, Indigenous Liberation, and the Politics of Evo Morales* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2011).

⁸ Juan Pablo Rodríguez, “The Politics of Neoliberalism in Latin America: Dynamics of Resilience and Contestation,” *Sociology Compass* 15, no. 3 (February 23, 2021): pp. 1-13, 6.

⁹ Rodríguez, 7.

Governments, international organizations, scholars, and the public watched Morales lead a poverty-stricken nation into the 21st century. Robert Albro defines Morales' "legacy" as "the transformation of Bolivian society through the enfranchisement of the country's Indigenous population."¹⁰ His constituency viewed the presence of the US and international organizations in the country as imperialistic. Morales could not separate domestic issues from foreign policy, such as defending coca. He had no choice but to address foreign actors, and his socialist policies at home could not flourish unless he asserted Bolivian sovereignty. With a socialist agenda at home, Morales' foreign policy centered on Indigenous concerns.

This essay incorporates the literature that explains individual areas of Morales' foreign policy. I include sources that discuss his political ideology, environmental policy, and decision to decrease ties with the US and increase relations with China. I also include scholars who have examined how Morales navigated through tensions between promoting extractivist policies and maintaining the interests of his Indigenous and peasant constituency. I build on the existing literature by focusing on his interactions with the US, China, the UN, the Bretton Woods Institutions, and his domestic audience. I contextualize Morales' foreign policy by examining his speeches at the UN, tallying to twenty-five according to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.¹¹ This essay also utilizes his tweets (@evoespueblo), op-eds in American news outlets, speeches at other events and platforms, and interviews. I analyze statements from various social movement leaders and political activists to uncover the attitudes and reactions toward his policies. I include works by foreign policy scholars, specifically those who discuss the trade-offs in foreign aid and intervention and the role of making decisions to send signals to domestic audiences.

This paper is organized into three sections. I first discuss Morales' political rise in Bolivia. Framing the ideology of MAS, I focus on the socialist and Indigenous wings of his political agenda. There is a concentration on his constituency's mobilization in the 1980s and 1990s to combat the authoritarian regimes' attempts to halt coca production and implement neoliberal policies. Second, I analyze Morales' decision to expel the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), cut off United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and declare independence from the IMF and World Bank. Third, I analyze Morales' critique of capitalism. Morales sought to prove that socialist policies worked in Bolivia and on the international stage. I also analyze his decision to

¹⁰ Robert Albro, "Evo Morales's Chaotic Departure Won't Define His Legacy," *Foreign Policy*, November 22, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/22/evo-morales-departure-bolivia-Indigenous-legacy/>.

¹¹ "Speeches and Meetings," Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/library/page/speeches-and-meetings>.

expropriate natural resources and increase Chinese foreign investment despite dissent from a few groups in his constituency.

Ultimately, I argue that an attempt to center Indigenous concerns and critiques of US imperialism and neoliberalism defined Morales' foreign policy. Morales used the expulsion of the USAID, the DEA, the IMF, and the World Bank, which he believed were imperialistic, to signal to his domestic audience that he was committed to an anti-US and foreign intervention stance. Moreover, Morales' socialist agenda at home was keen on developing the economy and pulling Bolivia out of poverty, even if it meant putting parts of his constituency, who held concerns for environmental protection and sustainable development, at odds with his national agenda. At international forums, Morales championed the “*vivir bien* (living well)” philosophy that many Indigenous people in Bolivia supported. However, back home, he faced the political realities of a dynamic domestic audience that supported or mobilized to stall government projects.

I maintain that at the heart of Morales' foreign policy decision-making, the Indigenous President constantly faced trade-offs between benefitting his Indigenous and peasant constituency and breaking promises of his anti-interventionist and pro-environment agenda. While it served Morales to cut ties with the US, he faced an uphill battle when developing transnational and international ties with Brazil and China. Trying to implement progressive policies in a market economy, Morales redefined Bolivian foreign policy.

Morales' political rise

Evo Morales' personality shined in the 2007 documentary *Cocalero*.¹² Towards the end, the producers spotlight a conversation between two citizens who discussed whether Morales would wear a suit and tie to his presidential inauguration. The banter included talks of Morales possibly wearing a traditional Aymara outfit. Indeed, what an Indigenous leader looked like was foreign to many Bolivians. Nevertheless, Morales knew he had a specific task: address neoliberal reforms that undermined an Indigenous economy that was inextricably tied to their identity.

Morales prided himself on his coca-producing past. He moved to the Chapare Province, a rural area located in the center of Bolivia, in the late 1970s. In Chapare, Morales grew coca and the trust of other coca growers as a union organizer. Morales witnessed the US War on Drugs initiative in the 1980s that sought to eradicate coca and cocaine production. In a 2009 op-ed piece in *The New York Times*, Morales wrote, “coca is an important symbol of the history and

¹² *Cocalero*, 2007.

identity of the Indigenous cultures of the Andes.”¹³ On one of the premier US newspapers speaking to a US audience, Morales argued that it was a “mistake” for the UN to equate the coca leaf with cocaine, citing that coca is healthier than nicotine and caffeine. Like the *Times* article, Morales published an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2010 entitled “Combatting Climate Change: Lessons from the World’s Indigenous Peoples.”¹⁴ Morales wrote to the American public to build credibility, combat criticism, and familiarize the nation with Andean and Bolivian culture.

