

Polity IV Country Report 2006: Bolivia

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2005</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td colspan="3">24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">Yes</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2005	2006	Change	Polity:	8	8	0	Democ:	8	8	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:	24			Tentative:	Yes			
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SCODE	BOL	CCODE	145	Date of Report	18 September 2007																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	3	4	7	2	3																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date		10 October 1982		Begin Date																					
				11 October 1982																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1964/1994																								
Executive(s)	President Juan Evo Morales (MAS); directly elected, 18 December 2005, 53.7%.																								
Legislature	Bicameral: Chamber of Deputies (130 seats; 70 directly elected, 60 proportionally elected; most recent elections, 18 December 2005) Movement toward Socialism (MAS): 73 Social and Democratic Power (Podemos): 43 National Unity Front (FUN): 8 Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR): 6 Chamber of Senators (27 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 18 December 2005) MAS: 12 Podemos: 13 FUN: 1 MNR: 1																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Bolivia is a constitutional multi-party democracy. President Banzer, who had governed Bolivia as head of a military dictatorship from 1971 to 1978, took office in 1997 by winning elections that featured intense competition and uncertainty of the outcome. The popular vote was fairly evenly split among five contenders including Banzer who gain a plurality with 22% of the total popular vote. Previously, Banzer had run for the presidency three times without success. In order to win in the election, Banzer had to

negotiate a "mega-coalition" with some other leading parties' candidates. The elections were decided in a run-off vote in the National Congress. Banzer subsequently resigned office in August 2001 for reasons of health and the Vice President, Jorge Quiroga Ramirez, assumed the presidency. In the June 2002 presidential elections no candidate was again able to garner enough votes for an outright victory and so the newly-elected Congress was empowered by the constitution to choose the president from between the top two contenders in the general election (the sitting president is not allowed to run for reelection). As a result of the 4 August 2002, election by the joint session of Congress, Gonzálo Sánchez de Lozada (National Revolutionary Movement) gained the presidency by a vote of 84 to 43 for Evo Morales (Movement Towards Socialism). Gonzálo Sánchez de Lozada had previously held the presidency from 1993 to 1997.

President Sánchez de Lozada was forced to resign and flee Bolivia in October 2003 after almost a month of clashes between the security forces and demonstrators which had led to more than 80 deaths. The protests and a general strike were organized by workers' unions, as well as the Movement Towards Socialism. Vice President Carlos Mesa was sworn in as the new president and vowed to lead an interim government until a constituent assembly could be organized. However, Mesa's presidency was itself beset by numerous crises, beginning with a November 2003 ruling by the Constitutional Court that Mesa's recess appointments of Supreme Court judges and Chief Public Prosecutor were in violation of the constitution. Protests and demonstrations greeted Mesa's announcement of an increase in petrol and diesel prices in December 2004. Demonstrations against Mesa's government, again led by the Movement Towards Socialism, included weeks of roadblocks by indigenous and labor groups, culminated in Mesa's offer to resign in March 2005. Congress refused the resignation, as well as his request to hold elections in August 2005, two years early. Continued protests threatened to paralyze the country, leading to Mesa's second resignation offer in June 2005, which the Congress accepted. According to the constitution, the presidency should then pass to the president of the Senate, Hormando Vaca Diez, but popular protests and hunger strikes by the mayors of La Paz and other cities against Vaca Diez stymied this constitutional transition. The president of the Chamber of Deputies also declined, and the presidency passed to the head of the Supreme Court, Eduardo Rodríguez, who was constitutionally bound to call presidential elections within six months. An agreement for early presidential, vice-presidential, and legislative elections was reached in July 2005, with elections scheduled for December 2005.

While eight candidates participated in the December 2005 presidential election, the primary contest pitted Evo Morales against former President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga. These two candidates represented a wider face-off between the eastern "cambas," as the people from Santa Cruz are known, and the "collas," the Indian residents of the western highlands and La Paz. While the "collas" are overwhelmingly poor, the "cambas" control the bulk of the nation's natural gas reserves and agricultural businesses. Morales, in a shocking first-round victory, defeated Quiroga with 54% of the vote and was inaugurated as President on 22 January 2006.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Institutionally, Bolivia's three branches of government are separated and mutually balanced. In April 2000, President Banzer declared a nationwide state of emergency in response to mass demonstrations protesting government policies, such as agrarian reform, water privatization, coca eradication. The state of emergency was approved by the Congress on 13 April 2000. After two weeks, the emergency rule was lifted, and the government agreed in October 2000 to rescind some of the disputed initiatives; protests reemerged in April 2001 in response to the government's failure to fully implement the agreement. The August 2002 election of the president by Congress resulted from the formation of a coalition including the MNR-MBL, MIR, UCS, and ADN. The judiciary, while independent, is corrupt and inefficient.

