



CLASS CONFLICT AND IMPERIALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A MARXIST- LENINIST ANALYSIS OF THE 2019 BOLIVIAN COUP D'ÉTAT

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ABSTRACT

The 2019 Bolivian coup d'état: was it the military overthrow of a democratically elected President, or was it the restoration of democracy after fraudulent elections. In this analysis, I will look at the history of Bolivia, and analyse both the history and the coup based on the principles of dialectical and historical materialism, imperialism, dependence theory and rational fascism. It will show that the entire history of Bolivia has been shaped by class antagonisms and imperialist influences. Morales' presidency was the first real government in Bolivia's history that managed to reshape its economy and its international relations, which emancipated the nation's historically oppressed masses. Therefore, the 2019 coup was an expression of the imperial core's dissatisfaction with Morales' government, and an attempt to create a new dependence of Bolivia on the United States, using rational fascism as a way to discredit the popular election of Morales in the 2019 elections.

Keywords: Bolivian coup d'état, class struggle, materialism, imperialism

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1. PROBLEMATIZATION, JUSTIFICATION AND HYPOTHESIS

This text will concentrate on the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état against President Evo Morales, who was replaced by a de facto government led by Jeanine Áñez, after various organisations had claimed fraud occurred during that year's presidential election. It will specifically try to correlate the events that took place in Bolivia with a Marxist-Leninist philosophical fundament, applying various Marxist theories. Research has shown that the academic community tends to analyse the events in Bolivia through a lens of public policy and liberal democracy. Therefore, this text will offer a more complete understanding of what happened through the Marxist-Leninist lens, a theoretic framework that is often forgotten when analysing the overthrow of President Morales. Although other theoretical analyses of this theme will be looked at, this work does not seek to rebuke these analysis, but it will merely offer a different point of view of what happened and why it happened in this way, without delving into an in depth investigation.

This text's main question is *how the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état can be reasonably explained from a Marxist-Leninist point of view*. To achieve this, I will describe and analyse the historical context of Bolivia, applying historical and dialectical materialism to see how its history influenced the coup d'état. I will also look at what role imperialism played in Bolivia, using both the classical Leninist understanding of imperialism and its modern interpretations. Lastly, I will also be using the idea of rational fascism.

To conduct this work, I will first construct an theoretical framework, with both the classical theories of Marxism-Leninism, as well as more modern interpretations. I will also construct a state of the art to see what academic analysis have already been conducted into this topic. Next, I will conduct a thorough historical contextualization of the political history of Bolivia, to be able to correctly apply historical and dialectical materialism in my analysis. Next, I will conduct the actual analysis of what happened in Bolivia, answering the question that this text seeks to answer, and lastly I will present my conclusions.

A Marxist-Leninist analysis of the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état will reveal that the overthrow of President Evo Morales and the subsequent rise to power of right-wing forces can be explained as a manifestation of a historical class struggle driven by domestic capitalist elites, which have historically fostered a divided society based on racial and economic lines, transnational corporations, and imperialist interests aiming to protect their economic and political dominance in Bolivia, continuing Bolivia's dependency on the United States in its economic development, and ultimately undermining the country's democratic socialist and indigenous-oriented agenda.

This division is one that exists as a historical manifestation of class struggles, which can be explained through dialectical and historical materialism. In this sense, the dialectics in Bolivia show the incompatibility of ideas between the elite and the oppressed masses, with the materialist aspect describing the vast differences in the economic position between the two groups. The historic aspect is that Bolivia has seen many different struggles that have led to to the development of its history and the demarcation of classes.

These divisions are, in turn, used through action from the imperial core, using imperialism and rational fascism to coerce Bolivia to become economically dependent again on the economic development of the United States, by putting its national resources into service of the imperial core. Imperialism is conducted through coercion by the imperial core through international organizations, something that has happened more than once in the history of Bolivia. Lastly, rational fascism is used to discredit the popular institutions of the anti-imperialist government, to destabilize it and to bring Bolivia back into the sphere of influence of the imperial core.

2. STATE OF THE ART AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I will start with an investigation into the different analyses that have been conducted on the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état, to have a thorough understanding of how different ideological viewpoints may view this coup d'état. First, I want to use a text by Renaud Lambert, who gives us the highlights of the highly complex political situation of Bolivia during the 2019 coup d'état. Specifically, the text discusses the events leading to the resignation of President Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2019, followed by the assumption of Jeanine Áñez as interim president.

The political crisis unfolded during the release of the results of the October 2019 presidential elections. Evo Morales, the first indigenous president of Bolivia, faced allegations of electoral fraud, leading to protests and calls for his resignation. As a result, various opposition groups, including those led by figures like far-right Santa Cruz politician Luis Fernando Camacho, accused Morales of clinging to power and demanded his resignation. Protests and clashes between demonstrators and security forces erupted in the following days (Lambert, 2019).

Following the protests, the Organization of American States (OAS) raised concerns about alleged irregularities in the election results, contributing to the perception of electoral fraud. However, some criticized the OAS for not providing concrete evidence of fraud. As a result the crisis escalated when General Williams Kaliman, the head of the Armed Forces, publicly urged Morales to resign, effectively involving the military in political matters. Morales subsequently resigned and fled the country. Following Morales' resignation, Jeanine Áñez, a senator aligned with the opposition, declared herself interim president in a move widely criticized as a coup d'état. Her government faced accusations of suppressing dissent and violating democratic norms (Lambert, 2019).

The crisis revealed divisions within Bolivia's political landscape, with Morales losing support from some segments of his base. The opposition capitalized on these divisions to push for regime change. Áñez's presidency was marked by controversies, including the use of military force against protesters and political opponents. The text argues that, considering all the facts, these events constituted a coup d'état. In summary, the text highlights the complex political situation in Bolivia that led to Evo Morales' resignation amid allegations of electoral fraud, the military's involvement in political matters, and the controversial assumption of power by Jeanine Áñez. It concludes that indeed the circumstances deserve to be called a coup d'état, instead of it being a regular political crisis (Lambert, 2019).

Next, I would like to concentrate on a text by Rafael Gustavo Miranda Delgado, who argues that Evo Morales embodied authoritarianism in Bolivia, in which he tried to consolidate power through a referendum. Miranda criticizes Morales for not following the ideals of the 1953 Bolivian revolution, which was ‘Estado para todos’, in which the Bolivian State would be a representation of all Bolivians. Instead, he says that Morales resorted to radicalized identitarianism, thereby creating internal divisions within Bolivia (Miranda Delgado, 2019, pp. 70-71).

Miranda claims that the government Morales headed was a form of ‘competitive authoritarianism’, that while there was the idea of competition and democracy, that in fact Bolivia was headed by an authoritarian leader. He explains that Morales weaponized the improved economy to cement his grip on power, thereby improving the competitive authoritarianism that he was heading. For a long time, there was no need to resort to all-out authoritarianism, as Morales had great results, thereby not giving his opponents a chance to come to power (Miranda Delgado, 2019, pp. 76-77).

As the constitution of Bolivia did not allow Morales to run for president in 2019, he sought to circumvent this by organizing a referendum. The aforementioned competitive authoritarianism should make sure that Morales would win this referendum, although in the end, a slight majority rejected the idea. Lastly, the fact that Morales had won the previous presidential elections with an absolute majority is, according to Miranda, a clear example of Morales using the State to promote his image, thereby weakening the opposition (Miranda Delgado, 2019, pp. 77-78).

I would like to continue with a text from Orietta Hernández, which states that “The 2019 coup in Bolivia has been the most complete and successful experiment of the United States’ strategy in complicity with the right-wing forces in the region to regain space and rebuild hegemony” (Hernández, 2020, pág. 1). But exactly how was the 2019 coup d’état a manifestation of United States’ neo-imperialism?

According to Hernández, the coup d’état was a direct expression of the incompatibility of two contrasting ideas: the MAS-IPSP led indigenista and socialist national programme, and neoliberalism, which is represented through the Bolivian right-wing elite. After the coup, which was fostered by the USA through the OAS, and under the disguise of ‘restoring democracy’, the de facto government of Jeanine Áñez implemented widespread economic reforms, which brought Bolivia economically in line with the United States again, which can be described as reinforcing economic dependence of Bolivia on the United States.

Áñez bringing the Bolivian economy in sync again with the United States' economy is also a great example of Dos Santos' theory of economic dependence as the backbone of 21st century imperialism. The way this manifested itself was that just before and for a substantial period after the coup, Tesla's stock value went up considerably. In other words, the economic development and ecological protection of Bolivia was subordinate to the economic growth of international capital.

Jonas Wolff, in another text, also highlights the fact that even though Jeanine Áñez claimed she was just heading a caretaker government, the actions of her government were anything but those a caretaker government would make. The goal was not merely to organize new elections, but to take Bolivia back to the pre-MAS era. The unelected Áñez government undid many decisions of the previous elected Morales government, like breaking off diplomatic relations with Cuba and Venezuela and recognizing Juan Guaidó as the president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In the area of economic policy, which is most important to understand the dependence theory of Theotonio dos Santos, the steps to dismantle the state-centred development model established by the MAS government were more gradual in nature; but the composition of the government and its close ties with Bolivia's traditional economic elites leave little doubts about the direction it took. It completely dismantled the public programmes, like free education, and brought the Bolivian economy right back in line with United States' economic interests.

What's important to understand about the role of 21st century imperialism, is that the argument of 'election fraud' to cause internal commotion, which made the change of power from Morales to Áñez way less explicitly a coup. Wolff says about that:

What makes the transition from Morales to Áñez look particularly undemocratic in substantive terms is that it openly and drastically contradicts the popular will as reflected in the party affiliation of the elected president and the composition of parliament. Still, procedurally speaking, it did not imply an open breach of the constitutional order, as confirmed by the constitutional court's official endorsement of the transition from Morales to Áñez (Wolff, 2020, págs. 176-177).

Edgardo Romero-Fernández states that the coup d'état against Morales was a traditional geo-strategic play of transnational capitalism, i.e. imperialism. Romero-Fernández touches upon Morales' participation in the Sao Paulo Forum, a gathering of left-wing forces in Latin America. The text suggests that his anti-imperialist stance and international connections played a

significant role in his political career. This anti-imperialist struggle was a threat of U.S. dominance in the region, thereby threatening its hegemony in the region (Romero-Fernández, 2020, pp. 94-95).

Romero-Fernández also highlights Bolivia's Vice-President Álvaro García Linera, who was very important in shaping the direction of the Bolivian political process. It highlights García Linera's shift towards a more moderate and pragmatic approach, including alliances with the Bolivian bourgeoisie. This is the main criticism of the Bolivian project, and ultimately was its main weak point. Therefore, Romero-Fernández advocates stronger regional left-wing alliances against imperialism, for a more defined anti-imperialist, leftist ideological foundation and for a continuous ideological struggle within social movements (Romero-Fernández, 2020, pp. 98-101).

A more liberal point of view is held by Nicolás Russo, who states that this was in actuality not a coup d'état. He states that Morales' claims of the 2019 coup d'état being funded by neoliberal forces are irrational, because Morales himself used constitutional trickery to stay in power up until 2019. Besides that, he doubts that the fact that the military urged Morales to step down constitute a coup d'état, as Morales had sought to stay 'perpetually in power', therefore using the 2019 elections as some sort of auto-coup to continue his government. In this sentiment, using the philosophy of famous liberal thinker John Locke, who states that it is legitimate right of every citizen to fight against a tyrannical government, this was not a coup d'état, but mere a contra-coup, ousting a dictator from staying indefinitely in power (Russo, 2019, pp. 6-10).

Russo further states that the election results of the 2019 were clearly falsified, citing the audit performed by the Organization of American States to justify this observation. Therefore, as stated before, he classifies Evo Morales as a tyrant, and his government as a dictatorship, committing an auto-coup to stay indefinitely in power. He further uses a text of Luis Fleischman, comparing the Bolivian situation with the Venezuelan situation. It is stated that Morales and Maduro are both tyrants, but that the main difference between the two countries is that in Bolivia, democracy was defended by the Armed Forces, while in Venezuela, the Armed Forces chose to side with the dictatorship (Russo, 2019, pp. 10-11).

The last text that I will use for this state of the art is from Maribel Aponte-García, who sees the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état mostly as a dispute between economic superpowers and their control over Bolivia's natural resources, taking a more neorealist point of view. It states that there are

three lithium producing nations in South America: Chile, Argentina and Bolivia, with only Bolivia considering to nationalize its lithium reserves (Aponte-García, 2020, p. 55).

She notes that there the Bolivian government indeed had nationalized its Lithium reserves under the company *Yacimientos de Litio Boliviano* (YLB). At the same time, China, United States and Canada all wanted to have access to Bolivia's lithium reserved, with Bolivia favouring China, signing various treaties of economic co-operation through China's State-owned company BYD. At the same time, Tesla and Pure Energy Minerals wanted to tap in on Bolivia's Lithium, failing to reach an agreement with the Morales government (Aponte-García, 2020, pp. 55-56).