When the US government focused on the crack epidemic in the 1980s, it equally sought to eradicate cocaine at its source in Latin America. President George H. W. Bush focused on policing the Andes and the Chapare coca growers.¹⁵ His policies rested on the premise that drugs, especially cocaine, are “viewed as tearing at the fabric of mainstream US society, as evident in periodic domestic drug scares and the demarcation – and demonization – of ethnic minorities and fringe groups in the United States,” according to Allan Gillies.¹⁶ Bolivian President Jaime Zamora and the Colombian and Peruvian heads of state signed The Cartagena Declaration of 1990 that authorized the US military to stop coca production. In 1994, Bolivian President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada’s “Option Zero” plan was an initiative to eradicate all coca crops.¹⁷

In response, Morales mobilized the rural coca growers for the “March for Life, Coca, and National Sovereignty” in 1994.¹⁸ More than 3,000 *cocaleros* marched for 22 days to La Paz.¹⁹ The government repressed the coca growers. The two sides fought for the crop vital to the Indigenous economy and identity. Five years later, with the backing of the international community, the Bolivian Government’s “Dignity Plan” in 1999 created the Conjoint Task Force, a group of 500 police and 1500 soldiers that aimed to halt coca production and killed more

¹³ Evo Morales, “Opinion: Let Me Chew My Coca Leaves,” *The New York Times*, March 13, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/14/opinion/14morales.html>.

¹⁴ Evo Morales, “Combating Climate Change: Lessons from the World’s Indigenous Peoples,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 23, 2010, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-apr-23-la-oev-0423-morales-20100423-story.html>.

¹⁵ Gillies, 83.

¹⁶ Allan Gillies, “Contesting the ‘War on Drugs’ in the Andes: US–Bolivian Relations of Power and Control (1989–93),” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 52, no. 1 (May 6, 2019): pp. 77–106, 80.

¹⁷ Jörg Alfred Stippel and Juan E. Serrano-Moreno, “The Coca Diplomacy as the End of the War on Drugs. The Impact of International Cooperation on the Crime Policy of the Plurinational State of Bolivia,” *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 74, no. 4 (April 29, 2020): pp. 361–380, 369.

¹⁸ Stippel and Serrano-Moreno, 370.

¹⁹ Luis Felipe Cruz, “The Cocalera Marches: An Expression of the Right to Demand Rights,” *De Justicia*, March 4, 2019, <https://www.dejusticia.org/en/column/the-cocalera-marches-an-expression-of-the-right-to-demand-rights/>.

than 115 people.²⁰ The government's violent intervention sparked the creation of MAS and became a rallying cry for Indigenous socialist organizers like Morales.

The 1994 March increased Indigenous mobilization within Bolivia, and it is credited as the "foundational moment in the imaginary" of MAS.²¹ MAS drew its base from the "campesinos, the landless movement, leftist lawyers, women's groups, some lowland Indigenous leaders, and assorted Trotskyites."²² Morales saw himself as bearing a torch lit by previous leftist revolutionaries, especially Aymara insurrectionist Túpak Katari and Cuban revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara. At MAS rallies, supporters often carried signs bearing photos of their two heroes, and Morales mentioned their legacies in his 2006 inauguration address.²³

Understanding MAS and Morales' affinity for Túpak Katari and Guevara helps explain their political ideology. A figure of Indigenous resistance, Túpak Katari led the Great Rebellion (1780-1782) against the Spanish. He rebuked their expropriation of resources on Indigenous territory and mercantilist policies.²⁴ He is ingrained in Aymara's cultural memory as the embodiment of pluralism, social justice, and Indigenous agency.²⁵ At the 2008 UN General Assembly, Morales mentioned that before the Spanish quartered Túpak Katari, the Indigenous leader professed, "I die, but I will return transformed into millions of people."²⁶ Those millions of people, Morales believed, were the more than two million people who voted for him and MAS in the 2005 Presidential Election.

MAS aligned itself with Guevara's Marxist mission to establish a government that provided structural changes involving the nationalization of public resources, land reform, education reform, and various social programs. Guevara was committed to socialism and anti-colonialism, as demonstrated through his role in the Cuban Revolution and participation in decolonization struggles in Africa.²⁷ During his planned overthrow of the authoritarian regime in Bolivia, Guevara died at the hands of the Bolivian army that received support from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).²⁸ Guevara's determination to

²⁰ Stippel and Serrano-Moreno, 371.

²¹ Stippel and Serrano-Moreno, 371.

²² Nancy Postero, "Morales's MAS Government: Building Indigenous Popular Hegemony in Bolivia," *Latin American Perspectives* 37, no. 3 (May 2010): pp. 18-34, 23.

²³ Evo Morales, "Evo Morales Inauguration Speech: January 31, 2006," *barrioflores*, <https://barrioflores.wordpress.com/2006/01/31/evo-morales-inauguration-speech/>.

²⁴ Eva Fischer, "From Rebellion to Democracy: The Many Lives of Túpac Katari," *History and Anthropology* 29, no. 4 (November 20, 2017): pp. 493-516, 507.

²⁵ Fischer, 507.

²⁶ Evo Morales, "A/63/PV.6," United Nations Digital Library, September 23, 2008, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/643753?ln=en>, 30.

²⁷ Zach Johnk, "Che Guevara's Fiery Life and Bloody Death," *The New York Times*, October 9, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/09/world/americas/che-guevara-history.html>.

²⁸ Johnk, "Che Guevara's Fiery Life and Bloody Death."

undermine these authoritarian governments point to MAS's democratic aspirations. MAS idealized a government, democratic and socialist, that empowered the Indigenous and poor.

Thus, Túpac Katari and Guevara represented the Indigenous and socialist wings of Morales' political agenda. Morales defined his agenda as "the continuity of the struggle for Túpac Katari; that struggle and these results [Morales' Presidential victory] are the continuity of Che Guevara."²⁹ Securing the rights and advancement of the Indigenous and poor was possible if the government engaged in socialist reform that provided for the citizen's welfare.

