

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Assessing Evo's Bolivia: Inclusion, Ethnicity, and Class

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This essay reviews the following works:

When Movements Become Parties: The Bolivian MAS in Comparative Perspective. By Santiago Anria. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. xxi + 275. \$34.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781108427579.

Between the Andes and the Amazon: Language and Social Meaning in Bolivia. By Anna M. Babel. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018. Pp. xii + 265. \$60.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780816537266.

Domesticating Democracy: The Politics of Conflict Resolution in Bolivia. By Susan Helen Ellison. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018. Pp. xiii + 281. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822371083.

Latin America since the Left Turn. Edited by Tulia G. Falletti and Emilio A. Parrado. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. Pp. vii + 376. \$69.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780812249712.

Coca Yes, Cocaine No: How Bolivia's Coca Growers Reshaped Democracy. By Thomas Grisaffi. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019. Pp. vii + 261. \$25.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781478002970.

USAID in Bolivia: Partner or *Patrón*? By Lawrence C. Heilman. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press. Pp. xiii + 345. \$85.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781626374362.

Beyond Indigeneity: Coca Growing and the Emergence of a New Middle Class in Bolivia. By Alessandra Pellegrini Calderón. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 205. \$55.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780816533107.

The Indigenous State: Race, Politics, and Performance in Plurinational Bolivia. By Nancy Postero. Oakland: University of California Press. Pp. xii + 228. \$34.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780520294035.

Along the Bolivian Highway: Social Mobility and Political Culture in a New Middle Class. By Miriam Shakow. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. Pp. ix + 259. \$65.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780812246148.

Reshaping the Political Arena in Latin America: From Resisting Neoliberalism to the Second Incorporation. Edited by Eduardo Silva and Federico M. Rossi. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018. Pp. xi + 403. \$32.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822965121.

Political Networks and Social Movements: Bolivian State-Society Relations under Evo Morales, 2006–2016. By Soledad Valdivia Rivera. New York: Berghahn Books, 2019. Pp. vi + 271. \$135.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781789202199.

The ouster of Evo Morales as president in November 2019—many call it a coup, some others a citizens' revolt—and his replacement by a hard-right interim administration brought a sudden and largely unexpected end to the fourteen-year-long government of Evo Morales Ayma, amid a vituperative onslaught on his record in office. As this review of scholarship on the politics of the previous two decades was going to press, fresh elections were due to take place which would, irrespective of their outcome, lead to a change of president. Morales was Bolivia's longest-serving president since the foundation of the republic in 1825, outdoing the twelve and a half years in which Víctor Paz Estenssoro had exercised this office. Such a lengthy period of relative political stability in a country previously noted for tumultuous volatility was itself a striking achievement.

Of the various governments that arose from Latin America's "pink wave" after 2000, Bolivia stood in a category of its own. Not only was Morales president for an extraordinarily long time—dodging various term-limits restrictions—but he remained a dominating figure politically with strong social support. In the disputed elections of October 20, 2019, it seems that he still won more votes than any other candidate, though perhaps not enough to win outright on the first round as he had claimed. The speed at which his government collapsed thereafter amid violent protests took many observers (this reviewer included) by surprise. Whatever the outcome of the 2020 rerun, it seemed likely that Morales would remain a force to be reckoned with.

It is therefore a timely moment for an appraisal of his role, first in opposition and then in government. Not surprisingly, the scholarly literature on the "Evo phenomenon" has been abundant in recent years. This review article focuses on books published in English, although the range of Spanish-language publications—witness the copious bibliographical references in all the books listed here—is even more notable. As Brooke Larson recently pointed out, this abundance, coming after many years in which Bolivia received scant academic attention, is both striking and welcome.¹ Although the works reviewed here vary in terms of scope, methodology, and disciplinary approach, they all bring academic rigor to the study of contemporary Bolivia.

Much of the recent literature has reflected the polarized political debate about the changes that have taken place in Bolivia, tinged either by the desire to discredit Morales and the MAS (Movimiento al Socialismo) or, alternatively, to laud their achievements. Criticism has come from both the right and the left. Those on the right have tended to portray the Morales government as illiberal, undemocratic, populist, and disrespectful of the rule of law, claims made with increasing force following the 2016 referendum which yielded a narrow no to Morales standing for a fourth term. On the left, critics have seen him as reformist, inconsistent, neextractive, and perpetuating the global capitalism of which Bolivia has long been viewed as a victim. And, among his supporters, Morales is often portrayed in terms overly eulogistic, justificatory, and uncritical.

The books reviewed here go beyond this ideologically generated bind. In different ways, they analyze how traditional barriers to political participation were broken and the ways in which previously excluded sectors assumed a more proactive role in reforming political practices. They look at the obstacles and limitations encountered, as well as how the Bolivian story compares with instances of the pink tide elsewhere in Latin America. They also highlight some of the inconsistencies between the promises and behavior of a government whose initial claim was nothing less than to refound Bolivia as a country.

Bolivia and the "Pink Tide"

I start this review with two edited collections that focus on Bolivia and its place in the wider Latin American context of the region's shift leftward after 2000. These are Eduardo Silva and Federico M. Rossi's *Reshaping the Political Arena in Latin America* and Tulia Falletti and Emilio Parrado's *Latin America since the Left Turn*. Both evaluate the significance of Bolivia's contribution to broader themes of change in Latin America since the period of neoliberalism in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Silva and Rossi deploy the idea of political incorporation as their overarching framework. They take up the baton from Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier's pioneering work² on the populist phase in Latin America from the 1930s to the 1960s (during which popular sectors, specifically organized labor, were brought within the body politic), to argue that the pink tide represents a "second wave of incorporation," a response to the marginalization of rural and urban popular sectors from spheres of governmental decision-making under neoliberalism. This varied significantly from the first wave in terms of those it sought to incorporate.