In the end, Aponte-García notes that the interest of various superpowers lead to the coup d'état in Bolivia, with the United States having a keen interest in overthrowing the Morales government to be able to access Bolivia's vast lithium resources, resorting a new plan condor - a United States military plan to eliminate left-wing activists from Latin-America - and a new Monroe doctrine – the United States opposing non-American interventionism in the American continent – so that the United States can secure it control over Bolivia's natural resources (Aponte-García, 2020, p. 57).

Now, I will continue by establishing a theoretical framework for the theme of my thesis: a Marxist-Leninist analysis of the coup d'état of Bolivia in 2019. For writing a monograph, I will need to have a solid philosophical and ideological foundation, and I will conduct write a state of the art in which I will explore the ideological different analysis conducted of this coup d'état. Before commencing this review, I will explain the different sections. I will start with conducting a theoretical framework, in which I will have the fundamental ideological basis to conduct my analysis. Then, I will write a state of the art, in which I will explore other analyses conducted on this topic.

It is of importance to get a historical definition of imperialism according to the Marxist-Leninist tradition, but we also need to get a good look of how this imperialism has developed in the 21st century, which is the timeframe that we will analyse this philosophy in. Also, we need to understand how Leninism has adapted in Latin America, which has decidedly different material conditions compared with Europe in the early 20th century, which was the period in which Lenin lived.

To understand Marxism-Leninism, we need to first take a step back and analyse the foundations of Marxism. To accomplish this, we will take a look to some fundamental Marxist-Leninist

works written by Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. In that way, we can use this Marxist-Leninist foundations and start analysing the coup d'état of Bolivia.

The most important tenant of Marxism is materialism, which is in direct opposition to metaphysics, and it contains four important aspects. The first one is that nature is connected and determined, meaning that nature and its history are connected as a whole. Things never happen just because. Second, nature is a state of continuous motion and change, meaning that every little thing that exists is the result of historical changes. Third, quantitative change leads to qualitative change. This means that the process of development is not simply a circular one, but one of upwards motion. Lastly, contradiction is inherent in nature. This means that there is always a form of antagonism, which with human being, is expressed through class struggle (Stalin J. V., 1938, pp. 5-7).

To give a more complete idea of what dialectical and historical materialism exactly are, they can be explained in the following way: dialectical materialism is a form of dialectically observing and studying the world. Dialectics in the Marxist sense is that reality is a constant struggle of incompatible ideas, which generates conflicts. The materialist aspect is that the material world is the basis of all ideas and phenomena, which is, as stated, in contrast to the metaphysical concept of philosophy. Furthermore, the thesis-antithesis synthesis explains how conflicts and irreconcilability are the driving force of social change in history (Stalin J. V., 1938, pp. 5-8).

Applying the dialectical philosophy on history, historical materialism explains the development of society on the basis of the material and economic circumstances in a given historical context. It states that the modes of production are the thriving force of historical change, that there is always a class struggle, in which one class dominates the other class by owning the means of production, and that history will always develop itself in different phases (Stalin J. V., 1938, pp. 16-24).

This materialist outlook on the world forms the philosophical basis of the Marxist-Leninist analysis. Now, we need to understand what the Leninist application of Marxism is. Lenin saw the work of Marx incomplete, and had a major criticism of the idea of 'spontaneity' in the workers revolution. Lenin argued that a spontaneous revolution is utopian, therefore having the need of a vanguard party – a communist party that will lead the workers revolution (Stalin J. V., 2020, pp. 20-21).

Also, given that Lenin wrote his theories during a stage of developed imperialism, the analysis of imperialism became central to the philosophical core of Marxism-Leninism. To start, it is important to give an approximate definition of the term imperialism. According to Lenin, in his book ‘Imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism’, imperialism is capitalism that has reached a stage of development in which monopolies and finance capital reign, capital exports have taken on enormous significance, the division of the world between the international trusts has begun, and the territorial division of the earth between the largest capitalist countries has been completed.

Stalin said about the Leninist analysis of imperialism:

Lenin called imperialism “moribund capitalism.” Why? Because imperialism carries the contradictions of capitalism to their last bounds, to the extreme limit, beyond which revolution begins. Of these contradictions, there are three which must be regarded as the most important (Stalin J. V., 2020, p. 5).

The first contradiction is the contradiction between labour and capital, which Stalin describes as: ‘Either place yourself at the mercy of capital, eke out a wretched existence as of old and sink lower and lower, or adopt a new weapon—this is the alternative imperialism puts before the vast masses of the proletariat. Imperialism brings the working class to revolution’ (Stalin J. V., 2020, p. 5).

The second contradiction is the contradiction amongst the various financial groups and imperialist powers in their struggle for sources of raw materials and foreign territory. Imperialism is the export of capital to the sources of raw materials, the frenzied struggle for monopolist possession of these sources, the struggle for a re-division of the already divided world, a struggle waged with particular fury by new financial groups and Powers seeking a “place in the sun” against the old groups and Powers, which cling tenaciously to what they have seized. This frenzied struggle among the various groups of capitalists is notable in that it includes as an inevitable element imperialist wars, wars for the annexation of foreign territories (Stalin J. V., 2020, pp. 5-6).

The last contradiction is the one between developed nations and developing nations. Imperialism is the most barefaced exploitation and the most inhuman oppression of hundreds of millions of people inhabiting vast colonies and dependent countries. The purpose of this exploitation and of this oppression is to squeeze out super profits (Stalin J. V., 2020, p. 6).

With this basis analysis of imperialism, we can also read that Lenin (1963) argued that imperialist expansion allowed capitalism to postpone its inevitable crisis. This means that the capitalist superpowers - Western Europe and the United States - need to exert control over developing countries (also known as the global south) in order to have easy access to cheap natural resources, cheap labour and a market to sell their products. This is necessary because capitalism is based upon the idea of limitless economic growth, but because the amount of labour and natural resources is limited, it will inevitably lead to an economic crisis. In order to postpone this inevitable economic crash, imperialism is a necessary tool.

One of Lenin's core tenants of imperialism in the late stage capitalist economy is the export of capital by monopolies. The incredible surplus of wealth, which is created in capitalist superpowers, does not get invested in other countries. Instead, this surplus capital is just being exported to developing countries, because "...in these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap" (Lenin, 1963, p. 45). This export of capital greatly accelerates the development of capitalism in the developing countries, which might indicate the formation of a dependence, which is a theme I will come back to in just a bit.

Something that is also noted by Lenin is the 'colonial policy in the epoch of capitalism imperialism', which noted that the finance capital uses foreign policies to further the strengthening of capitalism in the world. This creates a split between the countries of the world, which are described by Lenin as 'those who own colonies' and the colonies themselves. However, in the period in which Lenin wrote this book, decolonization was already underway to some extent, especially in Latin America. These countries are 'dependent', or 'semi-colonies'. They may be nominally dependent, but fall in the category of 'colonies' (Lenin, 1963, p. 64).

What is most important to understand about imperialism, is that it exists in a stage of capitalism where free-market competition has already been replaced by monopolies. However, competition is not eliminated by the monopolies, but said competition exist above or alongside these monopolies. Therefore, Lenin summarizes the definition of imperialism in the following way:

Such a definition would include what is most important, for, on the one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few very big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist associations of industrialists; and, on the other hand, the division of

the world is the transition from a colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unseized by any capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolist possession of the territory of the world, which has been completely divided up (Lenin, 1963, p. 66).

Lastly, Lenin explains the importance of understanding what monopolies and imperialism will eventually lead to: parasitism and rentier states. The reason for this is that monopolies eventually lead to economic stagnation and inflation – which means that imperialist nations, and above all, bourgeois individuals, need to accumulate more and more surplus to prevent their countries from falling into economic turmoil.

...imperialism has grown from an embryo into the predominant system; capitalist monopolies occupy first place in economics and politics; the division of the world has been completed; on the other hand, instead of the undivided monopoly of Great Britain, we see a few imperialist powers contending for the right to share in this monopoly, and this struggle is characteristic of the whole period of the early twentieth century. Opportunism cannot now be completely triumphant in the working-class movement of one country for decades as it was in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century; but in a number of countries it has grown ripe, overripe, and rotten, and has become completely merged with bourgeois policy in the form of “social-chauvinism” (Lenin, 1963, p. 81).

This Leninist analysis of imperialism still holds up to this day, even though the methods used to conduct imperialism may have changed. This is a theme that Theotonio dos Santos touches upon in his book ‘Imperialism and Dependence’. Imperialism in the twentieth century was conducted through direct intervention. A good example would be Chile in the seventies, where the CIA created the internal situation for the 1973 coup d’état against president Salvador Allende. Afterwards they gave direct military support to the dictatorship through operation Condor.

Theotonio dos Santos elaborates on how imperialism is conducted in the 21st, which is not through direct intervention, but through creating ‘dependence’. By dependence we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of interdependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-

sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on their immediate development (dos Santos, 2011).

If the dependent economies can obtain a high degree of productive autonomy and develop an important sector, foreign capital would lose its ability to determine the character of its development, it would become a purely artificial expression that would later be destroyed, making the dependency relationship disappear. For this reason, and by the very logic of its immediate interests, international capital seeks to guide the economic development of dependent countries towards sectors focused on the international market or towards high-income groups that consume more sophisticated products.

Theotonio dos Santos' thesis therefore says that within the capitalist world system of the 21st century, dependence is created between dominant countries and dependent countries to sustain the capitalist economic system and, according to Lenin's analysis, postpone the inevitable economic crisis that is always on the horizon. Later in this text, I will use this theory on the specific country of my thesis, Bolivia.

Dependence theory came to be as a reaction to modernization theory, an earlier theory of development which held that all societies progress through similar stages of development, that today's underdeveloped areas are thus in a similar situation to that of today's developed areas at some time in the past, and that, therefore, the task of helping the underdeveloped areas out of poverty is to accelerate them along this supposed common path of development, by various means such as investment, technology transfers, and closer integration into the world market. Dependency theory rejects this view, saying that underdeveloped countries are not just primitive versions of developed countries, but have unique features and structures of their own; and, importantly, are in the situation of being the weaker members in a world market economy.

Another modern principle of how to analyse imperialism is the idea of 'rational fascism', a term coined by professor Michael Parenti of Yale University. According to Parenti, modern scholars describe fascism as an 'irrational ideology', but this is far from true. Fascism is a rational ideology, based on a patriarchal, violent and conservative society. And even though fascism was supposed to be overcome by the end of the second world war, we see that neofascist groups keep on operating in the west of Europe without much resistance from their governments. Parenti gives us an example of the modern use of rational fascism in Italy:

In Italy, from 1969 to 1974, high-ranking elements in Italian military intelligence and civilian intelligence agencies; members of P2, a secret lodge of upper-class reactionaries, pro-fascist Vatican officials, and top military brass; and GLADIO, a NATO-inspired anticommunist mercenary force, embarked upon a concerted campaign of terror and sabotage known as the "strategy of tension. Other participants included a secret neofascist group called the Ordine Nuovo, NATO officials, members of the carabinieri, mafia bosses, thirty generals, eight admirals, and influential Freemasons like Licio Gelli (a fascist war criminal recruited by U.S. intelligence in 1944). The terrorism was aided and abetted by the "international security apparatus" including the CIA. In 1995, the CIA refused to cooperate with an Italian parliamentary commission investigating the strategy of tension (*Corriere della Sera*, 4/12/95, 5/29/95). The terrorist conspirators carried out a series of kidnappings, assassinations, and bombing massacres (i stragi), including the explosion that killed eighty-five people and injured some two hundred, many seriously, in the Bologna train station in August 1980. As subsequent judicial investigations concluded, the strategy of tension was not a simple product of neofascism but the consequence of a larger campaign conducted by state security forces against the growing popularity of the democratic parliamentary Left. The objective was to "combat by any means necessary the electoral gains of the Italian Communist party" and create enough fear and terror in the population so as to undermine the multiparty social democracy and replace it with an authoritarian "presidential republic," or in any case "a stronger and more stable executive." (*La Repubblica*, 4/9/95; *Corriere della Sera*, 3/27/95, 3/28/95, 5/29/95) (Parenti, 1997, pp. 20-21).

Parenti tells us about the countless victims of imperialism aggression, carried out by the United States in the name of defending freedom. This counterrevolutionary, imperialist and interventionist policy is based on four assumptions that the United States has. The first is that they believe to have the right to the limits of socio-economic development within other nations. Second is that the United States must carry out counterrevolutionary activities to defend its own interests. Third is that the United States has the moral obligation and authority to defend democracy in any country. And fourth is that it believes that fundamental changes should be achieved through an established course of action, dictated by the United States (Parenti, 1997, pp. 27-28).