Aside from the war on drugs, Indigenous and peasant farmers mobilized to protest the government's decision to privatize the water in what has been termed the "Cochabamba Water War (1999-2001)." A peasant farmer and Coalition for the Defense of Water and Life representative, Oscar Olivera, claimed in a 2001 interview that the World Bank's recommendation to Bolivia to privatize the water led to the passing of law 2029.³⁰ This law eliminated the guarantee that rural areas would be distributed water, forbade the collection of rainwater, and leased the water supply to Aguas de Tunari and the United States-based company Bechtel.³¹ The water proved vital to the Cochabamba economy, as the people there sustained themselves through coca and vegetable production.

The people of Cochabamba, and even a few elites, mobilized on December 28, 1999, to forcefully repeal law 2029. The 2010 film *Even the Rain/También la Lluvia* captures the spirit of this mobilization. A powerful scene in the film is when a protestor angrily remarks, speaking into a megaphone, that the government sold the country's water, "even the rain."³² Protestors blockaded roads and had violent encounters with police. On one occasion, 179 people were injured. The water companies fled the area in April 2001, and the bill collapsed.³³

After the people mobilized again and halted Bolivian President Carlos Mesa from privatizing gas, known as the Gas War (2003), he resigned under pressure from progressive forces in 2005. In this political context, Morales and MAS rode the momentum created by the Indigenous and poor communities who halted neoliberal policies considered an infringement on sovereignty and devastating for their economic well-being. Morales won the 2005 Presidential

²⁹ Morales, "Evo Morales Inauguration Speech.;" It is also interesting to note that Morales hung a portrait of Guevara, that was made of coca leaves, behind his Presidential desk. This captures how indigeneity and socialism were intertwined in his politics.

³⁰ Oscar Olivera, "The Fight for Water and Democracy: An Interview with Oscar Olivera," *Journal of Public Health Policy* 22, no. 2 (2001): pp. 226-234, 228.

³¹ Olivera, 229.

³² *Even the Rain/También La Lluvia*, 2010.

³³ Olivera, 233.

election with 53.7 percent of the vote, the first Bolivian head of state to amass over two million votes.³⁴

At the end of *Cocalero*, the producers spotlight the creative faction of Morales' campaign who designed an outfit that would soon mirror his foreign policy. They blended a traditional Indigenous outfit with a more traditional suit. Although it was his inauguration outfit, it spoke to his task: define Indigenous identity to the rest of the world and produce an image and plan applicable to both realms.

Paralyzing the imperialist arm

At the United Nations General Assembly on December 11, 1964, Ernesto "Che" Guevara announced Cuba's ties to the socialist Soviet Union. Dressed in his recognizable green military jacket with slicked-back hair, Guevara denounced the actions of the US towards Cuba and the rest of Latin America. With one hand in his pocket, he proclaimed that Cubans, and their "irrevocable determination to fight and to paralyze the mailed fist of the invader," would defend their portion of the Caribbean even if it meant death.³⁵ On US turf, Guevara injected his revolutionary spirit and country into a soon-to-be intense military conflict.

Evo Morales was fearless and purposeful at the UN. He took the anti-imperialist spirit of Guevara's speech to heart. The General Assembly was a means for the Bolivian President to earn international legitimacy, advocate for a world without US imperialism, and champion the protection of sovereignty and natural resources from ill-intentioned foreign investment. Morales delivered a consistent message that primarily denounced what he argued as the imperialist intentions of the US. In his view, the US had meddled in Latin America and induced poverty in the region. The US maintained an imbalance of power through USAID, the DEA, the IMF, and the World Bank.³⁶

On March 11, 2009, Morales spoke in a meeting with the UN Committee on Narcotic Drugs, an organization that drafted a ten-year narcotics strategy.³⁷ Here, Morales continued to critique the US and UN initiatives to halt coca and cocaine production. Morales tried to explain the irony of the proposed laws when

³⁴ Evo Morales, "A/63/PV.6," United Nations Digital Library, September 23, 2008, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/643753?ln=en>, 30.

³⁵ Ernesto Guevara, "A/PV.1299," transcript of speech delivered at the United Nations General Assembly, New York, NY, December 11, 1964, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/692269?ln=en>.

³⁶ Evo Morales, "A/64/PV.4," United Nations Digital Library, September 23, 2009, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/665848?ln=en>, 39; Morales called for the "real democratization of the United Nations" and made suggestions for a structural reset of the second United Nations organ.

³⁷ Ryan Grim, "Bolivian President Chews Coca During Speech At UN," Huffington Post, May 25, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bolivian-president-chews_n_174075.

he suggested that the coca leaf was grown and consumed three thousand years before Christ. He argued that the criminalization of the coca leaf at the international level was a systematic means of squashing the Indigenous economy and identity. In front of international leaders at this forum, Morales chewed a coca leaf, shrugged his shoulders, and was immediately met with the applause of other diplomats in attendance. Morales searched in the crowd for Antonio Maria Costa, the executive director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and he proceeded to ask why Costa had not arrested him.³⁸

When Morales questioned President Barack Obama's character at the 64th Session of the General Assembly on September 23, 2009, he illuminated his stance and view of indigeneity in the global context. Towards the end of his speech, Morales mentioned that a report from the US State Department accused him of "the explicit acceptance and encouragement of coca production at the highest levels of the Bolivian government."³⁹ Morales then alluded to the idea that the State Department accused him of encouraging the sale of cocaine. He felt that these documents painted Indigenous Bolivians and Morales' government negatively. Morales refers to the State Department documents then states:

I wonder how it is possible for someone [Obama] who has suffered discrimination to discriminate against another. At least in Latin America, the so-called Afro-Americans and Afro-Bolivians are the sectors most discriminated against in society, together with the so-called Indians or Indigenous people. We are called "negroes" and "Indians." I do not understand how a Black person who has been discriminated against and excluded can discriminate against and exclude an Indian. It is a matter of grave concern.⁴⁰

This critique of Obama came after Morales alluded to the US as an imperialist and racist state. Morales strategically linked US imperialism to racism.