In one of the first acts as President, Evo Morales signed a law in March 2006 to convene a constitutional assembly to fundamentally restructure the institutions and rules of governance in Bolivia. The Constituent Assembly was elected on 2 July 2006, with the MAS winning 137 out of 255 seats in this body. The Constitutional Assembly was subsequently convened on 6 August 2006 and was charged with the task of delivering a new constitution within one year. However, progress on drafting a new constitution got off to a slow start in 2006 with the process becoming bogged down over voting rules. The MAS, with over 50% of the seats in the constitutional assembly, argued for constitutional proposals to be accepted on the basis of a simple majority vote in the Assembly while the opposition demanded a two-thirds majority. In early 2007 Morales announced plans to call new elections in 2008 once the Constituent Assembly has completed its work.

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Political Participation: Factional Competition (7)

Bolivia's transition to democracy, which began in 1982, has been significantly hampered by the persistent poverty and entrenched racial stratification found within the country. After a quarter century of democratic rule, seven out of ten Bolivians, most from the indigenous Indian community, continue to live below the poverty line (and over 30% live on less than \$1 per day). For much of the past two decades power has been shared by three parties, the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), Nationalist Democratic Action (ADN), and the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR). Despite the revolutionary titles of these parties, all three parties appeal to the upper and middle class interests of Bolivian society and have pursued neo-liberal economic policies aimed at reducing state subsidies to the poor and limiting government ownership of business. Given the lack of lower class representation in the major political parties, there has been relatively little movement to address the concerns of the poor. As a result, over the past decade Bolivia has witnessed an increasing political efficacy and participation of the indigenous Indian community (which constitutes over 60% of the total population). In particular, Evo Morales's political organization, the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), has engaged the government in violent street protests, has forced the resignation of numerous presidents, has become a potent political force within the parliament and, ultimately, with the elections of December 2005, has gained control over both the legislative and executive branches of government.

Bolivia's political parties have traditionally been identity-based and personalistic, rather than broad-based and inclusive, in nature. Party support was largely fluid and wide swings in the support for certain parties often occurred from one election to the next. However, over the past two decades the factional nature of political activity in Bolivia has solidified along class, ethnic and regional lines. On the one side of the political equation are the eastern departments of the country. These departments are home to most of the country's large agricultural farms as well as to most of the country's oil and gas reserves. These regional departments tend to favor the traditional parties – the MNR, ADN and MIR – who represent the middle and upper class interests of the eastern elite and pursue a neo-liberal economic agenda. On the other side of the political equation we find supporters of the MAS who reside primarily in the western highland departments of La Paz, Oruro and Potosi, as well as in the Andean "valley" departments of Cochabamba and Chuquisaca. These departments, consisting primarily of Aymara and Quechua Indians, have traditionally had close ties to Bolivia's powerful trade unions and oppose the neo-liberal economic agenda favored by the traditional parties and the eastern elite.

In November 2006 factional tensions escalated in Bolivia when President Morales signed into law a sweeping agrarian bill that distributes land to the poor throughout the country. This act enraged the large landowners in the lowland districts of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni and Pando who, in response, have demanded both greater regional autonomy from the central government and increased representation in the National Assembly. The issue of regional autonomy has been passed on to the Constitutional Assembly where the MAS a controlling majority due to a boycott by the opposition. President Morales has indicated that he is willing to grant the four provinces more autonomy but not to the degree that they are demanding. The constitution drafted by the Constitutional Assembly is designed to shift power away from the traditional economic and political elites to the majority indigenous community. As such, it has triggered strong, public opposition in the country's more prosperous regions and among the traditional elites. The chief of the military has accused these elites of attempting to solicit military support for a coup. In response, President Morales has offered to break the impasse by conducting a referendum of public support for his presidency and, also, for each of the nine provincial governors. The President has offered to resign if he does not receive an affirmative response from the voters; he also expects governors who do not receive support to resign