This leads to third-world revolutionaries being branded as 'forces of instability'. However, what instability do they exactly cause? And to whom? Parenti explains it in the following way:

"Stability" is a code word for a society in which privileged social relations are securely entrenched. When popular forces mobilize against privilege and wealth, this causes "instability," which is judged to be undesirable by U.S. policymakers and their faithful flacks in the U.S. corporate media. Here we have a deceptive state of affairs. What poses as a U.S. commitment to peaceful nonviolent change is really a commitment to the violent defense of an unjust, undemocratic, global capitalism. The U.S. national security state uses coercion and violence not in support of social reform but against it, all in the name of "stability," "counterterrorism," "democracy,"—and of late and more honestly, "the free market." (Parenti, 1997, p. 31).

In comprehending capitalism, it is essential to peel back the facades propagated by its ideology. Unlike many bourgeois thinkers, Marx recognized the disparity between capitalism's professed identity and its actual nature. What sets capitalism apart is its methodical appropriation of labour solely for the aim of amassing wealth. Capital takes control of active labour to enhance its own accumulation. The ultimate objective of labour is not merely to provide services to consumers or support life and society, but to generate increasing profits for investors, regardless of the associated human and ecological tolls (Parenti, 1997, p. 132).

The philosophical base of imperialism according to Marxist-Leninist philosophy has not changed over the years, however how Leninism is interpreted and how imperialism manifests itself has changed. What's most important to understand is that imperialism will always be the highest stage of capitalism, made to postpone the inevitable economic crises that are inherent to the capitalist economic structures, and that imperialism in the 21st century is mostly conducted through the creation of dependence between dominant nations and dominated nations.

3. HISTORICAL POLITICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION BOLIVIA

See Annex 1 for a visual timeline of the historical political contextualization of Bolivia.

I will continue with the contextualization of the Bolivian case, taking as starting point the wars of independence. Bolivia technically had three independences in a short time: from the colonial Spanish government under the viceroy of upper Peru, from the colonial government of Portugal as a part of the Mato Grosso province under the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves, and from the Peru-Bolivia Confederation, of which Bolivia was a constituent country. Bolivia achieved its final independence in 1839 when Peruvian President Agustín Gamarra declared the dissolution of the Confederation, splitting Peru and Bolivia into two countries (Carter Kendall, 1936, p. 36).

3.1 Caudillo governments

Bolivia's caudillos, who formed many years of government after the 1839 independence, were in large lines similar to other caudillos in the region – strong, military, but also corrupt, leaders who sought the centralization of power. About the effects of *caudillismo* is much debate: some claim it brought stability by overcoming regionalism through centralization, others claim it led to destabilization because of their brutal way of governing their countries (Castro, 2007, pp. 11-13).

The first government after the 1839 independence was formed by General José Miguel de Velasco, after a long feud with General José Ballivián. However, struggle continued, and Ballivián eventually overthrew Velasco, who on his turn was overthrown by General Manuel Isidoro Belzú. What was interesting about this last coup, is that Belzú was the first leader who came from a majority indigenous, urbanized family – the so called *cholos*. This was seen as a threat by the aristocratic elite of Bolivia, while the humble lower classes saw Belzú as a source of hope (Morales, 2010, pp. 57-59).

It is important to describe how Bolivian society was (and to some extent, still is) divided along social and geographical lines. The east of Bolivia, which comprises of the departments of Pando, Beni, Santa Cruz and Tarija, is mostly plain and has high temperatures. In these regions live the Bolivian elite, who are mostly of Spanish descent. The west, which comprises of the departments of La Paz, Cochabamba, Oruro, Chuquisaca and Potosí, is mostly mountainous. In these regions, the people are mostly of lower social classes and of indigenous descent (Quechuas, Aymara and Guaraní) (Morales, 2010, pp. XLIII-XLV). The peoples of the west

have historically been excluded from politics and economics, thereby creating something resembling an Apartheid State (Pinilla Perdomo, 2020, pp. 1-2).

Belzú proved to be an incredibly popular leader, especially with the poor. He implemented various protectionist measures to promote the production and consumption of Bolivian goods. When the British ambassador to Bolivia protested about it, he had him expelled from the country. And even though Belzú was undeniably a dictator, committing excesses and governing as an autocrat, he did organize presidential elections after holding power for seven years. He was succeeded by José Córdova, his son-in-law (Morales, 2010, p. 62).

The Córdova proved to be incredibly unstable, and within two years, he had been overthrown in another coup d'état. He was replaced by José María Linares. Although Linares came to power through a military coup, he himself was not an army general, but rather a renowned legislator. This made him the first civilian leader of Bolivia, breaking the *caudillo* tradition of Bolivian presidents. He moved away from protectionist policies, opening up the Bolivian market in order to attract foreign investors. Over the years, however, Linares grew more and more authoritarian, which led to resistance and revolts. During the revolts of 1860, he murdered various indigenous activists in Copacabana, on the shores of Lake Titicaca. In 1861, Linares' minister of war, José María de Achá, seized power in a military coup (Morales, 2010, pp. 63-64).

De Achá was just as brutal as a dictator as his predecessor, so not much changed in regards to domestic policy. However, on international level, tensions were starting to rise with Chile over the Litoral department, a Bolivian department granting it access to the Pacific Ocean. This had mostly to do with the large deposits of Guano in the region, which is a highly valuable resource used in agriculture. The Bolivian army had less than two thousand active troops, leaving the Litoral Department highly vulnerable to a Chilean invasion at some point in the future (Morales, 2010, p. 64).

In 1864, De Achá was deposed in a military coup by General Mariano Melgarejo. Seeing that previous dictators were overthrown by different political factions supporting different previous dictators, he sought to cement his grip on power by executing the popular former president Manuel Isidoro Belzú in 1865 (Scheina, 2003, pp. 773-774). Melgarejo was a vicious dictator, keeping his grip on the population through extreme violence. He also ravaged the economy by debasing the Bolivian peso in favour of his own currency, the *melgarejo*. On the international front, Melgarejo relinquished any claim to the Guano in the Litoral Department, gifting it to Chile. He also signed the 1866 Mejillones treaty, basically conceding authority over the

Bolivian coastal cities to Chile, rendering the territory as property to Chile in all but name. This was all done for personal enrichment, as Melgarejo earned large fortunes with those treaties (Morales, 2010, p. 65).

On economic policies, Melgarejo tried to appease to the extreme capitalists, selling off natural resources to the highest bidder, many of those being connected in some way to Chile. This all was mostly hurtful to the majority indigenous population of Bolivia, who were forced off communal land they had held for many years. Indigenous people were forced to rebuy the land from the government, and if they couldn't, they had to lease the land. Because many indigenous did not have the financial capabilities to either buy or many, many decided to squat. This triggered a violent reaction from the government, which in turn led to violent resistance from indigenous militias. As a result, the government killed thousands of indigenous activists who refused to leave the confiscated land (De Elizalde, 1882, pp. 52-53).

After six years in power, and many bloody revolts, Mariano Melgarejo was overthrown by Colonel Agustín Morales. Although Morales was just as authoritarian as Melgarejo, he did try to bring the State into some form of order again. Melgarejo's incredibly unpopular land reform was annulled, the national debt was brought down and a campaign against corruption was started. In spite of this, though, scandalous international treaties were signed, the worst of them being with United States financier George Crunch to steamship company in the east of Bolivia, in order to pry the nation's rivers. The presidency of Morales would only last for one year, though. In 1872, Morales tried to shut down congress, who tried to destitute him. In a fit of rage, Morales was killed by his nephew, Federico La Faye. After Tomás Frías was originally named interim president, Adolfo Bavillán became president in 1873 (Morales, 2010, pp. 69-70).

Bavillán marked a return to the civilian government, headed by public administrators instead of soldiers. He tried to renegotiate international treaties, thus saving Bolivia from imminent bankruptcy. However, Bavillán was incurable sick, and he died just a year later, being replaced by the earlier interim president Tomás Frías. Frías' most important action was the signing of the 1874 Boundary Treaty between Bolivia and Chile. This treaty was mostly beneficial for Chile, as it established a 'Mutual Benefits Zone between the 23rd and the 25th parallel, which included the important coastal cities of Mejillones and Antofagasta. In this Zone, Chilean businesses and citizens would be exempt from new Bolivian taxes for at least 25 years, something that was fiercely opposed by the Bolivian elite (Quejerazu Calvo, 1979, p. 211). In

1876, with uncertain elections on the horizon, General Hilarión Daza took power in a coup d'état (Morales, 2010, p. 70).

What mostly defined the presidency of Daza, however, is his implementation of new taxes in the Litoral Department in 1878, something explicitly forbidden by the 1874 Bonder Treaty. Daza had little choice, however, as the Bolivian economy was as much a basket case as it has ever been, thanks to the looting of Bolivia's natural resources by Chilean, British and American multinationals. This next tax led to the War of the Pacific, in which Chile occupied the Litoral Department. Just after the military occupation, general Daza was overthrown in a military coup (Morales, 2010, pp. 70-71).

3.2 From caudillo's to republicanism

This war, although lost humiliatingly by a powerless Bolivian military, did mark a profound change in the country's political rule: the caudillo era had finished and the liberal, civilian rules had begun. A new oligarchy, mostly silver- and tin-mining monopolists, preferred controlled economic growth and political stability. In 1897, after the overthrow of Hilarión Daza, and General Narciso Campero was elected by the National Congress as president of Republic. He did continue the war until 1884, but Bolivia was no match for Chile, and in 1884, the Truce of Valparaíso was signed, in which Bolivia gave control, but not sovereignty, of the Litoral Department to Chile (Morales, 2010, pp. 82-83).

The war of the Pacific gave rise to a two-party republican system, as we have seen in so many Latin American countries. These parties were called the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. The Liberals wanted to continue the war at all cost, to protect Bolivia's international image and territorial sovereignty. The Conservatives wanted to settle for peace, taking into account Bolivia's economic interests – especially that of the elite and the big companies. Given the fact that many big companies had ties to Chile, the Conservative Party were seen as pro-Chilean (Morales, 2010, p. 84).

Outside of their stances on the War of the Pacific, there was a clear ideological difference between the two parties. Both wanted to see Bolivia prosper in a mostly stable and democratic way of governance, however, while the Conservatives wanted to protect the position of the Catholic Church as the nation's State religion, the Liberals pursued the idea of secularism and republicanism – inspired by both the American and the French revolutions. What has to be noted, though, is that these perceived ideological differences were more used as a smoke screen to fight out battles for power, which were often violent and bloody (Morales, 2010, p. 85).

The elections of 1884 would, however, bring to power a third party: the Democratic Party. This party was merely an electoral vehicle of Gregorio Pacheco, a silver magnate sympathetic to the Conservative Party. However, as the Liberals still held a plurality of seats in congress, Pacheco had to work together with them. As part of the support, second placed Aniceto Arce was promised the presidency four years later with Pacheco agreeing to become his vice-president, something that was honoured. Pacheco and Arce turned out to be quite effective presidents, bringing electrification to the entire country and greatly modernizing Bolivia (Lora, 2009, p. 188).

Presidents Arce and Pacheco, both of the Conservative Party, used the aforementioned ideological smokescreen to solidify the party's grip on power. This was mostly done by Arce after he won the 1888 elections in a landslide, triggering massive protests from the Liberals. Arce responded with violence, cracking down harshly on the liberal uprising. Between 1884 and 1898, all presidencies were held by the Conservative Party. Several more liberal uprisings, most of them lead by General Eliodoro Camacho, were crushed, and Camacho was eventually exiled from the country. While this period was marked by political instability, the conservatives did manage to further develop de railroad infrastructure in the country (Morales, 2010, pp. 85-86).

3.3 Civil war

In 1898, however, a civil war broke out. This civil war was the culmination of the demarcation of the Conservative and the Liberal Parties. The Conservative Party had positioned itself of the economic elite, of mostly white Bolivians of European descent and situation in the east of the country. The Liberal Party was a more socially progressive party, representing the mostly indigenous populations in La Paz. The reason for the outbreak of this civil war was the approval of the *ley radicatoria*. The Conservative majority wanted to capital to be situated in Sucre, which was a conservative stronghold. The liberal representatives suggested Cochabamba, as it was a more neutral city (Medinaceli, 2002, p. 57).

Given the fact that the Conservatives held a congressional majority, many of La Paz' liberal supported took to the street even before the vote had taken place. The liberals demanded Bolivia be turned into a federation of equal departments, with regional autonomy and with La Paz as the nation's capital. The Liberal coronel José Manuel Pando even headed a commission to investigate the possibility of having a federation. However, three days after protests broke out,

congress voted to make Sucre the country's capital, which ought to stay a highly centralized State (Morales, 2010, pp. 88-89).

After this vote, a Federal Junta by Liberals was formed to overthrow the government of conservative president Severo Fernández. This Junta was led by José Manuel Pando in the altiplano region, and Pablo Zárate Wilka in the La Paz region. By the end of 1898, the Liberal Federal Junta had amassed over 2000 weapons, making a rebellion feasible. In response, the conservative government lead informal squadron into the city of Oruro, to quell any uprising that might happen (Mendieta Parada, 2007, pp. 136-138).