¹ Brooke Larson, "Revisiting Bolivian Studies: Reflections on Theory, Scholarship and Activism since 1980," *Latin American Research Review* 54, no. 2 (2019): 294–309.

² Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement and Regime Dynamics in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

It was also less structured and less institutionalized, with the emergence of more territorially defined social movements: the indigenous, shantytown dwellers, neighborhood organizations, the landless, and so forth.

The volume is structured around three sections that focus on social movements, labor unions, and political parties. Each involves country pairings: Bolivia and Ecuador; Argentina and Brazil; with Venezuela placed in a category of its own. This provides a strong framework for individual chapters by specific authors. One of this book's strengths is that the editors insist on making individual chapters fit that framework. It thus avoids the intellectual dispersion that characterizes many edited volumes. The book also brings together an impressive collection of well-known scholars.

Here, Evo's Bolivia is seen much more as a bottom-up than top-down process, especially when compared with Ecuador under Rafael Correa and (even more) Venezuela under Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. Silva's own chapter (chapter 3) draws a sharp distinction between Correa's state-led incorporation and the "incorporation led from below" in Bolivia, where even prior to Morales's victory, rural-based social movements proved capable of framing the political demands that were subsequently to guide policy. Although this agenda was partially abandoned after 2010, Silva argues that the idea of "leading by obeying" was not just an empty slogan. He therefore parts company from more critical authors on the left who stress the co-optation of social movements.

In their chapter on labor movements (chapter 7), Jorge León Trujillo and Susan Spronk highlight how, despite the much-diminished role of the organized working class in Bolivia, the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) remains an influential actor, oscillating "back and forth as an ally and adversary of the government," whereas in Ecuador Correa initiated "outright war" on the labor movement (141). For his part, introducing the section on political parties, Kenneth M. Roberts singles out the key factors that help determine very different processes and outcomes in specific countries "depending on the institutional legacies of market reform, the reactive sequences they spawned, and the nature of the left in different national settings" (216).

Following this paradigm, and again contrasting Bolivia with Ecuador, Catherine Conaghan (chapter 11) highlights some unique characteristics of the Bolivian case: the historical antecedents of 1952, the ferocity of liberal adjustment, and the MAS's ability both to construct a "big tent" (234) and to act as a hybrid that was neither totally top-down (like Alianza PAIS in Ecuador) nor totally bottom-up. She too stresses the MAS's inclusiveness in representing the gamut of the Bolivian poor, not just indigenous sectors. Conaghan rightly contends that the ability of such governments to survive will depend "on their ability to maintain a catch-all coalition and to withstand the inevitable conflicts about who will take the reins from their exceptional founders" (250).

Seen in this comparative light, Bolivia emerges as an outstanding instance of the new incorporation. The book perceptively highlights the internal contradictions, not just at the macro but also the micro level, in gauging the sustainability of the regime. It provides a useful corrective to more radical critiques of Morales and the MAS in stressing the ability of social movements to maintain an important degree of autonomy from the state.

Faletti and Parrado's volume seeks to explain why some countries broke with neoliberalism while others did not. In so doing, it is more wide-ranging (but less focused) than Silva and Rossi's collection, and more interdisciplinary. It seeks to evaluate the changes in democracy, citizenship, and constitutional arrangements since the beginning of the "left turn." The book is organized under four broad headings: development models at both the national and regional level; power, protest, and the state of democracy in Latin America; participation, constitutionalism, and citizenship; and issues of race, decolonization, and violence. Published in 2018, it is recent enough to contemplate the reasons for what it sees as "the return of the political right" with Mauricio Macri's 2015 victory in Argentina and the 2016 ouster of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil. It was published too early to take on board the 2018 election victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) in Mexico, which challenged the idea of the new, right-wing hegemony (a "blue rinse"?) as unidirectional. Of course, it also predates the return of Peronism in Argentina and Morales's ouster in 2019.

The book lacks Silva and Rossi's strong organizational framework. The editors provide only a short introduction that does little but summarize the content of the four main sections; they do not provide a chapter with conclusions. Though the individual chapters provide some strong presentations, the central argument is somewhat clouded.

Bolivia is not the focus of any specific chapter, except perhaps Oscar Vega Camacho's on decolonization and the meaning of plurinationality, but it receives considerable attention throughout. Maristella Svampa's chapter on development models considers it paradoxical (16) that Bolivia combines adherence to the commodities consensus (aka neoextractivism or dependence on mining and hydrocarbons) with support for alternative development models. In Bolivia, as other authors make clear, political sustainability is related to

the government's ability to tap extractive rents and use these funds to finance social welfare programs and capital investment. Svampa grounds her argument on the neoextractivist literature but without explaining how, in a modern and increasingly urbanized setting, the state is to be funded (at least in the short run) without recourse to such rents. Policies to encourage the industrialization of raw material extraction (and so increase the value-added of such exports) are not discussed. In their chapter on fiscal policy and income distribution, Nora Lustig and Claudiney Pereira are similarly unenthusiastic about the effectiveness of Bolivia's strategy of using gas rents to reduce poverty levels, citing poor targeting and wasteful spending: Bolivia, they argue, achieves half the inequality reduction achieved by Argentina while spending 18 percent more (in relation to GDP) on social transfers. Still, the MAS government's record of reducing poverty is impressive; ECLAC data show it falling from 60 percent in 2002 to 30.6 percent in 2017.³