Morales viewed the Black and Indigenous struggle in the US as comparable to the Afro-Bolivian and Indigenous struggle. Morales refers to chronicled overt and structural racism in the US that has existed since enslaved people arrived and developed the first colonies across the Americas. For Morales, the US perpetuated racist and exclusionary policies towards Black, Indigenous, and other ethnic minorities within its borders and those abroad. Morales questioned how Obama, a representative of a discriminated minority group, could then discriminate against Latin American countries with ethnic minorities. He

³⁸ Drugreporter, "Morales Is Chewing Coca at the UN - Part 2," YouTube, May 11, 2009, <https://youtu.be/Ilz6WzdaP14>.

³⁹ Morales, "A/64/PV.4," 39.

⁴⁰ Morales, "A/64/PV.4," 39.

detested how the US continued to label the Andean Indigenous people as drug traffickers. The Indigenous president believed that from the US's perspective because the Andean Indigenous grew coca, they also produced cocaine.

The Indigenous leader linked issues of imperialism with those of race and ethnicity. His critique of the US as an imperial actor accompanied dialogue on the discriminatory practices of international organizations. According to Morales, the Bretton Woods Institutions recommended policies that expropriated natural resources and policed coca were explicitly designed to harm Indigenous groups and benefit the US. Morales may not always have explicitly mentioned indigeneity. However, by critiquing the expropriation of natural resources and the initiatives to halt coca production, which mattered tremendously to Indigenous economies and identity, he still championed Indigenous interests at international forums.

Furthermore, Morales led the expulsion of USAID in 2013, and he viewed the decision as a step toward ending US imperialism in Bolivia. USAID states its “twofold purpose of furthering America’s interests while improving the lives in the developing world” includes providing humanitarian, development, military, and technical assistance and money.⁴¹ Morales saw USAID as more an imperialist force than a beneficiary of the world’s impoverished. He eliminated USAID funding in response to US Secretary of State John Kerry’s characterization of the Western hemisphere as the “backyard” of the US.⁴² Throughout his UN speeches, Morales argued that USAID, and more broadly any US intervention, hurt the interests of Bolivians and Latin America. This decision came after the expulsion of the US ambassador to Bolivia in 2008 and the DEA in 2009, the former accused of cooperating with right-wing movements and the latter accused of using violence to harm coca growing.⁴³

Insofar as USAID injected pro-US policies into developing countries, Morales’ decision to reject funding paralleled his anti-imperialist stance. Foreign policy scholars agree that US foreign aid has strategic intentions, and their plan can be articulated as a “carrot and stick” mechanism. Accepting aid can be tricky for the recipient because they must determine whether they are willing to benefit their constituency with the idea that the donor may use the aid as a bargaining tactic in the future. Compliance is rewarded, and non-compliance may lead to the

⁴¹ “Mission, Vision and Values,” US Agency for International Development, <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/mission-vision-values>.

⁴² Tim Padgett, “The Obama Administration Looks to Latin America After Years of Neglect,” Time, May 13, 2013, <https://world.time.com/2013/05/13/has-washington-finally-discovered-latin-america/>.

⁴³ Emily Achtenberg, “Bolivia: USAID Out, Morales in For Re-Election Bid,” NACLA, May 11, 2013, <https://nacla.org/blog/2013/5/11/bolivia-usaid-out-morales-re-election-bid>.

loss of funding, less bargaining power in disputes, and sanctions.⁴⁴ It is crucial to characterize the perceived threat to Morales as real. Note, however, that the loss of funding would destabilize health and education programs that benefitted from USAID.⁴⁵

Kerry's comment gave Morales a heightened platform to denounce the US and signal to Bolivians that he cared for their interests. The decision came after Morales had already reduced USAID funding in half from 2010 to 2011 (\$26.7 million).⁴⁶ Because this "radical declaration [appeared] much weaker in practice than in theory," Claire Veale contends that Morales used Kerry's comment to appeal to the Bolivian public.⁴⁷ Tobias Heinrich argues that levels of "news coverage about the recipient conditions" is an indicator of whether a country sends foreign aid.⁴⁸ Although out of the scope of Heinrich's article, coverage of an issue appears to be a mechanism leaders consider when making decisions regarding aid. Morales used the heightened news coverage of Kerry's comment to prove to Bolivians that he maintained an anti-imperialist stance.

During his speech at the UN on September 20, 2010, Morales stated that Bolivia's economy grew because he nationalized natural resources and state companies, increased Bolivia's national income, and transferred resources and services to Bolivians through bonds and securities.⁴⁹ Morales simultaneously declared that the IMF and World Bank "oppress [Bolivian] society" through austerity measures. Morales critiqued neoliberalism and the Bretton Woods Institutions, and he argued that nationalizing industries and foreign investment under his direction induced prosperity.

As a decolonial gesture, the Indigenous leader cited various reasons for mistrusting these institutions. Morales often recalled that after a debt crisis in the 1980s in Latin America, countries such as Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, and Argentina looked towards the IMF and World Bank for assistance.⁵⁰ The IMF and World Bank lent to these countries under the condition that they implement neoliberalist

⁴⁴ Bryan R. Early and Amira Jadoon, "Using the Carrot as the Stick: US Foreign Aid and the Effectiveness of Sanctions Threats," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 15, no. 3 (July 2019): pp. 350-369.