The conservative squadrons moved into the city of Cosmini in January of 1899, where they were met with fierce liberal resistance. The squadrons had to retreat to the city of Ayo Ayo, where they were massacred by Liberal rebels. In other areas with a majority indigenous populations, like Oruro, La Paz, Cochabamba and Potosí, liberal resistance was strong. This all culminated in the battle of Segundo Crucero de Paria, in April of 1899, where General Pando and President Fernández led their battalions. This ended in a liberal victory, with General Pando being elected President by the National Convention, and Fernández being exiled to Chile and ending the Conservative hegemony in Bolivia (Mendieta Parada, 2007, pp. 191-194).

After the civil war, La Paz was designated as the *de facto* capital of Bolivia, while Sucre remained the *de jure* capital. Other than this symbolic gesture however, there were no massive societal changed. The white and criollo elite, even those who supported the Liberals, had no intention to redistribute their land to the mestizo and indigenous population, therefore continuing the stratification of Bolivian society. General Pablo Zárate was promoted in the Bolivian army, but was eventually executed without due process in 1902 because the elites feared an indigenous revolution led by Zárate (Mesa, Bolivia en la hora de su modernización., 1993, p. 117).

3.4 New Liberal hegemony

After the presidency of Pando, a liberal hegemony was established until 1920, which Ismael Montes being its most prolific statesman, leading Bolivia between 1904 and 1909 and between 1913 and 1917. What was noteworthy is that at the time, only about 2% of the Bolivian population voted. Being able to speak Spanish was a constitutional requirement to have the right to vote, which only about 25% of the population could. Therefore, Bolivian democracy could hardly be called a democracy (Morales, 2010, p. 91).

The Liberal hegemony was marked by an exponential rise in tin prices, something that Bolivia produced a lot of in that period. This increase in tin prices did not lead to an improvement of the Bolivian economy, however, as most business owners were foreign companies. As the cash-strapped Bolivian government did not want to lose a potential new source of income, it did not increase taxes on those companies. This economic situation also demonstrated once again the incredible division in Bolivian society. While many Bolivians, mostly of indigenous origins, were slaving away in the tin mines, the business owners and Bolivian elites were enriching themselves with their newfound wealth. These 'tin barons' actually put a strain on the Bolivian economy, by demanding expensive luxury items to be imported by the Bolivian government, instead of the government investing in necessities. Therefore, during this period, the Bolivian economy grew even more fragile than it already was (Morales, 2010, pp. 94-95).

In 1914, the Liberal party had an internal split, with many Liberal politicians, including former president General Pando, leaving the party and founding the Republican Party. In 1920, the Republic Revolution deposed the last Liberal President, José Gutiérrez, and installed a National Junta. The Republicans claimed that their goal was to ensure free and fair elections, which was successful, as it ended the Conservative-Liberal duopoly that had governed Bolivia for many years, and the Republic Party immediately split into two parties (Morales, 2010, p. 96).

3.5 Republican era

The new main political parties were the *Genuine Republicans*, led by Daniel Salamanca, and the *Socialist Republicans*, led by Bautista Saavedra. Saavedra was a populist, often holding contrarian ideas and trying to gain support of the masses, while Salamanca was more of a continuation of the previous elitist governments. In December 1920 congressional elections saw the Socialist Republicans win a majority of seats. As congress would decide who the new president would be, they voted for Bautista Saavedra, making him the first Republic president of Bolivia (Morales, 2010, pp. 96-97).

Saavedra turned out to be quite a repressive and authoritarian president. While he did raise taxes on the tin companies and pushed through certain labour reforms, he also brutally repressed a miner's strike and an indigenous uprising during his presidency. He also governed Bolivia during an economically different and tumultuous period, in which tin prices were fluctuating, which had a very negative impact on a still struggling Bolivian economy. Saavedra's authoritarian style of governance meant a brief return to the caudillo style of government that had dominated the country in the previous century (Morales, 2010, p. 97).

In 1925, Saavedra was unable to run for president again, and the Socialist Republicans nominated Hernando Siles Reyes as the party's candidate, against the will of Saavedra, who saw Siles Reyes as a threat to the *Saavedrist* hegemony of the Socialist Republican Party. He therefore forced Siles Reyes into a pact: Siles would accept Saavedra's brother, Abdón Saavedra, as his running mate, and Siles Reyes promised to strictly implement the Socialist Republican agenda and consult with Saavedra before taking important decisions. Once in power, Siles Reyes broke with Saavedra, exiling him and his brother and forming his own political party: the Nationalist Party (Morales, 2010, p. 98).

Siles Reyes was, especially compared to previous Bolivian presidents, a moderate and, to some extent, a progressive. He implemented various progressive educational reforms, and was cautious in international relations. He did preside over the precarious Bolivian economy, which was on the verge of bankruptcy after the 1929 economic crisis. The only way to secure the existence of Bolivia was to accept international loans against exorbitant interest rates, which led to almost daily protests, mostly from students who were inspired by the Marxist ideas of the Russian revolution. After a planned constitutional amendment that would allow him to extend his time in office, large scale protests broke out, and he was forced to resign as president in May of 1930 (Morales, 2010, pp. 98-99).

After a brief military government, headed by Carlos Blanco, governed Bolivia, Daniel Salamanca was elected president in the 1931 presidential elections as the only candidate on the ballot. Salamanca was seen as an expansionist, and saw solutions for the troubled Bolivian economy by increasing tensions in the Chaco Region, an inhospitable, barren and inaccessible region in the northwest of Paraguay. For decades, Bolivian entrepreneurs crossed the border into Paraguay to settle in the Chaco region, and with the Paraguayan authorities unable to do something about it, tensions rose. During Siles Reyes' presidency, Paraguayans made some small scale attacks in the Chaco region, which went largely unanswered by the Bolivian government. Salamanca saw in these tensions a solution to Bolivia's woes: international prestige, more territory and an improved economy through the war effort. A minor border incident between Bolivia and Paraguay, in which Fortín Boquerón was recaptured by the Paraguayan military, meant that Salamanca officially declared war on Paraguay, therefore beginning the Chaco War (Hughes, 2005, p. 413).

3.6 Chaco war

In December of 1932, Bolivian war preparations had concluded, and General Hans Kundt was asked to lead the Bolivian counterinsurgency. The plan was to take Fortín Nanawa and Isla Poí, in order to reach the Paraguayan city of Concepción, on the edge of the Chaco. However, when in January of 1933, the Bolivian army attacked Fortín Nanawa, they were met by a well prepared Paraguayan defence. The attack was a total failure, as the Bolivian army was not able to capture the Fort, as the Bolivian army was totally unprepared for a large scale war (Hughes, 2005, p. 415).

Kundt then ordered the invasion of Fortín Boquerón, the fort that was the *casus belli* for this war. What Kundt did not take into account is that Paraguay was fighting to survival, and had mobilized almost 19.000 men to defend the nation. The attack on Fortín Boquerón was ill-prepared, chaotic and led to a humiliating defeat for the Bolivian army. When news arrived to Bolivia of their defeat, people took the streets, demanding the resignation of both General Kundt and President Salamanca. In a last ditch effort to save his reputation, Kundt ordered an attack of Fortín Arce, which also failed, after which he was recalled by President Salamanca. By the time he was substituted as leading General in the Chaco war, 14.000 Bolivian soldier had already died and another 32.000 were seriously wounded (Morales, 2010, pp. 107-108).

General Kundt was replaced by General Enrique Peñaranda, but Bolivia's success in their war effort did not improve. Thousands of soldiers died, with Bolivia suffering loss after loss. This eventually led to soft coup, in which President Salamanca was replaced by his Vice-President: José Luis Tejada. Tejada immediately ordered a full scale mobilization to try to improve the war effort, but natural disasters and poor war tactics meant more defeats for the Bolivian army (Morales, 2010, p. 109).

The most important battle during the Chaco war was the battle of Ibibobo, deep in Bolivian territory, close to the oil-rich fields of the Santa Cruz department. This battle was by far the hardest one for the Paraguayan military, as they were far away from Paraguayan territory, which meant long supply routes. Even under these disadvantages, Paraguay managed to win the battle, which was a hard blow to the Bolivian spirit and war effort. The Bolivian army was desperate to recapture their oil field, and they were able to push back the exhausted Paraguayan military. In 1935, with both parties tired and with no clear winner in sight, Bolivia and Paraguay signed a cease-fire, with a peace treaty signed in 1938. The Chaco War was officially over, with Bolivia being seen as the loser (Morales, 2010, pp. 109-110).

The Chaco War had been a humiliation for the Bolivian military leaders, and the societal impact was grave. The economic burden of the war was mostly placed on the indigenous Bolivian, who were *en masse* rounded up to go to war against Paraguay. 60.000 Bolivian had died during the war. This war also meant a turning point for the political history of Bolivia, which entered a period of radicalism, organized labour and societal movements, which sought to change the system for good. As Herbert S. Klein had put it: “The system had failed in a crucial hour, and that failure had compromised it forever” (Morales, 2010, p. 110).

3.7 Postwar radicalism

The postwar radicalism was formed by two military generals who were heroes of the Chaco war: David Toro and Germán Busch. They had ideals of some sort of military socialism, which was characterized by vague populist, socialist and militaristic ideas, without ever really specifying what these ideas entail. The end result was clear, though: a more equal and just society, free from the chains of imperialist oppressors. At the end of Tejada’s presidency, a merger of two smaller parties – the Republican Socialists and the New Socialists – joined the military junta, with David Toro named president of Bolivia. He pledged to introduce state socialist ideals, to regain economic sovereignty and to improve the living conditions of poor Bolivians (Morales, 2010, p. 111).

While at first, the postwar situation was marked by calm, this would soon change. Toro’s revolutionary rhetoric did not resonate with the more conservative party that were part of the government junta. Confusingly, the Socialist Party – an offshoot of the Nationalist Party and only socialist in name – was the organisation that proved most difficult to govern with. Toro tried many things to implement his ideas. First, he created so called ‘functional syndicates’ to organize workers and he moderated his tone about ‘radical transformations’, this all to undermined the communist elements of the government junta. This proved to be very unpopular with the student movements, who threatened to commit a coup if he did not deliver on his promises. In response, Toro expropriated the American Standard Oil Company, the first such expropriation ever in Latin American, something truly revolutionary, and approved of by almost everyone in Bolivia (Morales, 2010, pp. 112-113).

Toro continued to govern with a military style of socialism, using rudimentary war-time executive decrees to implement the reforms he wanted. Although he was a staunch critic of the free market, he also did not trust the Marxists. Therefore, he did not make any side of the government junta happy. While the centrists and the right-wing parties claimed Toro was too

radical, the Marxists though he was not radical enough. In the end, Toro was overthrown in a coup d'état by his former comrade, Germán Busch (Morales, 2010, p. 114).

The Busch presidency was short, only two years, but it was a very important and eventful period of Bolivian history. Busch presented himself as a more moderate president as Toro, something he stuck to. He defended the expropriation of the Standard Oil Company, but toned down the rhetoric of class struggle. He organized a constitutional assembly to write a new constitution to legitimize military rule, in which almost all political parties, even those not represented in the junta, participated. Under the new constitution, Busch was named president, with Enrique Baldivieso of the conservative Socialist Party as his vice president (Morales, 2010, p. 115).

In 1938, however, Busch came under intense scrutiny an event called the 'immigration affair'. On June 9, 1938, Busch permitted unrestricted Jewish immigration from Europe to Bolivia, to settle the Chaco region and protect it from future invasions. But given the lack of profession of Bolivian diplomatic representatives, the flood of applications and the desperation of the people who applied (as European Jews were facing intense persecution in Europe at that moment, in light of the rise to power of Adolf Hitler), abuses occurred. The most scandalous one was of the Bolivian embassy in France, where they charged Jews between 10.000 and 20.000 francs to have their visas approved. Not only was Busch criticized for the moral implications of these scandals, he was also criticized for allowing almost 10.000 Jews into Bolivia, a country where many had sympathies for the National Socialists (Klein H. S., 1967, p. 169).

On April 24, 1939, Busch declared himself dictator of Bolivia, because of mounting opposition. As a result, upcoming elections were cancelled, congress was dissolved and while the constitution would stay in its place, he would govern by decree. In the months that followed, Busch would nationalize various key national industries, the Bolivian railways and the Central Bank, and he passed a general labour law, which, for the first time in Bolivian history, gave certain right to workers, including accident pay and collective bargaining. On August 22, 1939, General Busch allegedly made a suicide attempt and died. Although his death was ruled a suicide by Bolivian authorities, rival General Carlos Quintanilla, a conservative, already commenced the occupation of the presidential palace before the suicide was attempting, creating widespread belief that Busch was killed (Klein H. S., 1967, pp. 173-175).

Although the conservatives took power again through General Carlos Quintanilla, they had to deal with a mobilized and radicalized leftist bloc, organized through various political parties. The nationalist left was represented by the National Revolutionary Movement and the Bolivian

Socialist Falange, while the Marxist left was represented by the Party of the Revolutionary Left and the Revolutionary People's Party. On the right, the oligarchy and the conservative movements had founded the *Concordancia*. The conservative junta organized elections for 1940, which were won by the Concordancia candidate General Enrique Peñaranda, a Chaco War veteran, thereby solidifying the ties of the conservative forces with the military. The elections were not free, as General Quintanilla did not allow the organized opposition parties to field a candidate (Morales, 2010, pp. 120-122).