While the chapters on what Latin America's left turn meant for democracy refer specifically to Mexico and Venezuela, they are relevant to Bolivia too. These highlight the trend toward more authoritarian, centralized government and the abandonment of liberal democracy, a charge leveled with increasing force at the MAS administration after the 2016 referendum. However, Bolivia was arguably more successful than most in combining presidential leadership with grassroots participation. This was due not just to the power of social movements but also to the weakness of the state in enforcing centralized policy making. On several occasions, Morales was forced to backtrack on initiatives that encountered popular resistance. Grassroots constituencies thus provided a vocal counterbalance to the supposed authoritarian tendencies of those in government.

Bolivia receives much more than just passing mention in Vega Camacho's section on decolonization and plurinationality. Indigeneity and "state transformation" loom large in his analysis. Here, the key concept is self-determination within the framework of the unity of the state. This involves "rebuilding nations and peoples from the oblivion and destruction of the postcolonial order" (313). As many have pointed out, the story of how the 2009 constitution was implemented was one of disappointment to those who pinned their faith on the formation of a new, decentralized state that afforded priority to indigenous self-determination. But just because such demands are no longer the main driver of policy, it does not mean that other sorts of social organizations will not push government into heeding their agendas.

Indigeneity and Participation

Nancy Postero's book brings us foursquare to the central notion of indigeneity as a key feature of the Morales era, indeed as a key legitimizing agent. She sees indigeneity as a "slippery" concept (184), one with many meanings and susceptible to manipulation from above. This is a useful insight in that indigenous self-identification (e.g., in census data) is often confused with many ostensibly indigenous people preferring to identify as "mestizo." Also, those who self-identify as indigenous do not necessarily adhere to indigeneity as an ideology, as other authors reviewed here seek to show.

Postero argues that the MAS, and Morales in particular, adopted the idea of indigeneity in a bid to legitimize political, economic, and social agendas in ways that gave primacy to ethnic over class identity. The electoral achievement of the MAS, it would seem, was to create an overarching discourse that joined up the dots between disparate constituencies, among them indigenous ones, into a nationally defined movement capable of winning power through elections. This picks up on what Raúl Madrid has called "ethnopolitism."⁴ Other more rigidly defined ethnic parties, like the Aymaran Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (MIP), failed to appeal to non-Aymara ethnic groupings, let alone to the wider electorate.

Postero is certainly right in drawing a sharp distinction between the appeal to ethnically based symbols and political praxis since 2006. Evo Morales, a coca farmer from a syndicalist background in the Chapare, Bolivia's coca lands, effectively adopted a pro-indigenous discourse as part of a leitmotiv of decolonization. Although the distinction between race and class has always been one that has been hard to draw with any great clarity in Bolivia, the resort to ethnic symbols (such as the coca leaf) clearly had an important echo among those whose support Morales sought to mobilize. Although self-identification in census data generates results that need to be treated with caution, Bolivia is certainly one of Latin America's most indigenous countries. And Postero rightly states that such cultural identification is real enough among a large part of the population, even though the Aymara identity differs from that of the Guaraní, let alone

³ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Social Panorama of Latin America* (Santiago de Chile: ECLAC, January 2019). Many economists concur that growth reduces poverty more effectively than social spending programmes.

⁴ Raúl L. Madrid, *The Rise of Ethnic Politics in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 38–40.

some of the smaller ethnic groups in Bolivian Amazonia. And then there is the question of indigenous identity and what it means in urbanized settings like El Alto.

That the policies of the Morales governments shifted ground since the promulgation of the indigenous 2009 constitution is clearly correct. Postero adopts many of the neoextractivist arguments staked out by Eduardo Gudynas and others to underscore adherence to an economic model based on extractive industries, notably hydrocarbons.⁵ This is hardly consistent with an ideology based on plurinational indigenous autonomies, protection of the environment and living in harmony with nature (*vivir bien*). Whether this is what former vice president Álvaro García Linera would call a “creative tension” or something more fundamental is a moot point. Postero would argue that it is more fundamental.

Her book provides a useful historical reprise as to how indigeneity became a dominant ideology in a country where class-based politics had long prevailed. Particularly interesting here is the way in which neoliberal reforms opened the way for discourses based on indigenous rights. The reforms of the Sánchez de Lozada era in the 1990s, particularly the Law of Political Participation and the 1994 INRA Law, introduced notions of indigenous citizenship which, through a top-down incorporation of indigenous peoples as “responsible, docile neoliberal subjects” (30), would let the genie out of the bottle. Although few predicted at the time that these reforms would help generate the dynamic that was to emerge only a few years (and much conflict) later, the development of the indigenous idea—however malleable—owes a good deal to these antecedents.

The point at which Morales abandoned the indigenous discourse, privileging a more nationalist and developmental one, is also moot. More radical voices would argue that it stemmed from his decision to adopt electoral politics as the way to achieve power. Others would posit that, on becoming president, Morales was forced to reject *protesta* in favor of *propuesta*. Postero would argue that the ambiguity remained alive until the passage of the 2009 constitution and that it was only thereafter that idea of indigeneity was sidelined. Like others, she interprets the 2011–2012 TIPNIS dispute—the proposal to build a road through a lowland indigenous reserve, the Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécuré on the borders between Beni and Cochabamba—as clear evidence of the subjection of *vivir bien* to national development goals based on extractivism. Criticized internationally as demonstrating the hollowness of Morales's commitment to indigenous rights and environmentalism, the TIPNIS dispute ended up alienating many in the coalition that had originally brought the MAS to power.