⁴⁵ Eric Farnsworth, "Expelling USAID from Bolivia: The Impact of Morales' Decision," *America's Society/Council of the Americas*, May 3, 2013, <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/expelling-usaid-bolivia-impact-morales-decision>.

⁴⁶ Claire Veale, "Morales' Expulsion of USAID: Truly Progressive Move or Political Sleight of Hand?" *Collective Development*, May 29, 2013, <https://collectivedevelopmentdotorg.wordpress.com/2013/05/29/morales-expulsion-of-usaid/>.

⁴⁷ Veale, "Morales' Expulsion of USAID: Truly Progressive Move or Political Sleight of Hand?"

⁴⁸ Tobias Heinrich, "When Is Foreign Aid Selfish, When Is It Selfless?" *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 2 (April 9, 2013): pp. 422-435, 422.

⁴⁹ Evo Morales, "A/65/PV.3," United Nations Digital Library, September 20, 2010, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/698726?ln=en>, 19.

⁵⁰ Jon V. Kofas, "The Politics of Austerity: The IMF and US Foreign Policy in Bolivia, 1956-1964," *The Journal of Developing Areas* 29, no. 2 (January 1995): pp. 213-236, 213.

reforms, known today as the Washington Consensus.⁵¹ Bolivia, shackled with debt, took loans from the IMF in 1980s.⁵² These reforms had limited success and disproportionately affected impoverished sectors.⁵³ At the UN General Assembly on September 26, 2007, Morales mentioned how in 2003 the IMF and World Bank ordered the Bolivian government to implement austerity measures. Between a gasoline and worker's tax, the Bolivian government chose to tax workers. This move by the government led to protests that resulted in 15 deaths.⁵⁴ Negative views towards the IMF and World Bank policies festered throughout Bolivia, so Morales' beliefs on the Bretton Woods institutions were consistent with the general view of the Bolivian population.

When Morales (@evoespueblo) declared "total independence" from the IMF and World Bank on Twitter in 2017, the two organizations that he wrote "dictate the economic destiny of the world," the news came to no one's surprise.⁵⁵ Much like Morales' op-eds in *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, the head of state used Twitter to communicate with Bolivians, US citizens, and other foreign publics. Morales tweeted about domestic and global issues, often accompanying his message with a photo of him smiling. He relayed statements across accessible forums, like Twitter, to show a commitment to involving the public in his political process. Morales communicated that he cut ties with the US, IMF, and World Bank for the people's benefit.

The slew of speeches at the UN to condemn imperialist actors and decisions to expel USAID and the Bretton Woods institutions were the consequences of years of Indigenous mobilization. I focus on the expulsion of USAID and Bretton Woods Institutions to emphasize that when Morales attempted to end relations with the US and these institutions, Bolivia lost resources and funding. These decisions sought to restrict foreign influence over domestic economic and political processes. As much as Morales saw it necessary to cut ties with these actors, he equally, as I show in the next section, sought partners willing to aid him and Bolivia. Leaders account for the fact that when they sever ties with one partner, they generally must find another to fulfill the role of the previous state/organization. Morales would likely not have left these deals unless he saw a formidable way to keep his promises to his people and the international community that he would bring prosperity.

⁵¹ John Williamson, "What Washington Means by Policy Reform," Peterson Institute for International Economics, November 1, 2002, <https://www.piie.com/commentary/speeches-papers/what-washington-means-policy-reform>.

⁵² Kofas, 214.

⁵³ Rodríguez, 7.

⁵⁴ Evo Morales, "A/62/PV.7," United Nations Digital Library, September 26, 2007, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/610026?ln=en>, 24.

⁵⁵ Evo Morales, Twitter (Evo Morales Ayma @evoespueblo, July 22, 2018), <https://twitter.com/evoespueblo/status/888741299620384769?>

A socialist vision

On August 15, 2011, almost 1,000 Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS) residents protested Morales' 182-mile proposition.⁵⁶ Morales proposed a highway that would bisect the TIPNIS territory: the Indigenous land and a national park which the Chimáne, Yuracaré, and Moxeño-Trinitario peoples consider home. The police repressed protesters and left 70 wounded. Termed the "TIPNIS controversy," domestic interests collided.

Leaders critical of Morales cited that he could not champion the environment and Indigenous people on the international stage and then return to Bolivia and break his promises. The President of the TIPNIS Subcentral, Fernando Vargas, stated that Morales "is the first defender of Mother Earth internationally, he needs to be that here." President of the Indigenous movement CIDOB, Adolfo Chávez, expressed that the government should "work in good faith alongside Indigenous peoples."⁵⁷

For Morales, the highway preceded economic development, as it was supposed to be contracted by the Brazilian construction company Construtora OAS and the National Bank for Economic and Social Development of Brazil. The Brazilian entities promised to fund about 80 percent of the project (\$330/\$415 million).⁵⁸ The highway would link Brazil to ports in Chile and Peru.

The inconsistencies that Vargas cited stemmed from the fact that at the UN especially, Morales was a champion of the environment and one of the most vocal supporters of combatting climate change. During Morales' first UN speech on September 19, 2006, he mentioned that it was important for the UN to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that included "the right to care for the environment," and he argued for "*vivir bien*" and not "*vivir mejor*."⁵⁹ The *vivir bien* (living well) philosophy is "a community-centric, ecologically balanced, economically sustainable, socially harmonious and culturally meaningful set of commitments," according to Robert Albro.⁶⁰ Morales

⁵⁶ Emily Achtenberg, "Why Is Evo Morales Reviving Bolivia's Controversial TIPNIS Road?" NACLA, August 21, 2017, <https://nacla.org/blog/2017/08/22/why-evo-morales-reviving-bolivia%E2%80%99s-controversial-tipnis-road>.