General Peñaranda was a widely disliked president who followed a broadly conservative political programme, especially regarding foreign affairs. This manifested itself in various shady deals with the United States, especially regarding the production and export of tin, and Bolivia started repaying a debt it had to the United States, something it hadn't done since 1931. As a close partner of the United States, Bolivia was a strong supporter of the Allied Powers during the Second World War, even going as far as declaring war on Nazi-Germany in early 1943. A five million dollar loan to Bolivia was also approved by the United States, although a third of this loan would be transferred to the previously expropriated Standard Oil as compensation for their loss (Morales, 2010, pp. 124-125).

General Peñaranda has reversed many of the labour policies that were passed by General Busch, including the right to strike and the right to collective bargaining. This led to unrest within the mining community, especially in the Catavi tin mines. In 1942, the miners demanded a 100% increase of wages, while management of the mines refused to negotiate with the miners. In a response, the government arrested all union leaders and killed seven miners who protested the arrest. As a response, seven thousand miners went on a five-day-strike to protest the arrest and to demand an increase of their wages. These protests were met by brutal repression, as the Bolivian military started shooting at the crowd. As many as four hundred people may have been killed (Nash, 1993, p. 212).

In December 1943, General Peñaranda's conservative government was overthrown by the young General Gualberto Villaroel, an admirer of Toro and Busch, who came to power with the help of the nationalist Revolutionary Nationalist Movement. In order to cement his power, Villaroel tried to create an alliance with the marginalized indigenous population by organizing an indigenous congress. During this congress, the domestic servant system, which included an obligatory form of unpaid servitude to the white elite, was ended (Ramos, 2018, pp. 365-370).

Villaroel's political movement was called *Razón de Patria*, or RADEPA. The RADEPA was a strange organisation, as it did not have a clear, congruent political ideology. It supported both the military socialist ideas of Toro and Bush, but it also harboured the pseudofascists of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement. In the end, though, Villaroel was mostly an anti-imperialist, defending the sovereignty and independence of the Bolivian State. While labour and indigenous rights were expanded, other civil rights were highly curbed. Villaroel proved to be a brutal dictator, committing State sponsored kidnapping of businessmen and extrajudicial executions in Chuspipata and Challacollo to stay in power (Morales, 2010, pp. 127-130).

In 1946, Villaroel's relationship with the military and the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement became strained because of his excesses, and he narrowly survived a first coup attempt. However, anti-fascist forces organized a strike in July of that year, with thousands of workers, students and women taking to the streets. Villaroel could not save his government, and resigned, but refused to leave the presidential palace. The protesters violently entered the palace in response, killing Villaroel and his associates and hung their bodies from lampposts. General Villaroel's chaotic government had come to an end (Morales, 2010, pp. 131-132).

3.8 Short return to oligarchy

The six years following the death of Villaroel were marked by a return to the conservative, oligarchic rule from before the Chaco war. The first year, the presidency was occupied by leaders of the military junta, namely Néstor Guillén and Tomás Monje. In 1947, elections were organised. After none of the candidate won a majority, congress elected Enrique Hertzog of the right-wing Republic Socialist Unity Party as president. He resigned two years later, when he was succeeded by his vice-president Mamerto Urriolagoitía. When the 1951 Bolivian elections were won by Víctor Paz of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, Urriolagoitía committed a self-coup and installed General Hugo Ballivián as president of a military junta, to stop the opposition from taking power. In this period, the MNR organized itself as the most important opposition movement to the authoritarian, oligarchic power, something quite remarkable, as most of its leaders were exiled. It adopted a more broad left-wing ideology, incorporating many layers of the marginalized groups in Bolivia (Morales, 2010, pp. 131-138).

This period of oligarchic rule meant that many of the progressive social policies that marked Bolivian politics after the Chaco war were turned back, something felt mostly by indigenous and poor workers. Previously adopted working rights were cancelled, and the position of the indigenous Bolivians were once again of that of third-rang citizens. There were many protests

against the oligarchic rule, however, which were mostly inspired by the so-called thesis of Pulacayo. This thesis was written by the Llallaguaga delegation during the Congress of the Syndicalist Federation of the Mine Workers of Bolivia, and based mostly on the fourth international Trotskyist idea of ‘permanent revolution’, in order to free the working-class Bolivians (Morales, 2010, pp. 134-135).

3.9 National revolution

General Ballivián was in power for eleven months, but he could never consolidate his power, as resistance against oligarchic rule continued to grow. Bolivians were particularly upset with the overturning of the many labour reforms, which had the aim of solidifying the political grip of the oligarchic elite. This cumulated in a revolt, organised by the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement, by early 1952. This uprising was carefully planned by its two key leaders: Hernán Siles Zuazo and Juan Lechín. It saw the help of various sectors of the Bolivian military and it had the help of the Bolivian armed police, the *Carabineros*, something approved of my Minister Antonio Seleme (Morales, 2010, pp. 140-141).

On April 9, 1952, MNR revolutionaries and the Carabineros launched their first attack, and managed to overtake the centre of La Paz. However, the rebels were encircled by the Bolivian military. When Minister Antonio Seleme sought political refuge in the Chilean embassy, the situation seemed precarious for the MNR rebels. However, Siles Zuazo and Lechín decided not to capitulate, and the revolution spread to the cities of Oruro and Cochabamba. Meanwhile, workers of La Paz confiscated weapons to join the revolution. The next day, armed miners joined the revolution and started attacking the military from behind in El Alto, a city next to La Paz. In the different cities, MNR-rebels security weapon depots and strategic spots. On the 11th of April, 1952, General Ballivián capitulated, as the Bolivian army could not retake control of the cities. His military government, and with the oligarchic power, came to an end (Robles & Klein, 2006).

Víctor Paz, the winner of the 1951 elections that were cancelled by Urriolagoitía, was installed as President, with Hernán Siles Zuazo being made his Vice-President. The new MNR government had to answer some profound questions: who were they now? As the MNR were once a nationalist and proto-fascist party, they now had to successfully conduct a social revolution that would affect many different aspects of Bolivian society. To answer these questions, the MNR had already established three core pillars that would mark their revolution: universal suffrage for everyone in Bolivia, nationalization of the country’s mines and a far-

reaching land reform. Not all factions of the MNR were in agreement with those pillars, though, as the party was divided between radical and reluctant reformers (Morales, 2010, pp. 143-144).

The difficulties that the MNR faced with the implementation of their plans are shown by James Malloy, who says that there were basically three main factions that made up the MNR. There was the old-guard MNR militants, that remained close to the parties original nationalist and proto-fascist ideology. There was also a revolutionary, left-wing faction of the MNR that was represented by Juan Lechín. Lastly, there was the pragmatist wing, led by Víctor Paz, who stood between the old-guard reformists and the left-wing revolutionaries (Malloy, 1970, pp. 158-159).

The first reform passed by the MNR-administration was universal suffrage. Voting rights were offered to all Bolivian citizens who were at least 21 years of age, and the Spanish literacy test was abolished. This gave around 60% of the Bolivian population, most of them illiterate and indigenous, the right to vote for the first time. This was the first time in modern Bolivian history that the country could be considered a working democracy (Morales, 2010, pp. 146-147). The second reform passed was the nationalization of big mining companies, which brought around 50% of the State's fiscal receipt in the State's hands, thereby trying to bring about economic independence for the Bolivian workers (Morales, 2010, p. 148).

However, the mines owned by large United States companies were not expropriated, which created a rift in the MNR. The middle class leaders of the MNR did not want to step on the toes of the United States, as not only was the Bolivian economy still very dependent on United States loans, the middle class leaders of MNR also feared retributions of the United States, in light of the cold war. In the end, to prevent infighting the MNR, a compromise was reached. The United States companies were expropriated, but they were royally compensated (Morales, 2010, p. 148).

Implementing the land reform, however, proved to be difficult. Although the land reform implemented in 1953 abolished almost all feudal practices still prevalent in Bolivian agriculture, which included indentured servitude (i.e. slavery), and it provided indigenous farmers with technical assistance to improve the quality and quantity of their produce. However, leftist MNR members thought the land reform did not go far enough, arguing that this was merely a move to incorporate indigenous farmers into the liberal-capitalist competition, instead of redistributing land *en masse* to them, instead of the parcellation of the land. In the end, this did create another rift in the MNR, but the land reform was, in general, a success, in that it had destroyed the old feudal systems. The indigenous farmers, before called *indios*, were now

campesinos, land-owners with voting right. This was the first step toward modernization under MNR leadership (Morales, 2010, pp. 152-153).

The MNR tried to modernize the country through different mechanisms. First, they invested foreign aid they received in the modernization of the country. Second, it implemented a system of comprehensive and free compulsory education, and third, it tried to explore vast, empty lots of land in the Santa Cruz area, which were rich in oil. Most of the funding from this came from the United States, which raised a question about the fundamental character of the MNR: were they really revolutionaries trying to guarantee the independence of the Bolivian State, or were they the pragmatists they had always been (Morales, 2010, pp. 154-155).

President Paz did offer an answer to this question, coming from the reformist wing of the MNR. He used a 'divide and rule' tactic in order for his wing to stay in power, and that way guaranteeing the continued rule of the MNR. Paz was a legislature pure sang, and not a revolutionary, which meant that he always sought to compromise between the left-wing and the conservative wing of the MNR. Another strategy of Paz was to infiltrate and penetrate several organizations, such a peasant unions, labour unions and civic movements. By infiltrating and, eventually, taking over those *sindicatos*, the MNR could secure votes in future elections (Morales, 2010, pp. 155-159).

The MNR also tried to organize itself along the lines of Mexican corporatism, like the Institutional Revolutionary Party that was governing Mexico as a de facto one-party State. All these strategies worked in securing political power. In the 1956 elections, Hernán Siles Zuazo won the presidency for the MNR with 84.5% of the votes. In 1960, Víctor Paz won the presidency again with 76.1% of the vote, and in 1964, Paz won again, with 97.9% of the vote. The MNR's place as Bolivia's dominant party looked cemented (Morales, 2010, pp. 159-165).

3.10 The end of the MNR

Although winning the 1964 elections convincingly, the MNR was in a high state of disintegration. Both the left-wing of the party, and the conservative wing of the party felt disenfranchised by the pragmatist reformists that had ruled the MNR. The left-wing were angry that the MNR did not purge the army of old, elitist and oligarchic elements, while the conservative wing were angry with the many social reforms that were implemented. As the MNR weakened, the military strengthened, and they forced Paz to appoint General René Barrientos, a military strong-man coming from the extreme conservative wing of the MNR, as his vice president. As protests in Bolivia increased, demanding more far-reaching social

reforms, General Barrientos saw his chance, and he conducted what he called a 'restorative revolution', exiling Paz, Lechín and Siles Zuazo and formed a political union with the conservative wing of the MNR and the Authentic Revolutionary Party, a far-right offshoot of the MNR (Lehman, 1999, pp. 114-127).

From 1964 until the elections of 1966, Bolivia was governed by a military junta, headed by General René Barrientos. These elections were not democratic, however, as many of the opposition candidates were barred from running by the military government. Barrientos had formed the Popular Christian Movement, a right wing political party. While it did want to go back to a more conservative way of governing, it did maintain close connections with peasant- and worker's fronts, thereby not returning to the previous oligarchic rule (Dunkerley, 1998).

The Barrientos government was, without a doubt, harsh and authoritarian. There was a violent crackdown of organized labour movements. However, Barrientos himself was from Cochabamba and spoke fluent Quechua, therefore being able to connect with the indigenous campesinos. These connections made it possible for Barrientos to destroy any support the MNR may have had with the indigenous organizations, and thus cementing his grip on power (Morales, 2010, pp. 170-173).

However, Barrientos did face difficulties during his presidency. Marxists, formerly with the MNR, formed the Ñancahuazú Guerrilla, who tried to violently overthrow the government and install a Marxist-Leninist government and a socialist State, with which they received help from Che Guevara. To combat this, Barrientos collaborated with Klaus Barbie, a Nazi war criminal and known as the 'Butcher of Lyon'. This collaboration proved successful, as Barrientos used extreme violence and massacres to halt the insurgency, arrest and kill Guevara and essentially quell the Marxist-Leninist uprising (Morales, 2010, pp. 176-183).

Barrientos' government came to an end in 1969, when he was killed in a helicopter crash near Cochabamba. He was replaced by his Vice-President, Luis Siles, but only for a short while, as he was overthrown by a coup d'état in September of 1969. This coup was committed by General Alfred Ovando, the antithesis of General Barrientos, an energetic, leftist general that promoted the idea of a 'revolution from above'. He immediately allowed exiled leftist leaders to return to Bolivia, including Juan Lechín, ended the militarization of mines and expropriated American companies, which led to an immediate embargo implemented by the United States government (Morales, 2010, pp. 185-186).