But the TIPNIS dispute also highlights different ideas of what indigeneity means. It involved a clash of interests between peasants with individual title to land (the beneficiaries of the 1953 agrarian reform) and those for whom land is owned and managed collectively, a key to indigenous identity. Both may arguably be “indigenous” but their attitudes toward the land and its significance differ markedly. As I and a coauthor have argued elsewhere, this differentiation is fundamental for understanding rifts among Bolivia's indigenous populations, and not just in the TIPNIS.⁶ Support for the MAS was always stronger among small-scale peasant producers for whom ethnicity was no longer central to their identity.

As with Svampa in Falletti and Parrado's volume, it remains unclear here what sort of alternative economic development model would substitute for the dependence on extractive industries as the motor for capital accumulation. That the MAS (despite its name, which was initially borrowed from another party for the purposes of electoral registration) is not a socialist party that seeks to end capitalism is beyond dispute. But the sort of green alternative to national development is not drawn out here. Also, as Postero admits, indigeneity means different things to different people, but in a context of the rapid urbanization that has taken place in recent years, the appeal of indigeneity loses some of its luster as the explanatory key to mobilization and legitimization.

Social Movements, Autonomy, and Co-optation

The issue of bottom-up, autonomous indigenous politics as against those of top-down, centralized bureaucratic rule is also a central theme of Santiago Anria's book about when movements become parties, a theme earlier developed by Donna Lee Van Cott.⁷ Rather than comparing the Bolivian MAS with Ecuadorean or Venezuelan movements or parties, Anria focuses on a comparison between it and the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) and the Uruguayan Frente Amplio (FA). He sees the PT as validating

⁵ Eduardo Gudynas, “The New Extractivism of the 21st Century: Ten Urgent Theses about Extractivism in Relation to Current South American Progressivism,” Americas Program Report (Washington, DC: Center for International Policy, January 21, 2010).

⁶ John Crabtree and Ann Chaplin, *Bolivia: Processes of Change* (London: Zed Books, 2013), 16–35.

⁷ Donna Lee Van Cott, *From Movements to Parties in Latin America: The Evolution of Ethnic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the idea that parties lose their bottom-up characteristics, their participatory elements, as they become bureaucratized and institutionalized. But the MAS, more like the FA, he sees as retaining an important element of bottom-up participation that resists the bureaucratizing hegemony of party structures.

Anria sees the key to this residing in the circumstances surrounding the formation of the MAS and the structural strength of civil society in Bolivia. He defines the MAS as a "movement-based" party that effectively constrains the autonomy of leadership. He sees such parties being the construct of social movements (not political elites) within which they form the core constituency. They differ from parties with links to social movements but not necessarily founded by them. Therefore, Anria argues that the MAS, as a party founded by social movements, is less vulnerable to the sort of bait-and-switch stances practiced by party leaderships elsewhere. Where Morales went against core interests, the popular reaction was such as to force him to back down. Such was the case with the 2011 *gasolinazo*, an attempt to raise domestic fuel prices massively that sparked an immediate and universal reaction from social movements. Anria thus distances himself from those who argue that the MAS successfully controlled social movements through co-optation.

Anria usefully focuses his attention on organization within the MAS, how it worked internally and how social movements managed to maintain autonomy. This is challenging from the research point of view, as one of the MAS's key features is precisely its lack of institutionality. It makes for difficulties in gathering research data but contributes greatly to the literature. Anria focuses on the form in which Bolivia's "dense and autonomous" civil society impacted the formation and early growth of the MAS and the way in which these "core" movements (initially largely rural, but today rather more urban) continue to influence the party through the choice of candidates to elective office. He thus provides counterarguments to the view of "competitive authoritarianism" developed by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way,⁸ seeing bottom-up influences challenging vertical and authoritarian traits through "horizontal contestation."

But the glass is ever half full here. There is a danger of exaggerating the power of social movements rather than looking at the other side of the coin by analyzing the weakness of the Bolivian state to assert its will. There is also the danger of understating the ways in which the conformation of social movements is itself changing as the nature of society changes; few will deny that Bolivian society has seen significant change since 2006. Then there is the point, largely unaddressed, as to what happens when bottom-up influences clash with one another, a problem that afflicted the MAS administration at several points. Finally, it is undeniable that under the MAS—as under any government that had been in office for such a lengthy period—the organizations that originally gave rise to the party have experienced atrophy, along with their leaders. That said, this is a book that has a relevance that goes far beyond Bolivia, even though the Bolivian case may be untypical.

Soledad Valdivia Rivera's book deals with similar themes and seeks to ground the Bolivian experience in social movement theory. It seeks to get beyond the autonomy versus co-optation framework of analysis by examining the penetration of the state by social movements through what she terms "political networks." By so doing, she uses the Bolivian experience to develop social movement theory in innovative directions. She adds much to the existing literature by highlighting the many complexities and contradictions in the relationship between the state and social movements.

The book follows a chronological logic. It first looks at the period before 2005 in which social movements became the main vehicle for oppositional politics. It then examines Evo's first term, in which social movements went from *protesta* to *propuesta*, making a qualitative leap in their repertoire and playing a key role in defining a vision of the "common good" through their involvement in the Constituent Assembly. Finally, and most crucially, it looks at the period from 2010 to 2016, a testing period in which various social movements seriously challenged the government, forcing it (as we saw above) to backtrack on key items of public policy.

