

Evo Morales' Ally Has Real Chance of Winning Bolivia's Upcoming Elections

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A corrupt, manipulative and indolent government in Bolivia, coupled with problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has only exacerbated the many issues the country has faced since Evo Morales was ousted from power on November 10, 2019. Interior Minister Arturo Murillo, the main figurehead of Interim President Jeanine Añez, went to Washington to receive difficult instructions – defeat the candidate for the Movement for Socialism (MAS), Luis Arce. As Evo also belongs to the MAS, Arce is running on the same policy ideas and platform as the former president.

In the near full year since the accession of Añez to power, Bolivia has regressed in social and economic terms, is tinkering with inflation, and has seen an increase in unemployment and poverty. Arce is an economist and has been recognized as one of the best economic ministers in the region. It was under his ministership that Bolivia was among the countries that greatly reduced poverty, while he also oversaw high growth rates in a sustainable manner.

Today Bolivia has fallen into a deep crisis, and is now far from the growth rates seen under Evo's administration. Since Añez became president, power and wealth in Bolivia is once again being monopolized and the country is governed by a handful of people whose party did not even have 4% of the electorate in 2014. She did not choose to be president, she was chosen by a group led by the heads of the Bolivian Catholic Church, minor political parties, the Brazilian Embassy and the [Jubilee Foundation](#), with the blessing of Washington.

With elections being held in only 10 days, the legacy of Añez is not only mired by increasing poverty and a decline in the economy, but also [corruption scandals](#), along with the dismantling of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Communication and the Ministry of Sports. The consequences are already being felt in the economy. The [Sacaba and Senkata massacres](#), where innocent people were killed, are also on their backs.

Within the Añez government there are three ministers with Croatian roots in key areas – Interior Minister Arturo Murillo, Foreign Minister Karen Longaric and Minister of Economy and Finance Branko Marinkovic. All of them were very politically active, although to get to government they needed a soft coup against Evo.

Marinkovic was accused of taking part in the violent 2009 uprising which also involved the now former minister Óscar Ortiz Antelo. Armed cells led by Bolivian Croats and Hungarians were involved, but the trial that followed the violent uprising attempt was recently shelved following Marinkovic's appointment as minister. Investigations revealed some politicians and businessmen financed the purchase of weapons, explosives, and other weapons for the group, led by the Bolivian-Hungarian militant Eduardo Rózsa

Flores, to assassinate Evo and fragment Bolivia. Canela Crespo, a candidate for the MAS, also revealed [on Twitter](#) that Marinkovic's parents were involved with the Nazi-collaborating Croatian Far Right Ustaše movement.

Some mistakes by Evo also contributed to the decline that Bolivia is experiencing today. Morales attempted to appease the military, even gifting 100% of their salary as a retirement package. He and his administration trusted many of the generals, the same ones who, according to the ultra-right candidate Luis Fernando Camacho, coordinated the soft coup against Evo.

Without Evo, Bolivia is falling into significant indebtedness that will only reverse all the decreases in poverty, unemployment and dependency that his administration oversaw. With Arce they can recover and continue the path started in 2006 that oversaw all these impressive progresses.

Whoever comes into power in the aftermath of the October 18 elections must avoid devaluation and inflation, whilst also continuing policies that restores production and industries, reduces poverty, renegotiates foreign debt and increases international reserves. However, this can only be done with a sovereign government without genuflecting before powers or credit institutions. Bolivians will have the opportunity to make their choice on October 18, but there are already threats that endanger the legitimacy of the elections because many foreign interests are at stake, especially American, as they would not want a reversion to limitations on foreign ownership of key industries and investments.

Holly K. Sonneland [wrote on](#) Americas Society/Council of the Americas that "Añez dropped out of the presidential race on September 17, saying she was doing so because she didn't want to fracture the anti-MAS vote and thereby allow the MAS presidential candidate, Luis Arce, [to] win." However, as she highlights, Añez is yet to endorse a candidate, with most of the anti-MAS constituency split between centrist former President Carlos Mesa and Catholic right-wing Luis Fernando Camacho, as well as many of the minor parties.

According to the [October 2 CELAG poll](#), Arce leads with 44.4%, Mesa with 34% and Camacho with 15.2%. If the opposition were able to unite, they would be able to comfortably topple the MAS candidate. However, as usually occurs in post-coup/coup-attempt Latin America, the opposition disintegrates into competing factions and is unable to unite, as we see today in Venezuela. If Arce is successfully elected in 10 days' time, we can expect a quick reversal of Añez's policies that led to increased unemployment and poverty, while re-establishing Bolivia's independent foreign policy - and this is exactly what Washington wants to avoid from occurring.

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