⁵⁷ Kenner, "President Evo Morales Officially Signs off TIPNIS Law."

⁵⁸ Pauline Blount, "Indigenous Bolivians Challenge Road through Isiboro Secure Park, 2011," Global Nonviolent Action Database (Swarthmore College, October 30, 2011), <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/Indigenous-bolivians-challenge-road-through-isiboro-secure-park-2011>.

⁵⁹ Morales, "A/61/PV.11," 35.

⁶⁰ Robert Albro, "Bolivia's Indigenous Foreign Policy: Vivir Bien and Global Climate Change Ethics," in *Church, Cosmovision, and the Environment: Religion and Social Conflict in*

essentialized his Indigenous constituency as one that would advocate for nations globally to “collectively end irrational industrialization and consumption to cease provoking irreparable harm to our environment.”⁶¹ Morales pushed an initiative that marked April 22 as International Mother Earth Day. Bolivia was the only country that did not sign the accord of the UN Climate Change Summit in Cancun in 2010. Bolivian ambassador to the UN, Pablo Solon, cited that the text lacked binding mechanisms, contradicted “the stated goal of capping the rise in temperature at 2C,” and included “loopholes for polluters, opportunities for expanding carbon markets and similar mechanisms that reduce the obligation of developed countries to act.”⁶² Ultimately, through action and rhetoric abroad, Morales painted his country and Indigenous people as committed to protecting Mother Earth, even if it meant forgoing development projects and decreasing consumption.

Competing with this agenda was Morales’ goal of lifting Bolivians out of poverty and developing the economy. Morales argued that the root of the world’s issues was the privatization of resources and state-owned sectors, which marginalized the people who found themselves outside the small concentration of those who held most of the world’s wealth. Morales strived to develop a reputation for economic success. He mentioned how he reduced extreme poverty through socialist policies in nine out of twenty-five speeches at the UN. For instance, in 2010, he cited that UN data found that since his inauguration, extreme poverty in Bolivia fell from 41 to 32 percent.⁶³ In 2019, Morales reported that extreme poverty fell to 15.2 percent.⁶⁴ The head of state affirmed that his socialist policies benefitted Bolivians. His message revolved around the ills of capitalism and the possibilities of socialism.

The TIPNIS ordeal highlights the difficulties of keeping a consistent policy on domestic and international fronts. It also shows the tension between being an environmental champion keen on developing a country with abundant natural resources. Emily Achtenberg argues that the TIPNIS predicament “exposed the contradictions of Morales’ global championship of Indigenous and environmental rights while promoting destructive projects at home.”⁶⁵ Jessica Aguirre and Elizabeth Cooper echo this sentiment, arguing that although Morales

Contemporary Latin America, ed. Evan Berry and Robert Albro (London, England: Routledge, 2018), pp. 99-122, 101.

⁶¹ Morales, “Combating Climate Change: Lessons from the World’s Indigenous Peoples.”

⁶² Pablo Solon, “Why Bolivia Stood Alone in Opposing the Cancun Climate Agreement,” *The Guardian*, December 21, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/cif-green/2010/dec/21/bolivia-oppose-cancun-climate-agreement>.

⁶³ Morales, “A/65/PV.3,” 19.

⁶⁴ Evo Morales, “A/74/PV.3,” United Nations Digital Library, September 24, 2019, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3832033?ln=en>, 37.

⁶⁵ Achtenberg, “Why Is Evo Morales Reviving Bolivia’s Controversial TIPNIS Road?”

could push for “something new and different in the world of global politics” in terms of sustainable environmental and development policies, he still confronted a reality that was “far more traditional back at home in the practicalities of Bolivia’s domestic politics—political compromise included.”⁶⁶ Morales articulated an authentic climate agenda because indigeneity was intrinsically tied to the land. He earned the title of UN “World Hero of Mother Earth.” However, parts of his constituency either punished or supported Morales for looking to use the land to develop the economy.

I make three observations here. Firstly, I extend Aguirre and Cooper, who would likely agree that there were “political realities and compromises that [Morales] was forced to face” domestically.⁶⁷ The same hand that Morales used to remove the country from cooperation with the US and other international organizations was also restrained in dealing with outside actors. Secondly, when President of the TIPNIS Subcentral Fernando Vargas points to the fact that Morales had an inconsistent message internationally, recognize that citizens followed Morales’ word on the international stage and held him accountable for those statements to further their agendas at home.

Lastly, this controversy illuminates the views of Indigenous communities toward neoliberal policies and the kinds of compromises Morales faced. While many factors contributed to the failure of neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s, the TIPNIS ordeal highlights that, as the human rights activist Waldo Albarracín believed, “the left grew frustrated by [Morales’] emphasis on business and his lack of interests in environmental prerogatives.”⁶⁸ To develop the economy through infrastructure projects, Morales was willing to sacrifice pro-environmental policies, which upset lowland Indigenous groups, who believed that the highway would lead to “deforestation and colonization by migrant settlers from the western highlands.” However, the highway would have benefitted the Cochabamba coca growers and farmers, who “enjoy improved market access, as would small cattle ranchers in the lowland department of Beni.”⁶⁹ This “contested development,” as Emily Achtenberg calls it, showcases the tension between development and environmental policy, especially in an Indigenous-majority country like Bolivia.⁷⁰ Morales’ depiction of the Indigenous people as monolithic

⁶⁶ Jessica Camille Aguirre and Elizabeth Sonia Cooper, “Evo Morales, Climate Change, and the Paradoxes of a Social-Movement Presidency,” *Latin American Perspectives* 37, no. 4 (July 2010): pp. 238-244, 238.