Valdivia thus sees the power of the MAS government as dependent to an important degree on the acquiescence of key social movements. Like Silva and Conaghan, she takes issue with the view that Morales and the MAS successfully tamed Bolivia's social movements by co-opting them. She writes (237) "the very social movement that appears 'co-opted' by the government at a certain point appears highly 'autonomous' at another." She stresses the role of NGOs and the media in offering social movements political resources to operate with an important degree of autonomy.

The book also deals with the role of leadership within social movements, focusing on the dual and contradictory actions of social movements in seeking to reconcile the particularistic demands of their social

⁸ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

base with what was required for the pursuit of public policies that did not necessarily square with those demands. So, while leaders may be accused by those beneath them of lending themselves to bribery and manipulation, they also run the risk of being criticized from above for failure to adhere to core principles of policy. Of course, at the apex of the system sat Evo Morales, whose personal ability to deal with the complexities of polarizing politics stands out in explaining how he survived in office for so long. Valdivia's book, the most recently published of the volumes reviewed here, also deals with the vexed issue of succession, hinting at the point that supposedly authoritarian methods represented the only ways of maintaining the MAS—itsself a loose amalgam of often divergent interests—as a united political force. Time will tell how irreplaceable Morales will be in keeping the MAS together.

A shortcoming of this otherwise impressive volume is that it does not deal with the diversity between and among social movements. It would have been interesting, for example, to have more on the dissidence sparked by the mining cooperatives in 2013, a rather different form of social movement than those discussed. When does a social movement turn into a mafia-type organization? And by no means all social movements are on the left.

As with Postero and others, there is a clear before and after in Thomas Grisaffi's account of the *cocalero* movement in the Cochabamba tropics. Much of his book deals with the emergence of the *cocaleros* in opposition to the neoliberal policies of the 1990s and to the US-backed attempts of the Banzer and Quiroga administrations (1997–2001) to eradicate coca in the Chapare. But Grisaffi also examines at the more local level how the relationship between social movements and the state changed as the Morales administration consolidated itself in office.

His fieldwork is spread over more than a dozen years; he first visited the Chapare in 2003 and most recently in 2015–2016. This provides him with a measure of how things have changed since the years of *protesta*. He examines the background to social mobilization in Bolivia and the evolution of the coca/cocaine trade before going on to characterizing the *cocaleros* as a social movement. In common with other accounts, he stresses the syndicalist nature of their organization although recognizing a disposition to use indigenous motifs when it suited them, not least veneration of the coca leaf.

He rightly gives emphasis to the sort of grassroots democracy that prevailed in the Chapare, contrasting it with conventional norms of representative democracy. He sees the *sindicato* or union structure as the linchpin of social and political organization, grounded on the fact that it is the *sindicato* that effectively controls people's access to land and therefore their livelihood as farmers. Other forms of political organization, including the town hall and the local MAS party itself, are simply appendages of the *sindicato*. Grassroots democracy, he argues, is highly participative, but once decisions are made then participants are expected to toe the line. There is no room for pluralism or dissidence here. This is a form of democracy that owes much to Bolivia's communal traditions as well as to its unusually strong trade union traditions.

Quite where the dividing line lies between before and after is unclear, but Grisaffi takes the view that the relationship between the *cocaleros* and government changed once Morales (who remained throughout as leader of the Six Federations of the Chapare) reached presidential office. Even among these loyal followers, many interviewees see him as increasingly authoritarian in demeanor and failing to heed the principle of "leading by obeying." The main reason for this, Grisaffi believes, is that once in office, Morales found himself constrained by wider national and international problems of statecraft, not least pressures to limit production of coca and cocaine. Here he examines the operation of the *cato* (landholding unit of 1,600 square meters) policy and the role of the *sindicato* in enforcing this. Limiting family production to a *cato* successfully stabilized production, but not without generating criticism that the *cato* was insufficient to provide an adequate family income.

Grisaffi also looks at the role of radio as an instrument in generating cohesion among the *cocaleros*, and how Morales arbitrarily ordered the dismissal of the radio team once it started to air criticisms of government policies. But despite such feelings of frustration and dissent, it was hardly likely when it comes to representative democracy that this traditional bastion would turn against the MAS administration. Following Morales's ouster in November 2019, the *cocaleros* were among the first vociferously to protest and suffer the consequences of repression.

Indigeneity and Class

Indigeneity of a different sort is the subject of Alessandra Pellegrini Calderón's book—as her title, *Beyond Indigeneity*, suggests—as groups previously seen as indigenous challenge the way they are viewed (or view themselves) as they ascend the ladder of class. *Beyond Indigeneity* is based on an ethnographic study of

a small coca-producing community in the Yungas district of La Paz. It raises questions about the whole nature of race versus class in defining social movements in contemporary Bolivia.

Pellegrini paints a picture of an affluent peasant community in which there is a significant process of accumulation derived from this valuable crop. Such is the level of accumulation among some households in the Yungas that these spend more time marketing their coca in faraway Santa Cruz or Tarija than they do producing it. This accumulation of wealth accelerated rapidly after 2000, with the more successful peasant farmers generating sufficient cash to acquire, among other things, sophisticated trucks and fancy homes.