This embargo led to a 75% reduction of income for the Bolivian State, which in turn led to widespread protests, especially in the oil-rich Santa Cruz department. These protests were organized by the conservative political factions of the previous Barrientos and Siles administrations. On the other side, the Marxists also organized disruptive strikes, mostly in La Paz, because they thought the nationalizations did not go far enough, and saw Ovando as implementing a form of State capitalism instead of socialism. Students formed a new guerrilla movement, aimed at overthrowing the capitalist State entirely. In response to these protests, Ovando had the police and the military shoot at protesting students, killing almost 100 of them. In the confusion that caused this situation, Ovando accepted that he could no longer govern the country, and stepped down. He was succeeded by General Juan José Torres (Morales, 2010, pp. 186-187).

Torres was even more convinced of the military led socialist revolution, and in the ten months he was in power, created an even bigger schism between the younger, revolutionary sector and the older, conservative sector. The main question that had to be answered was: should Bolivia sever its relations with the United States even more and move to the left, or should Bolivia have a pragmatic way of conducting its international relations, and continue to have friendly relations with the United States? Torres chose the first option, severing ties with the United States and forming official diplomatic relations with the Eastern Bloc countries, further nationalizing key industries and industrializing Bolivia (Morales, 2010, pp. 186-187).

Torres' most famous decision was the convocation of a 'popular assembly', which was organized as the unifying centre of the anti-imperialist struggle in Bolivia, with the aim of unifying the left and achieving total freedom for Bolivia from imperialist exploitation. In this popular assembly, we saw the participation of Trotskyists, Marxist-Leninist, Maoists, Anarchists, Syndicalists, Moderate Leftists, Progressive Christians, Radicals and even some right-wing anti-imperialists (those of the Socialist Falange). The programme adopted by this assembly was mostly a Marxist-Leninist one, focussing heavily on industrial workers (Morales, 2010, pp. 187-189).

The Popular Assembly took a more and more revolutionary line, arming peasants, workers and miners, who in turn violently took over private mines, haciendas and land from the nation's elite. This all drew the ire of the United States. U.S. ambassador to Bolivia Ernest Siracusa ordered Torres to undo these actions, or face the consequences. Torres did not back down. The United States in turn started to plot a coup with the help of the country's more conservative military sectors. This culminated in a right-wing coup d'état in January of 1971, in which

General Hugo Banzer took power and exiled Juan José Torres to Argentina (Hudson & Hanratty, 1989, pp. 229-233).

3.11 Banzer's regime

Banzer's rule was one that was similar to other South American right-wing dictatorships of time. It was extremely conservative, militaristic and favoured an extremely close relationship with the United States and with the military government of Brazil. In the first three years, Banzer nominally accepted the activities of political parties, and in name, his government was a joint military-civilian one with the support of right-wing Popular Nationalist Front. In 1974, however, Banzer declared all political activity illegal, and installed a military junta through a self-coup (Morales, 2010, pp. 190-192).

The economic policy promoted by Banzer was one of extreme neoliberalism, favouring economic deregulation while holding a firm, dictatorial grip on Bolivian society. While the economy of Bolivia did grow exponentially during his years in power, this newfound economic growth went mostly to the countries white elite. Banzer froze the wages of workers while at the same time refusing to do something about the rising prices in basic necessities. When the Bolivia peso was devaluated 1972, the economic burden was placed on the country's working class. It also privatized and sold many key industries to mostly American and Brazilian multinationals (Morales, 2010, pp. 192-193).

The United States also offered military help to Bolivia. This manifested itself in Bolivia's participation in Operation Condor, a United States backed campaign of political repression and State terrorism against (supposed) leftists. In total, around 1000 Bolivians were killed or disappeared by the *caravan of death*, which included former president Juan José Torres, who was assassinated in Argentina. During operation Condor, many more leftists, almost 3000 to be exact, were arbitrarily arrested and tortured by Banzer's intelligence agency, under the disguise of antiterrorism (McSherry, 2002, pp. 40-50).

By 1977, the Bolivian economy had worsened, and the middle class that had previously supported Banzer and his policies joined the popular classes in their criticisms against the Banzer regime. This, combined with the new United States president Jimmy Carter's focus on human rights in the Americas, meant that Banzer had to step down eventually. He promised democratic elections in 1980, but these were brought forward to 1978. Banzer granted all political prisoners amnesty and stepped down in July of 1978 (Morales, 2010, p. 194).

The 1978 elections saw a plethora of candidates, including General Juan Pereda, Banzer's handpicked successor, and former President Víctor Paz, of the reorganized Revolutionary Nationalist Movement. These elections, however, were marred by irregularities, with a registered voter turn-out of 102.62%. Juan Pereda got the most votes, but given the extreme irregularities, the Electoral Court decided to annul the results. In response, Pereda committed a coup d'état, and formed a military junta (Nohlen, 2005, pp. 347-351).

3.12 Attempted return to democracy

General Pereda promised to hold new elections within six months, but he did not deliver on this. This meant that his tenure was short lived, as the younger sectors of the military did favour a democratic process. Pereda was, therefore, coupéd himself in November of 1978 by the young General David Padilla. Even though several coup attempts were tried, Padilla was able to hold new elections in 1979, in which he did not participate himself. These elections proved to be contentious. Three candidates only had a chance of winning: former president Hernán Siles Zuazo, former president Víctor Paz and former dictator Hugo Banzer (Morales, 2010, pp. 195-196).

The results were not conclusive. Siles Zuazo received 35.99% of the votes, Paz 35.89% of the votes and Banzer 14.88% of the votes. In this situation, congress had to decide who would become president. As congress was deadlocked, they could not reach an agreement on who would be president. In the end, they could reach a compromise, as the president of the congress Walter Guevara would be declared temporary president for one year, after which new elections would be organized. The conservative factions of the Bolivian military were not happy with this situation, and after just three months, Guevara was coupéd by General Alberto Natusch (Morales, 2010, p. 196).

The Natusch coup was extremely unpopular, as it signified a return to the Banzer-era repression. General Padilla and former MNR frontman Juan Lechín led popular uprisings, which made consolidating the coup extremely difficult for Natusch. After just fifteen days in power, Natusch reached an agreement with congress: Walter Guevara would not be allowed to retake the presidency, and instead congress would be allowed to vote on a new president. On November 16, Congress voted to make Lidia Gueiler of the Revolutionary Nationalist Left Party president, the first woman to hold the position of president in Bolivia (Morales, 2010, p. 197).

Gueiler had the difficult task to not only protect the few democratic institutions that were left in Bolivia, but to also improve military-civilian relationship and improve the severely

underperforming Bolivian economy. In 1980, new elections were held, and again, there was no clear winner, as Siles Zuazo, Paz and Banzer tried to win the presidency. This time, congress was able to choose a winner, namely Siles Zuazo. Before he was able to take his post, however, President Gueiler was overthrown by her cousin, Luis García Meza, who represented the extreme conservative faction of the Bolivian army (Morales, 2010, pp. 197-198).

3.13 Cocaine government

General García Meza was exceptionally brutal, and his government became an international pariah, not even supported by the staunch anti-communist United States president Ronald Reagan. García Meza was a big supporter of General Pinochet's dictatorial regime in Chile, as he saw it as his mission to destroy the Marxist cancer in Bolivia. He ruthlessly killed, tortured, exiled and imprisoned any opponent, he bombed the mines and intimidated officials of the Catholic Church. As said, the García Meza government did not gain any international recognition, and foreign soon dried up. To make things even worse, General García Meza and his interior minister General Luis Arce Gómez were implicated in cocaine trafficking. This was unacceptable to the Bolivian military, who felt that their country's international image had been damaged beyond repair, and General Meza Tejada was forced to resign in August of 1981 (Morales, 2010, p. 198).

After General Meza Tejada had resigned, General Celso Torrelio and General Guido Vildoso took power. While they were able to repair international relations and therefore its image abroad, within Bolivia, everyone had lost their faith in the government. After so many coups and constitutional illegitimacy, Bolivian wanted peace and democracy. General Vildoso announced that new presidential elections would be organized, but this was not acceptable. For days, more than 100.000 Bolivians took to the street. On September 17, 1982, General Vildoso announced he would step down, and congress decided to validate the 1980 presidential election results, making Hernán Siles Zuazo president for the second time (Morales, 2010, p. 199).

3.14 The return of democracy

After almost two decades of military rule, countless coup d'états and eleven different rules, Bolivia returned to democracy, albeit a very fragile one. Siles Zuazo's presidency could not overcome the immense economic and social damage that had been done by the military rules, and the country collapsed economically. This was the lead up to the 1985 presidential elections, in which we saw two front runners: former military dictator Hugo Banzer and former president Víctor Paz. As again, no single candidate could win a majority (33% for Banzer against 30%

for Paz), congress had to decide. Scared of electing a former military dictator, congress elected overwhelmingly for Paz. These elections were historical, as it marked the first time in Bolivian history that power was transferred peacefully between two presidents (Morales, 2010, p. 202).

Paz, who had shifted from his previously left-wing political stances to neoliberal ones, started his fourth and final presidency in 1985. Through decree 21060, also known as *New Economic Policy*, he sought to privatize many mines, laying off many miners and suppressing organized labour movements. This decree was not communicated with other cabinet members or with congress, and it was implemented without anyone knowing what it exactly entailed. It was met with instant protests, and Paz resorted to dictatorial measures, such as the imprisonment and disappearing union leaders, to implement the plans. These extreme neoliberal ideas did not save the Bolivian economy, and in fact, had the opposite effect, plunging many Bolivians into greater poverty without generating new wealth (Klein N. , 2008, pp. 613-621).

Paz' government was also marred by his connection to the illegal drug trade. A scandal broke out when various members of his MNR party and of Banzer's Nationalist Democratic Action Party (AND) were seen visiting Bolivian drug king Roberto Suárez, which was video tapes. These videos severely damaged Bolivia's relationship with the United States in light of the War on Drugs. This, combined with the extremely unpopular New Economic Plan led to almost monthly strikes, which disrupted the Bolivian economy. But even with all this negativity, he did manage to bring down inflation rates and (relatively) stabilize the Bolivian economy. The old Paz left the presidency with an approval rating of almost 70%, unheard of in Bolivia at that time (Morales, 2010, pp. 212-214).

The 1989 had three frontrunners, all from the political right. Gonzalo Sánchez was from Víctor Paz' MNR party, and seen as a continuation of his technocratic and authoritarian way of governance. Former dictator Hugo Banzer again tried to become president through democratic means, and Jaime Paz, an opposition figure who was previously imprisoned and tortured during the Banzer dictatorship. All these candidates received between 20 and 25 percent of the votes, meaning that congress had to decide once again who would become president. They decided on third placed Jaime Paz to become Bolivia's next president. What was noteworthy is that all candidates accepted the results (Morales, 2010, pp. 215-217).

Although Jaime Paz was an opposition figure, he chose to continue the extreme neoliberal economic policies of his predecessor, which lead to more general strikes. Although Paz was not willing to negotiate with the protesters, he also did not respond with the same kind of

authoritarianism as the previous government. Therefore, Jaime Paz was seen as a technocrat and a pragmatist, who defended the democratic way of governing, without scaling back the neoliberal reforms (Morales, 2010, p. 219).

Regarding the war on drugs, Jaime Paz sought not to destroy cocaine plantations as his predecessors had tried to, but he tried to rebrand the image of coca leaves from a deadly drug to an indigenous image. With the slogan '*Coca no es cocaína*', he was able to reincorporate the production and usage of coca leaves in indigenous culture. However, by the end of his presidency, he was obligated by the United States to resume the projects of eradication of coca field (Campero, 1992, pp. 82-83).

On international policies, Jaime Paz broke off diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, instead recognizing the Republic of China (better known as Taiwan), even opening an embassy in its capital, Taipei. This international policy reflected on Paz' extreme focus on antisocialism and anticommunism, and following the trend of various right-wing governments that had already recognized the Republic of China as the sole legal government of the whole of China (Campero, 1992, p. 86).

For the 1993 presidential election, we saw a resurgence of the campesino-indigenous social movements. The Revolutionary Liberation Movement Túpac Katari formed an alliance with the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement and its presidential candidate, Gonzalo Sánchez. In return, Sánchez nominated Victor Cárdenas, an indigenous activist, as his Vice-Presidential nominee, a historic first in Bolivian politics. The other main candidate was, as in the previous elections, Hugo Banzer. As both candidate failed to win a majority, congress had to decide once again on who would become president, voting for Sánchez. This made Victor Cárdenas the first indigenous Vice-President in Bolivia's history (Morales, 2010, pp. 221-222).

In economic policy, Sánchez embodied the continuation of the New Economic Policy implemented by both Víctor Paz and Jaime Paz, thereby continuing to implement extreme neoliberal measures of his predecessors. He did, however, have a lasting impact on the functioning of Bolivian democracy, by implementing the constitutional amendments of 1994. The term of political officeholders was extended from four to five years, and the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 years. With the pressure of indigenous campesino movement, he also added article 1 to the constitution, defining Bolivia as a multiethnic and plurinational republic, giving the indigenous population constitutional representation for the first time in history (Morales, 2010, p. 222).