⁶⁷ Aguirre and Cooper, 240.

⁶⁸ Anderson, “The Fall of Evo Morales.”

⁶⁹ Emily Achtenberg, “Contested Development: The Geopolitics of Bolivia’s TIPNIS Conflict,” *NACLA*, August 1, 2013, <https://nacla.org/article/contested-development-geopolitics-bolivia%E2%80%99s-tipnis-conflict>.

⁷⁰ Achtenberg, “Contested Development: The Geopolitics of Bolivia’s TIPNIS Conflict.”

actors who preferred environmental protections at the international stage was far from the more complex and contested political terrain he encountered back home.

The TIPNIS predicament suggests that development models that rely on natural resource extraction to modernize the economy are, to an extent, at odds with some groups in an Indigenous-majority country and even at odds with Morales' foreign policy agenda that found some acclaim and support from international bodies and actors for supporting sustainable development. Albro contends that Indigenous environmental politics are distinct from the "normative underpinnings of capitalist-driven economic development and market-based solutions to the growing climate crisis."⁷¹

Furthermore, Morales increased ties with China to develop the economy through natural resource expropriation. As Deng Xiaoping's famous quote goes, the Chinese economy, which expanded at an unprecedented rate in the late 20th century, "crossed the river by feeling for the stones." The Chinese government's Belt and Road Initiative, formally proposed in 2013, was a development model intended to gain trading partners. The program's philosophy was that through an exchange of ideas and common interests, China could earn the trust of the places they visited.⁷² A form of soft power, this global agenda is known for its expansion across Western Asia, Europe, and Africa.⁷³ The Chinese government also built a steady economic relationship, sometimes symbolic, with Latin American states. China increased its presence in Bolivia to diversify its national resource suppliers.

According to Morales' UN General Assembly speech on September 28, 2015, China offered Bolivia "assistance and cooperation." He saw their approach as "not an expansionist one."⁷⁴ China's state capitalism and imperial past, known as "the Century of Humiliation" (1839-1949) when the country was subjugated to Western and Japanese rule, also provided attractive cultural and ideological similarities to Bolivia.⁷⁵ China became an alternative to US funding and Bretton Woods institutions in a move to increase hegemony throughout Bolivia and Latin America. As Ivo Ganchev claims, neoliberalism's decline in Latin America

⁷¹ Albro, "Bolivia's Indigenous Foreign Policy: Vivir Bien and Global Climate Change Ethics," 113.

⁷² David Dollar, "Seven Years into China's Belt and Road," The Ripon Society, October 2020, <https://riponsociety.org/article/seven-years-into-chinas-belt-and-road/>.

⁷³ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (2004): pp. 255-270, 256; As defined by Joseph Nye, "soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments." Scholars since Nye (2004) have extended his argument to other countries, such as Russia and China.

⁷⁴ Evo Morales, "A/70/PV.15," United Nations Digital Library, September 28, 2015, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/811309?ln=en>, 28.

⁷⁵ Alison Adcock Kaufman, "The 'Century of Humiliation,' Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order," *Pacific Focus* 25, no. 1 (March 11, 2010): pp. 1-33.

created an opportunity for China to invest and increase trade in the region.⁷⁶ Given that Chinese foreign direct investment in Bolivia was negligible from 2005-2014 to China's economy, decisions to create ties are more political than economic.⁷⁷

When Morales severed ties with the Bretton Woods Institutions, he increased ties with China and other Latin American lending institutions. In 2005, Bolivia owed more than one-third of its external debt to the World Bank. According to Ganchev, by 2014, debt levels with the World Bank were 8.7 percent.⁷⁸ In 2005, half of the external debt was owed to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Andean Financing Corporation (AFC), roughly about 32.8 percent and 17.6 percent respectively. The country kept its debt levels to the IADB roughly the same but increased its debt with the AFC to 30.9 percent in 2014.⁷⁹ And for China, external debt in Bolivia rose from negligible to 9 percent by 2014, which suggests an attempt to decrease reliance of US-led financial institutions.⁸⁰

Chinese investment negatively impacted the environment and undermined some Indigenous communities' interests in Bolivia. In 2015, Bolivia's *Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos* (YPFB) consulted the Tacana Indigenous village about three seismic explorations to locate hydrocarbons in the Bolivian Amazon.⁸¹ One of the three, the Nueva Esperanza Project, was led by BGP Bolivia, a subsidiary of China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). The Tacana Indigenous people hesitantly agreed to the projects under the condition that BGP Bolivia protected the forests, biodiversity, and the Indigenous people in voluntary isolation.

After BGP Bolivia and the Tacana people agreed to a deal, BGP Bolivia said it could not conduct the exploration without compromising the area's resources. The project went on, and BGP Bolivia "mutilated" chestnut trees and polluted the water.⁸² According to a 2018 report by the International Federation for Human Rights, BGP Bolivia stripped "hundreds of linear kilometers" of forest

⁷⁶ Ivo Ganchev, "China Pushed the Pink Tide and the Pink Tide Pulled China: Intertwining Economic Interests and Ideology in Ecuador and Bolivia (2005–2014)," *World Affairs* 183, no. 4 (November 17, 2020): pp. 359-388, 362.

⁷⁷ Ganchev, 374.

⁷⁸ Ganchev, 372.

⁷⁹ Ganchev, 373.

⁸⁰ Ganchev, 373.

⁸¹ Yvette Sierra Praeli, "Environment and Rights Founder in the Wake of Chinese Funding in Bolivia," Mongabay, December 27, 2018, <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/12/environment-and-rights-founder-in-the-wake-of-chinese-funding-in-bolivia/>.