This is therefore a community which defines itself in ways that are somewhat surprising. People consider themselves superior to the indigenous inhabitants of the Altiplano (whence many of their forebears came) referring to them pejoratively as *jaqui*. They see themselves as traditional coca producers, as opposed to more recent migrants to the Chapare. Indeed, while resisting moves to limit coca in their own area, people in the Yungas appear happy to see eradication policies pursued in the Chapare; it helps drive up prices for their own product. *Yungueño* coca farmers suffered less from eradication than those of the Chapare owing to the difficult nature of the terrain and the close-knit nature of community organization.

What Pellegrini refers to as a rural middle class challenges traditional ways of analyzing race and class in Bolivia. She argues persuasively that such people reject the terminology of indigeneity as conventionally construed. Theirs is an "in-between" category that transcends the differentiating line between who is indigenous and who is not (16). She affirms that the debate over indigenous peoples fails to take into account those who do not fit conventional categories of self-identification. She cites the pioneering work of Olivia Harris in suggesting that such categories as "Indian" and "mestizo" have always been grounded in economic relations and activities.⁹ In a context of social mobility, then, ethnic and racial identification shifts accordingly. To be "indigenous" in this part of the Yungas is to be poor and exploited by others. The *jaqui* from the Altiplano who work as laborers on the coca plantations are therefore seen as indigenous, while the *yungueños* reject this labeling of their own identity. Here wealth is valued, in part because the wealthy contribute more to community events and the funding of community organizations (including the peasant union); it therefore has a social function. Successful families are successful by dint of their own efforts within a highly marketized economy where the Weberian work ethic is grounded not on religion but on presence within the capitalist market economy.

Politically, *yungueños* have tended to vote for the MAS. Yet on repeated occasions coca farmers clashed with government authorities in conflicts over attempts to reduce coca production. Although they did not identify with Morales in the way people from the Chapare did, he was perceived as offering a guarantee against an all-out war on drugs. In a world that revolves around market prices and monetization, this is a far cry from the sometimes anti-capitalist discourse adopted by Morales and other MAS leaders; coca is commodity capitalism writ large. Becoming middle class is not related here just to urbanization or becoming *mestizo*; it takes place within the rural economy and is based on burgeoning capitalist accumulation.

There are several connections between Pellegrini's work in the Yungas and that of Miriam Shakow in the township of Sacaba, outside Cochabamba. Both are ethnographic studies, both provide a discussion around ethnicity and class, and both relate to the impact of the coca economy on social mobility. While geographically bounded, their fieldwork also has far-reaching implications for the discussion about how the country has changed in recent years. Studies such as these stretch our understanding and challenge received wisdoms about contemporary Bolivia. The "highway" in the book's title could literally be taken as the highway between Cochabamba and the Chapare, on which Sacaba is located; more metaphorically it refers to the highway of social mobility and where the people of Sacaba stand along it.

Shakow's work focuses on the growth of a culturally and ideologically ambivalent middle class in a medium-sized town whose economy is rooted in the commercialization of coca. What, she asks, does it mean to be middle-class in today's Bolivia? The people she interviewed in this study have different viewpoints, but all are—as in the Yungas—caught in an in-between society. In terms of income, they have risen above the mass of the poor; in terms of occupation, most are involved in professional or commercial activities; in terms of ethnicity, they no longer regard themselves as indigenous (although many are from an indigenous background); and politically, they are of mixed opinions whether to prefer the more inclusive discourse of Morales and the MAS or the more liberal and less egalitarian views of the MAS's opponents. The more upwardly mobile were apparently "appalled" by promises of wealth redistribution that they viewed as

⁹ Olivia Harris, "Ethnic Identity and Market Relations: Indians and Mestizos in the Andes," in *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology*, ed. Brooke Larson and Olivia Harris (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

confiscatory (82). Of course, even within a single district, a range of views and ideologies is to be found, but people tended to be scornful of the notion of an indigenous person being president. "How can we have a president with such a [ethnically defined] face?" she quotes one of her interviewees saying (84), even though this person herself possessed similarly indigenous features.

The experience of Sacaba chimes with that of other urban or peri-urban locations where the idea of the bounded community, dominated by the peasant (*sindicato*), is no longer so relevant to people's lives. In these circumstances, political loyalties tend to be based on other considerations, such as clientelism and the need for a job, even though linkages between countryside and city remain strong. Shakow's townships lack a strong sense of community; they are a conglomeration of people pursuing different goals, experiencing different lifestyles, and traveling constantly to other locations. New, more complex types of community and identity are emerging in the more urban milieu which are important to understand, whether by academics or would-be politicians.

A third ethnographic study also takes up an "in-between" society: Anna Babel's account of life and values in Saipina, on the borders between Santa Cruz and Cochabamba. This is where east (the so-called *media luna*) meets west, where Quechua and Spanish languages vie for dominance, where highland *colla* culture meets that of the lowland *cambas*, where tradition meets modernity, and the blue (the color adopted by the MAS) meets the green (the color of the pro-autonomous *cruceño* Demócratas) in the political arena. It is therefore an apt place in which to test social, ethnic, and political identities and to see how ethnic distrust and conflict work out where Bolivia's political and cultural tectonic plates meet. Babel, a linguistic anthropologist, applies the use of language, and the mixing of language, to show how these binaries apply to a given location and how, in between them, a local identity emerges, albeit framed by the overall colla/camba divide. Babel's study, the fruit of repeated visits (and marriage to a community member), stresses how language defines social interactions. Here Spanish is infused by Quechua and Quechua by Spanish, depending on who is talking. Language within Saipina becomes a proxy for values and status. The admixture of language is, of course, not neutral: those who speak more Quechua are more rural, poorer, and less socially refined. Language is a litmus test of status (110).