These constitutional amendment brought about a great improvement of civic participation in the democratic process, especially among the historically disenfranchised indigenous population. On economics, though, there were more and more voices of dissatisfaction with the extreme neoliberal measures that Sánchez continued to implement. In various rural regions, mostly indigenous unions started to form to fight for more economic justice (Morales, 2010, p. 223).

The 1997 presidential elections had no less than five candidates who had a reasonable shot at winning. First, there was Hugo Banzer, who again tried. Then there was Juan Carlos Durán, the candidate of the MNR. Third, there was Remedios Loza, an indigenous leader. Former president Jaime Paz tried to win the presidency for a second time. And lastly, Ivo Kuljis was a representative of the conservative, authoritarian right. With all candidates winning between 16 and 22%, it was in no way clear who would be the next president, as congress, again, had to make the final decision. In the end, congress voted for the candidate who had received the most votes, which was former dictator Hugo Banzer (Mesa, *Presidentes de Bolivia: entre urnas y fusiles : el poder ejecutivo, los ministros de estado*, 2003, pp. 444-466).

Banzer, who had implemented extreme neoliberal and capitalist policies himself during his dictatorship, promised a new form of politics, based on four pillars: dignity, opportunity, equity and institutionalization. Of those four pillars, equity proved to be the most impossible to obtain, as Banzer refused to undo most of the privatizations of the previous administrations, something he had promised to do during his campaign. Institutionalization was supposed to be achieved by adopting a new penal code, which sought to harshly punish coca producers, thereby constituting a revitalization of Bolivia's participation in the war on drugs. This institutionalization was seen as an attack on Bolivia's democracy and respect for human rights, however. His dignity pillar was supposed to be achieved with his 'zero coca' plan, or eradicating all coca production, which was also not achieved. Bolivia did not revitalize economically, socially or democratically (Morales, 2010, pp. 227-228).

Banzer proved to not have forgotten his authoritarian roots. Several indigenous campesino unions organized more and more protests against the government's continued used of neoliberal economic policies. This culminated in what is called the 'Cochabamba Water Wars', where a water contract was handed to Bechtel, an American company. Bechtel, who were thus in control of supplying safe drinking water, raised water prices with 60% and forbade local residents to collect rain water for their own consumption. The ensuing protests were met by brutal force by the Banzer government, but protests did not back down. After several months, Banzer gave in,

annulled the contract and renationalized Cochabamba's water supply. By early 2001, Banzer was suffering from an advanced stage of lung cancer, and he resigned from the presidency, leaving his vice president, the young technocrat and neoliberal Jorge Quiroga, to continue his neoliberal policies and his veracious war on drugs until the end of his constitutional term in 2002 (Crespo, Fernández, Herbas, & Carrillo, 2005).

During the Banzer administration, a new political force gained momentum: Movement for Socialism – Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples, or for MAS-IPSP short. This broad electoral movement was a mishmash of indigenous campesinos, coca farmers, Marxists, anti-imperialists and other progressive elements that were unhappy with the many years of neoliberal economic policies and with Banzer's relentless war on the coca farmers. The leader of this movement was Evo Morales, a senator, coca farmer and trade union leader of the Unified Syndical Confederation of Rural Workers of Bolivia (Harten, 2011, pp. 71-75).

From the beginning, the MAS were worked against by the Bolivian authorities, as they felt threatened by the growth of popular support of MAS. Back in 1999, the party was called IPSP, and they wanted to participate in that year's municipal elections. The National Electoral Court refused to register its name, so they were forced to take the name and image of another, already existing party, which came to the Movement for Socialism Party, a splinter group of the far-right Bolivian Social Falange, hence the current full name: MAS-IPSP (Monasterios, Stefanoni, & Do Alto, 2007, p. 72).

Ahead of the 2002 general elections, MAS-IPSP was further worked against by the Bolivian authorities. First, MAS-IPSP was denied registration ahead of the elections by the National Electoral Court, while another indigenous organisation, Pachakuti Indigenous Movement (MIP), was granted registration. Only just before the elections, MAS-IPSP was allowed to participate, with Evo Morales as its presidential candidate. His popularity was boosted when he was suspended from congress, allegedly for organizing violent clashes between poor, indigenous labour leaders and the Bolivian authorities (García Linera & Stefanoni, 2005, pp. 55-59).

In the build up to the election, there were once again four main candidates: former president and MNR leader Gonzalo Sánchez, MAS-IPSP president and union leader Evo Morales, businessman Manfred Reyes and former president Jaime Paz. The campaign was a tense one, with many people expecting Morales to win, because of the general discontent of the population with the neoliberal policies, and because Morales had a strong connection with the majority

indigenous population. The United States were worried about a possible of a Morales win, giving six million dollars to Gonzalo Sánchez, branding Morales as a dangerous, hardline Marxist and the American ambassador to Bolivia, Manuel Rocha, threatened that the United States would cut economic aid to Bolivia if Morales would win. Rocha's successor, David Greenlee, stated just before the elections that the United States would not accept any other winner than Gonzalo Sánchez (Forero, 2002).

This only helped Morales' popularity grow, as he campaigned on a platform of strong anti-imperialism, especially against United States interference in Bolivia, against the neoliberal economic policies of his predecessors and against the extreme poverty in the country (almost 60% of Bolivians lived in poverty in 2002). In the end, Sánchez received the most votes, with 22.46% of the vote. Second was Morales with 20.94%. Third was Reyes with 20.91%. And fourth came Paz with 16.32%. This, once again, meant that congress would be the one deciding the president. All parties, except for MAS-IPSP, formed a pact, and voted for Sánchez to become president of the second time (Morales, 2010, pp. 230-231).

The decision of congress to name Sánchez as president proved controversial. Morales' popularity grew, as he was seen as someone who stood up against the economic elite. This culminated in the gas wars. As Bolivia is rich in natural gas, this constituted an important part of Bolivia's income. Previous president Jorge Quiroga promoted the construction of a pipe line to the Chilean city of Mejillones, to export the gas more easily abroad. This was disliked by many Bolivians, who still fell a distrust for Chile, a result of the War of the Pacific and the loss of the Litoral department. The new president, Sánchez, also favoured the a pipeline to Chile, which angered even more Bolivians, fearing even more external intervention in Bolivia. Amidst the chaos, President Sánchez, a year into his term, decided to resign, after what was called 'Black October'. During October of 2003, the Bolivian military shot and killed around a hundred protesters, severely damaging Sánchez' image. His Vice-President, Carlos Mesa, took over (Morales, 2010, p. 231).

By the time Mesa became president, the indigenous and syndicates could not be stopped. After twenty years of extreme neoliberal economic policies, Bolivians were poorer than they had been in a long time. President Mesa, although having initial support for being a historian instead of a politician, proved severely underequipped for dealing with the chaos, as he had little organizational experience. Mesa organised a referendum, in which Bolivian voters rejected the privatization of the gas reserved. The problem, however, was that the wording of the question

was phrased in such a way that it did not obligate Mesa to renationalize the gas reserves, thereby giving him an opt-out of the results (Morales, 2010, pp. 234-235).

As a reaction, by 2005, 80.000 protestors, mostly of indigenous origins are lead by Evo Morales, demanded the nationalization of water and gas. While congress did approve of raising taxes on foreign gas companies, Morales stated this was in no way enough to satisfy the demands of the protesters. Instead of giving in to these demands, Mesa resigned as President in July of 2005. He was followed by the President of Bolivia's Supreme Court, Eduardo Rodríguez. His only action was to immediately organize new elections for December of 2005, in order to save Bolivia's democratic institutions (Morales, 2010, p. 238).

3.15 MAS-IPSP come to power

The 2005 presidential elections saw just two main candidates: Evo Morales of MAS-IPSP, and former president Jorge Quiroga, a right-wing technocrat. The political plans of Evo Morales were clear if he were to become president: form a constitutional assembly to write a new constitution that would include the many indigenous groups that have been excluded from political life since the foundation of the modern Bolivian State. Besides that, his two other main goal were the nationalization of oil and gas and a referendum on regional autonomy. Meanwhile, Quiroga stood for the continuation of the neoliberal policies of his predecessors (Morales, 2010, pp. 238-239).

It is no surprise that Morales won a landslide victory, gaining 53.74% of the votes and thereby eliminating the need for congress to vote on the winner. Not only did Morales win, his MAS-IPSP party won an absolute majority in the chamber of representatives, but not in the senate, making the implementation of his policies more challenging. Morales also problems implementing his policies from the national level, as previous constitutional amendments gave considerable power to regional and local authorities to implement their own policies. The constitutional assembly, invoked in 2006, was made up mostly of MAS-IPSP politicians and Morales supporters, giving it the authority to write a constitution that would make it easier for Morales to implement the reforms he wanted. At the same time of the elections for the constitutional assembly, voters could also vote in a referendum regarding regional autonomy. This referendum asked whether the voters wanted the departments to continue having regional autonomy after the approval of the new constitution. This was rejected by 57.59% of the voters. (Morales, 2010, pp. 242-246).

The constitutional assembly had to answer some important questions. The first one was how Bolivian democracy should be strengthened, and the second one was what the relation of the Bolivian State with its economic resources should be. These questions marked the beginning of a constitutional crisis, with MAS-IPSP members wanting to give the government more authority to direct the economy, with opposition members being vehemently against that idea. Also, the voting rules of the assembly were not clear. MAS-IPSP stated that a simple majority was necessary (which would give it complete control over the assembly), while the opposition claimed that two-thirds of the votes were necessary, which MAS-IPSP did not have (Morales, 2010, pp. 255-256).

These shenanigans led to conflicts between pro-Morales and anti-Morales supporters, especially in the city of Cochabamba, which at the time had a staunch anti-Morales and pro-autonomy mayor: Manfred Reyes. With Morales supporting the simple majority rule proposed by MAS-IPSP, but not having the support of the senate, he had to commit to a compromise: individual articles would be subject to a two-third vote, while the constitutional text as a whole would be subject to a simple majority vote (Morales, 2010, p. 256).

In December 2007, the constitutional assembly presented the final draft, being approved by the assembly itself. In 2008, further dialogues in the different departments and in congress made some amendments to the final text, most notable with Sucre being designated as Bolivia's capital, while all the governmental institutions would remain in La Paz. In October of 2008, congress approved a law to organize a referendum on whether or not to approve the new constitution. The referendum was held January 25, 2009, with 61.34% of the voters approving of the new constitution. An additional referendum was held, asking whether landholding should be a maximum of 5000 hectares or 10.000 hectares, with 80.65% voting for 5000 hectares (Morales, 2010, pp. 257-259).

The new constitution renamed the Republic of Bolivia to the Plurinational State of Bolivia, reflecting the country's ethnic diversity. It further stated that the State would be secular, instead of Catholic as it had been previously, that the national resources and the economy would be directed by the State, it prohibited the creating of foreign military bases in Bolivia, it changed the presidential elections to a two-round system, requiring the president to win 50% of the votes, and it limited presidents to two terms, with every president starting with 0 terms as per the 2009 presidential elections (Morales, 2010, p. 258).

Also during Morales' first term, he moved away from the incredibly unpopular war on drugs, as many Bolivians saw the drug problem as a question of demand, and not of supply. Morales immediately stopped the programme of the eradication of fields where coca was grown, instead focusing on the fight against illegal drug transports. He pursued a way of convincing the coccaleros to not participate in the drug trade, favouring the promotion of indigenous cultures and their use of the coca leave instead of harsh State repression. The methods of Morales were successful, as he seized almost 17 tonnes of cocaine in 2007 alone, although they went against international treaties, obliging him to continue eradicating the cultivation of coca. Morales suspended Bolivia's participation with the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, which meant that as a response, Bolivia was blacklisted by the United States as a major cocaine producing nation (Morales, 2010, p. 261).

US-Bolivian relations soured significantly ever since Morales came to power, as the United States saw him as a far left-radical, weakening the position that the United States had in Latin America. Although the USA congratulated Morales with his victory, relations went south quickly, as the United States strongly disagreed with Morales' anti-drug policy, the nationalization of key economic industries and his relationship with Cuba and Venezuela, with which he signed numerous bilateral agreements. When the Bolivian congress refused to ratify a treaty exempting United States military personnel from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, the US responded by cutting 96% of military aid to Bolivia (Morales, 2010, p. 263).

Morales also used populist nationalism to bolster his image, renewing Bolivia's claim to the long-lost Litoral department, which were now the regions of Tarapacá and Antofagasta, governed by Chile. The election of socialist candidate Michelle Bachelet in Chile renewed the possibility to dialogues to come to some sort of an agreement. However, as natural gas prices had dropped and Bolivia was exporting less and less gas to Brazil and Argentina, Morales had no other choice than stop his quest for access to sea, as they became dependent on Chilean imports of Bolivian gas (Morales, 2010, p. 268).