⁸² Praeli, "Environment and Rights Founder in the Wake of Chinese Funding in Bolivia."

cover.⁸³ The company “altered the route of underground watercourses and affected the rivers that supply local communities with water,” and the oil workers drove away game species.⁸⁴ Adamo Diego Cusi, an environmental and social monitoring coordinator for the village of Tacana, claimed that after he exposed the environmental harms, the Bolivian government threatened to prosecute him. Cusi then fled and hid for two years. The operation infringed on the land of isolated Indigenous villages. After allegations that the company’s workers assaulted the monitors, the Tacana people mobilized and protested BGP Bolivia’s harms, and they even were able to suspend its operations. Although exploration works eventually finished, the effects remained. Morales and his government did not offer reparations despite these harms.

When Morales increased ties with China, he put some Indigenous communities at odds with his national agenda. Latin American leftist leaders and citizens held differing views on Chinese investment. In Latin America and Africa, key regions where China entered and invested, citizens held negative views about the superpower. David Shambaugh cites that internationally, positive views about China have declined and that 49 percent of respondents to a BBC poll viewed China negatively.⁸⁵ Despite the region’s shaky views of the superpower, Ganchev argues that Chinese investment “aided leftist leaders there [in Latin America], providing them with the financial means to maintain anti-American policy stances while fulfilling their domestic agendas and pursuing multiple bids for reelection.”⁸⁶ Increasing foreign investment with China enabled Morales to “rebalance [his] economy while steering away from the United States, at least in the short run.”⁸⁷ While he did not entirely rely on China, Morales gained a non-US outlet to provide economic assistance.

The interaction with BGP Bolivia and the Tacana people demonstrates that Morales’ mission to pull Bolivians out of poverty through a liberalization development model that relied on the expropriation of resources faced trade-offs between the national agenda and a piece of his constituency. Although the Tacana people rejected this plan, he continued with the project to increase profits for his country. There were issues that Morales was not willing to compromise, such as the intrusion on Tacana land. After Morales declared independence from the IMF

⁸³ (FIDH) International Federation for Human Rights, “Universal Periodic Review, Third Cycle of the Civil Society’s Evaluation of the Extraterritorial Obligations of the People’s Republic of China: Case Studies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru,” International Federation for Human Rights, November 10, 2018, 21.

⁸⁴ FIDH, 22.

⁸⁵ Shambaugh then argues that “so long as [China’s] political system defies, rather than enables, free human development, its propaganda efforts will face an uphill battle.” For more, “China’s Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect,” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 4 (2015): pp. 99-107, 107.

⁸⁶ Ganchev, 381.

⁸⁷ Ganchev, 380.

and World Bank on Twitter in 2017, another Twitter user replied, “*Ahora dependen de China.*” This exchange captured the Bolivian public’s complex relationship with foreign investment. Despite the meager increase in Chinese investment, which hovered around nine percent, the regional disturbances to the environment mattered to the public more than the numbers imply.

Conclusion

In this essay, I showed that Morales’ foreign policy’s defining features were a critique of US foreign intervention and capitalism. His foreign policy centered on Indigenous interests, but his domestic audience put him in a position to choose which pieces of his constituency benefitted. When Morales focused on Indigenous and peasant concerns domestically, he needed to address foreign actors who undermined his constituency’s interests. Morales saw USAID and the DEA as exploitative agencies that harmed his democracy and coca grower/Indigenous interests. So, he removed the agencies to show a commitment to anti-US imperialism and free Bolivia from what he saw as exploitative agreements. A critique of capitalism and neoliberalism, Morales declared independence from the IMF and World Bank, which he viewed as predatory lenders.

Morales brought prosperity to the region, but to do so, he balanced catering to his constituency, foreign actors, and an image he projected abroad. When Morales sought new agreements to develop his economy through foreign investment, infrastructure projects, and natural resource extraction, he faced an uphill battle to maintain a *vivir bien* agenda. Lowland Indigenous groups held him accountable for his words at international forums and the UN, where he essentialized the Indigenous people as fully supportive of the environment and earned the title of “World Hero of Mother Earth.” Thus, while he listened to calls to stall projects, such as the TIPNIS highway, he disregarded concerns from the Tacana people when inviting Chinese corporations that extracted natural resources. Morales faced trade-offs between harming Indigenous and peasant concerns and developing the national economy and pulling Bolivians out of poverty.

After Morales’ chaotic exit from office in November 2019, journalists and scholars scrambled to define his legacy. With some outlets calling him “the America’s greatest President,” the media has generally held a positive view of the leader and rested in the midpoint between spectacular and beneficial but problematic to Bolivian democracy.⁸⁸ The in-between is Laurence Blair and Dan Collins’ characterization of Morales as “the Indigenous leader who changed

⁸⁸ Olivia Arigho-Stiles, “Evo Morales Was the Americas’ Greatest President,” *Jacobin*, October 18, 2020, <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/10/evo-morales-bolivia-Indigenous-president-mas>.

Bolivia but stayed too long.”⁸⁹ Morales said that he “refounded Bolivia.”⁹⁰ Certainly, the Indigenous leader navigated progressive politics in a market economy and redefined Bolivian foreign policy. After he and MAS combatted the authoritarian governments that privatized natural resources and squashed Indigenous demands, Morales ended decades-long agreements that put Indigenous and peasant interests aside. However, during his tenure, he raised questions as to whether he was entirely committed to catering to all his Indigenous/peasant constituency.

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⁸⁹ Laurence Blair and Dan Collins, “Evo Morales: Indigenous Leader Who Changed Bolivia but Stayed Too Long,” *The Guardian*, November 15, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/15/evo-morales-Indigenous-leader-who-changed-bolivia-but-stayed-too-long>.

⁹⁰ Anderson, “The Fall of Evo Morales.”

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