Saipina, previously more *camba* than *colla*, is now more *colla* than *camba*, as migrants arrive from the highlands of Cochabamba, Chuquisaca and Potosí in search of a better life. This has engendered distrust between those who see themselves as *legítimos* (long-standing members of a largely Spanish-speaking community), *conocidos* (Quechua-speaking community members of long standing), and *desconocidos* (recent Quechua migrants from the highlands). As with Pellegrini's *yungueños*, who do not regard themselves as having anything in common with *jaquis* from the Altiplano, different identities emerge here within the predominantly Quechua-speaking communities. Ethnic identification does not therefore obey the *indígena/no-indígena* binary of the official census or the *indígena/mestizo* binary in much of the literature.

In the political sphere, party affiliation or support follows language, with the Quechua-speaking majority having voted mostly for the MAS and the largely Spanish-speaking *legítimos* for the Demócratas. Conflict between the two, especially at election time, reinforces such divides, as conservative politicians from Santa Cruz try to whip up anti-*colla* sentiments. But such conflict is not always destructive. The MAS-affiliated mayor of Saipina sought to play these interparty battles to his advantage, appealing for cash from both the government in La Paz and the regional authorities in Santa Cruz (136–138). But while in-betweenness can bring advantages, electoral competition highlights and exacerbates racial and moral tensions. And the *camba/colla* binary in Saipina is still palpable; the stigma of being *colla* is always more than that of being *camba*.

These three ethnographic studies provide useful reminders as to the malleability of indigenous self-identification and how people place themselves within the wider, changing class structure. The binaries are not always binaries, nor are they necessarily fixed. Bolivian society is on the move, very literally when it comes to the study of migratory patterns. Urbanization is rapid, and with it how people respond politically; this may provide a key to understanding the future in Bolivian politics.

Bolivia and USAID

In 2013, the Morales government took the decision to expel USAID, ending the more than seventy years during which it had played a significant role in influencing both the policy agenda as well as situations on the ground. This followed the expulsion of the US ambassador to Bolivia in 2008 for allegedly meddling in Bolivian domestic politics at the time of maximum tension between La Paz and Santa Cruz. Morales's nationalistic stance toward Washington, originally a product of the "war on drugs" in the Chapare, sought to highlight defense of national sovereignty. This was not just in relation to coca, but also toward the

US-dominated international financial institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank) that had previously shaped the country's economic policies. His anti-imperialist discourse helped cement his political appeal, both before 2005 and after. Two books focus attention on the activities of USAID, one by Susan Helen Ellison, the other by Lawrence Heilman. While Ellison focuses more on perceptions of USAID's role in Bolivia, Heilman examines the details of its programs and how they changed over time.

Ellison's volume looks at the introduction of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods in El Alto as of the late 1990s, but particularly in the wake of the 2003 "gas war" that brought down the second Sánchez de Lozada government. So-called integrated justice centers (IJC) were established in various districts in El Alto, ostensibly to facilitate the dispute resolution (mainly relating to families and debt) without recourse to the official court system. These benefited from deep-rooted public skepticism about the workings of the justice system in providing agile and speedy channels for this purpose. However, as Ellison persuasively argues, they were more than that.

She uses as her title the idea of "domesticating democracy." This is a nice conceit, since "domesticating" can have several meanings, including the idea of taming the sort of collective action that emerged during the gas war in El Alto. But domestication also refers to the way in which public policy, including ADR projects, sought to change people's attitudes toward political activity by increasing faith in individual as opposed to collective agency. The book provides a telling link between what Ellison calls the "micro-practices of negotiation and the macro-politics of ADR as a tool of democracy promotion" (5).

ADR methods aimed to increase citizens' self-reliance as part of a handbook of negotiation methods and discourage disruptive methods of collective protest. They form part of a set of measures designed to promote good governance along the lines advocated since the 1980s by the World Bank. As such, they sought to weaken the collectively organized social movements described by other authors in this review. The introduction of judicial reforms, an adjunct to the 1990s liberalizing economic agenda, formed part of the wider strategy for underpinning a market-based transformation. Bolivia, indeed, had been a testing ground for the World Bank's advocacy of second-generation reforms. These included the promotion of microfinance in areas like El Alto, designed to foment capitalist values not just by making people financially more self-reliant but by bringing them within the orbit of formal lending institutions.

Ellison portrays the expansion of ADR, specifically through the IJCs, as a deliberate policy by USAID to counteract behaviors deemed as destabilizing to democracy and conducive to manipulative leaderships within *alteño* organizations. That the establishment of IJCs after 2003 focused on El Alto, Plan Tres Mil (a large and poor immigrant settlement in the suburbs of Santa Cruz), the Yungas, and the Chapare suggests it formed part of a political strategy by USAID to stem the rise of perceived anti-system political movements, specifically the MAS. Dressed up as supporting the rule of law, it seemed to Bolivian policymakers at the time, including even to the interim president (2005–2006) Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé (54), as being more about promoting US than Bolivian interests. Ellison quotes an official USAID document (73) describing El Alto as "a brewing cauldron for confrontation, frustration and all kinds of anti-democratic and anti-systemic (illegal) actions" dominated by "unscrupulous and self-interested *dirigentes*."

A more positive view of USAID's role is taken by Heilman, who began work for USAID in 1967 and spent many years in Bolivia. In seeking to decide whether it was more as "partner or *patrón*," he inclines toward the former. "Overall," he writes (292), "the United States and Bolivia can point to a beneficial partnership" with high and low points. He calculates that USAID spent US\$4.6 billion on aid to Bolivia over seventy years, crediting its programs with having positive impacts in health, education, agricultural development, forest management, food provision, and democracy building. If USAID's record was suboptimal, he thinks, it was down more to bureaucratic bungling in Washington than to those working in the field.

Heilman's book provides useful insights into how USAID priorities changed over time in response to fluctuating political conditions in both the United States and Bolivia. His account is chronological; each chapter is devoted to a specific US presidential term, starting with Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 and finishing with Barack Obama in 2013, when Bolivia showed USAID the door. It is thus a US- rather than Bolivia-centric approach to the agency's track record, and much of the bibliography reflects primary and secondary material gleaned more from US archives than from Bolivian sources.

Heilman confirms that from the 1980s onward two key priorities were the war on drugs and the promotion of liberal democracy. This squares with Ellison's account, with USAID providing enthusiastic support to Sánchez de Lozada's decentralization and political participation policies, as well as backing for microfinance and the establishment of the Banco Sol. Predictably, USAID (and Heilman) had little time for Morales and what he calls the latter's "clamorous political base in the Chapare [promoting the] political

cacophony that was spreading through Bolivia” in the late 1990s (224). As Ellison also suggests, USAID was crucially concerned in the early years of the new millennium about the threat posed by Morales's political rise. Heilman describes the desperate attempt to redirect USAID spending after 2003 toward El Alto with the establishment of the Office of Transition Initiatives to demonstrate US sensitivities to the plight of “ordinary” Bolivians (265–266). He trips lightly over the reasons for the US ambassador's expulsion in 2008, lamenting the closure of USAID's program.

A Victim of Success?

This flurry of recent literature shows how much the Bolivian experience since 2006 has raised both important new questions (relevant well beyond Bolivia's frontiers) while reaffirming some of the more traditional concerns about the country and its history. It illustrates some of the dilemmas facing those in government and the difficulties in reconciling the need to pursue national policies (of which there were winners and losers) while remaining responsive to pressures from below. Policy making involved pragmatic decisions that frequently went against the discourse of indigeneity. But despite accusations of dictatorial behavior and co-optation of social movements, the latter proved forceful defenders of their own interests in the face of contrarian state policies.

Bolivia has clearly undergone profound changes in the last decade and a half, and these changes will not easily be reversed by those who take office in 2020 (or perhaps later, depending on the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic), or even those who succeed them. Let me mention just three, all interconnected in one way or another, reflected in the literature discussed here.

First, Bolivia has undergone a process of political and social integration that has brought previously excluded indigenous populations closer to the center of power. The election of an indigenous-born president was of course a powerful symbol but, as both Anria and Silva show, social movement leaders became actively engaged in political decision-making at all levels. Under Morales, indigeneity became a symbol of the assertion of national sovereignty. Postero shows us how Morales used the idea of indigeneity to weld together a powerful coalition, even though his conduct in government frequently parted from such ideas in practice. Morales's successors will find it hard—even if it is what they desire—to return to the sort of exclusionary governance that held sway until 2006.

The second is that Bolivia has undergone a process of urbanization in which previously indigenous peasants have been absorbed into the city environment, a process that necessarily changes both perceptions of identity and electoral preferences. According to the 2001 census, the urban population represented 62 percent of the population. By 2018, it was close to 70 percent, and looked likely to hit 75 percent by 2025. More than half the country's population in 2018 lived in the three main metropolitan areas of La Paz–El Alto, greater Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz. No longer does the rural *sindicato* have the political weight it enjoyed previously, while a rising urban middle class has different aspirations and less clear-cut voting preferences.

Third has been the increase in people's living standards overall. Although Bolivia remains one of Latin America's poorest countries, per capita incomes more than tripled between 2005 and 2017 from US\$ 1,037 to US\$ 3,390.¹⁰ While the exact nature of that distribution remains unclear—and an important topic for future research—there is no doubt that it has benefited people at the bottom of the income distribution as well as at the top. ECLAC estimates that the Gini coefficient for Bolivia (which provides as measure of income inequality) fell from 0.611 in 2002 to 0.453 in 2017,¹¹ one of the most dramatic falls in Latin America over this period.

All this means that the salience of specific groups in society and the demands they make on the state have changed. Demands for policies like land distribution will become less forceful when compared to pressing urban demands such as improved education, better health provision, decent housing, and access to justice. The importance of social movements—so much a key theme in the books reviewed here—will likely decline as the more individualistic and consumeristic urban society comes to prevail. Whether or not the MAS has the capability to recover from the electoral debacle of 2019, with or without Morales as its unquestioned leader, remains an open question to which only time will provide the answer.

Arguably, Morales and the MAS ended as victims of their own success. Electors may search for new, more pluralist forms of political participation and recoil against the arbitrary behavior that Morales demonstrated

¹⁰ Ministerio de Economía, *Memoria de la economía boliviana* (La Paz: MEFP, 2017), http://medios.economiayfinanzas.gob.bo/MH/documentos/Memorias_Fiscales/Memorias/Memoria_EB_2017.pdf.

¹¹ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America*.

in the past. Further, their expectations have risen and their priorities have changed. New methods of political interaction, notably the huge expansion of the use of social media, have also altered traditional ways of doing politics. Political life may therefore become rather more fractious and less stable as Bolivia heads toward its second centennial in 2025.

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