With that, Morales term came to an end in 2009 and new elections were held, the first under the new constitution. As explained, the new constitution did not count presidential terms held under the previous constitution, thus Morales was eligible to stand in these elections. Although this new constitution had been approved by 60% of the voters, there was still a climate of polarization. Morales' main opponent was Manfred Reyes, the former mayor of Cochabamba who staged anti-Morales protests during the constitutional process. Morales' approval rating

were at 60% when the campaign started, which is historically high, especially in Latin America, which could be attributed to the fact that Bolivia had the fastest growing economy of the continent. Morales had also funded large anti-poverty programmes, which were paid for with through the nationalization of natural resources. These programmes led to a dramatic decrease of people living in poverty (Alpert, Centellas, & Singer, 2010, pp. 758-759).

In these elections, participation reached a record high, with 95% of Bolivian casting their votes. The results showed an overwhelming support for the mandate of Evo Morales, who won 64.22% of the votes, 40% more than Manfred Reyes. This time, MAS-IPSP won a majority in both the House of Representatives and in the Senate, meaning that Morales would no longer face congressional obstacles in the process of implementing his reforms (Alpert, Centellas, & Singer, 2010, pp. 759-760).

During Morales' first term under the new constitution, he continued the large scale nationalization of many key industries. First, he nationalized various companies responsible for the production of energy, followed by the nationalization of various cement companies and the nationalization of the company who managed the national electricity grid. These nationalizations had a great effect on the economy, which saw a yearly GDP increase of between 5 and 10% during the Morales administration between 2010 and 2014 (Ranta, 2014, pp. 157-160).

In terms of healthcare, Morales increased State spending in the healthcare sector with 173% up until 2014, which, according to the World Health Organization, thanks to a State sponsored vaccination programme, led to the eradication of polio, measles and rubella in Bolivia, thereby also improving the life expectancy from 66 years to 68 years in just four years. Besides health, Morales also embarked on a fight against illiteracy, which increased the literacy rate from 86% in 2006 to 95% in 2015. In 2010, he also passed a law making it a right to receive high-quality education on all levels (Fontana, 2015, pp. 25-31).

On the international scene, Bolivia strengthened its relationship with fellow leftist governments in the Americas, namely Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Uruguay. He also sought to improve relationship with other anti-imperialist nations, like Russia and Iran, signing various bilateral agreements with these nations. A major scandal broke out when Morales' presidential plane was forced to land in Austria when he was on his way home from a summit in Russia, because European Union officials suspected Edward Snowden, a United States whistleblower who leaked classified information about United States government surveillance programmes,

might be on board, after Morales suggested he might give him political asylum. When it turned out he was not on board, the European Union had to apologize (Chomsky, 2013).

During this term, Morales had faced some domestic protests, especially after it announced that the minimum wage would be increased with 5%, something that the Bolivian labour unions called 'insufficient'. When the government also cut fuel subsidies, which almost doubled the prices of fuel, large scale protests broke out. These protests only died down when the Morales government announced the reimplementing of these subsidies (Linda & Kohl, 2014, p. 211).

When the 2014 elections came around, Morales was again the front runner, seeking his second term under the new constitution. He indeed prevailed, winning 61.36% of the votes, and MAS-IPSP maintaining its majority in both the House of Representative and in Congress. During his new term, that would last until 2019, he immediately implemented a universal healthcare system, which was applauded by the World Health Organization as a model for many developing countries (Sirén, 2022).

As this was Morales' second term under the new constitution, and said constitution did not allow more than two terms, he would have had to leave office come 2019. To allow himself to run in 2019, he organized a constitutional referendum, which, if approved, would have allowed him for a third term under the constitution. Many expected a majority to vote in favour, but the right-wing resorted to fake news to damage Morales' image, saying that he had fathered an illegitimate child called Ernesto Fidel Morales. The women in question even showed the child to national press. This child turned out to be borrowed from her aunt. These allegations did seriously hurt the image of Morales during the referendum, as it was narrowly rejected (Molina, 2018, pp. 124-125).

In September 2017, the MAS-IPSP petitioned the Plurinational Constitutional Court to allow Morales to run in the 2019 elections, on the grounds that term limits were a violation of Morales' human rights based on the charter of the American Convention on Human Rights, which is a binding multilateral treaty. Two months later, the Court decided to rule in favour of Morales, allowing him to run in the 2019 elections. The court decided that all term-limits were unconstitutional, and abolished them for all public offices, not just for Morales (Córtez Chávez, 2017).

United States-Bolivian relations were not particularly warm during the presidency of Barack Obama, but when Donald Trump came to power, relations soured even more. Trump, with the help of the Organisation of American States, crafted a harsh anti-leftist policy, tightening the

embargo on Cuba, recognizing Juan Guaidó as the constitutional president of Venezuela and imposing various economic sanctions on leftist governments in Latin America. In Bolivia's case, Trump started aiding the political arms of the *gente de bien*, the traditional white elite of Bolivia, who had lost their grip on power after the first election of Morales (Orellana Aillón, 2020, pp. 11-15).

This internal meddling of United States in Bolivia's domestic politics made Morales even closer to the anti-imperialist axis, both in Latin-America as in other parts of the world. As the United States had a profound interest in Bolivia's lithium, something used in batteries of electric cars, they had a reason to meddle in the 2019 elections, and try to destabilize the country. In this climate of international hostility towards the Morales government, Bolivians went to the polls in October of 2019 (Hernández Bermúdez, 2020, pp. 36-38).

In these elections, the Bolivian right failed again to gain popular support, presenting former President Carlos Mesa as its candidate. MAS-IPSP again nominated Morales. Morales won 47.08% of the votes, while Mesa won 36.51% of the votes. The Bolivian electoral law stated that a candidate must win either an outright majority, or at least 40% with a minimum 10% margin with the candidate who finished second, to win the elections outright in the first round. As the difference between Morales and Mesa was more than 10%, Morales was declared the winner of the elections (Hernández Bermúdez, 2020, pp. 38-39).

3.16 Fraud allegations and coup d'état

The Bolivian elite, who for the first time in many years made it close to the second round, cried foul play. They claimed that massive fraud had been committed in favour of Morales, thereby allowing him to win the elections. First, Carlos Mesa prematurely announced he had made it to the second round, without vote counting having been completed. This planted the idea that the results had already been decided, which they had not. The announcement of Mesa was based on the incomplete quick count, which was halted for the night, with the difference between Morales and Mesa being less than 10%. The official count, however, was never interrupted, and continued throughout the night without problems (Hernández Bermúdez, 2020, p. 40).

The following day, when the official results and the quick count showed that Morales indeed had a margin of more than 10%, Mesa urged his supporters to take to the street, and the Organization of American States published a public statement, calling the fact that MAS-IPSP won a large margin of the late counted votes was 'inexplicable', without giving any evidence for this. It is, however, easy to explain this. More late counted votes came from rural areas,

where MAS-IPSP is more popular. This phenomenon was also observed in previous Bolivian elections, where Morales had won with a wider margin (Hernández Bermúdez, 2020, pp. 40-41).

The fraud narrative had unleashed protests, mostly in Santa Cruz, where most of Bolivia's white elite lives. These protests were led by Carlos Mesa and by Fernando Camacho, a far-right politician from Santa Cruz, leader of the Civic Committee for Santa Cruz, an openly fascist and Christian fundamentalist paramilitary organization and former Vice-President of the extremist, falangist Santa Cruz Youth Union. Although these protests were painted as a popular uprising, it has to be noted that when the elections were redone after the 2019 coup, MAS-IPSP won even more votes than in the 2019, therefore proving that it was a small minority of people seizing the opportunity to topple the popular MAS-IPSP government (Orellana Aillón, 2020, pp. 93-94).

On the 10th of November, 2019, the Military 'urged' Evo Morales to step down from the presidency. While this was not a traditional military takeover, a suggestion by the military can only have one possible outcome: you step down as president, either on your own, or by force, thereby cementing a bloodless coup d'état. The three people in line of succession, Vice-President Álvaro García Linera of MAS-IPSP, President of the Senate Adriana Salvatierra of MAS-IPSP and President of the Chamber of Deputies Víctor Borda of MAS-IPSP, we also suggested not to take up the presidency by the armed forces. The fourth in line, Vice-President of the Senate Jeanine Áñez, a right-wing politician, was then allowed by the military to take office (Orellana Aillón, 2020, pp. 95-96).

The ascension of Áñez to the government was, by all accounts, illegal, as article 171 of Bolivia's electoral law states that in case the election results are annulled, that the elections should be repeated on the next Sunday. This further solidifies that the narrative of 'restoring democracy' was just a pretext to take over political control in Bolivia. The Organization of American States conducted an investigation into the fraud claims, and concluded that fraud had been committed. However, this investigation had many flaws (Orellana Aillón, 2020, pp. 98-99).

Jeanine Áñez took the presidency November 11, 2019, in an extraordinary session of the Bolivian plurinational senate, in which she appealed to article 41 of the senate, which states that she could assume the presidency of the senate because Adriana Salvatierra, the Senate president, was not present. Consequently, she used article 170 of the Bolivian constitution, which stipulates the line of succession, to take up the presidency of Bolivia, as President

Morales and Vice-President García Linera had applied for political refuge in Mexico, and with Adriana Salvatierra refusing to partake in this session of the senate. What is important to note, is that there was no quorum for Áñez to do this, as all MAS-IPSP senators abstained from the session (Orellana Aillón, 2020, pp. 100-101).

With this constitutional play, Áñez had secured the presidency. She went to the *Palacio Quemado*, the old presidential palace, with a pink bible, stating that ‘God had allowed the bible to enter the palace again’, clearly indicating her aversion to the secular constitution of Bolivia. The following day, Adriana Salvatierra, the president of the senate, contested the line of succession. As MAS-IPSP congress members tried to enter the congress to start a new emergency session, they were blocked from entering the building by security personnel (Salvatierra dice que no renunció y busca entrar a la ALP junto a la bancada del MAS, 2019).

While Áñez clearly did not take the presidency in a legal way, the Plurinational Constitutional Court did decide that she was the legitimate president of the Plurinational State. While they did recognize that the way she ascended to the presidency was not according to the Constitution, a previous court decision stated that the functioning of the government should continue under any circumstance. Therefore, the constitutional succession ipso facto applied to Áñez (Orellana Aillón, 2020, p. 102).

While Áñez states she would just be responsible for organizing new elections, she immediately started to make sweeping changes, for which she had no democratic foundation, which were met with protests of indigenous and campesino unions. In order to quell these protests, Áñez passed Supreme Decree 4078, which exempted member of the Bolivian armed forces of any criminal responsibility when acting during a state of necessity’, basically giving them a *carte blanche* to shoot and kill any protester. Within hours, the military and the police started shooting on protesters in the village of Sacaba, where eleven protesters were murdered and another 98 were injured. Four days later, the military killed another eleven protesters in Senkata. The Inter-American Court for Human Rights called these massacres a grave attack on human rights in Bolivia (CIDH presenta sus observaciones preliminares tras su visita a Bolivia, y urge una investigación internacional para las graves violaciones de derechos humanos ocurridas en el marco del proceso electoral desde octubre de 2019, 2019).

With regards to organizing new elections, Áñez removed all members of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and replaced them with people close to her. A day for new elections was set at May 3, 2020. However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, the elections were moved to September 6,

2020, by the Bolivian congress. Áñez rejected this, as she said that she did not want to organize any elections while the virus was still around. Later, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal postponed the elections once again to October 18. This caused widespread protests, which Áñez threatened to put down by force. In the end, the elections were set for October 18, 2020 (Blockades test main forces in Bolivia amid election crisis, 2020).

On domestic issues, Áñez completely rebranded the image of the national government. She abolished the Ministries for Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Sports. She also embarked on a veracious crusade against MAS-IPSP members, charging them with terrorism and sedition. In total, 1500 people were charged with terrorism. Examples of this were former MAS-IPSP strongmen who fled the country, but also ordinary citizens who had been members of pro-Morales Whatsapp groups. Human Rights Watch concluded that Áñez had weaponized the country's judicial system to commence a witch hunt against perceived opponents (La justicia como arma, 2020).

With regards to the economy, the de facto government sharply cut public spending and wages of public sector workers, which led to the GDP going down by more than 6% over 2020. Some policies of the Morales' government were kept though, like measures to guarantee the liquidity of Bolivian financial institutions.

As stated, the de facto government implemented a policy of economic austerity. From Q3 of 2019 until Q1 of 2020, the amount of public investment as part of the GDP dropped more than six percentage points. As a result, the nominal value of the minimum wage failed to increase – which was the first time since 2006. The pandemic of 2020 and the sanitary measures taken by the government increased the economic damage to Bolivia.

During said pandemic, the Áñez government continued the previous government's expansionary monetary policy, which successfully restrained the rise of interest rates and inflation. However, the boost to demand from the accommodative monetary policy was limited and offset by the policy decision to defer interest and capital payments, which significantly impacted the financial sector's cash flow.

The Áñez government wanted to make big cuts to public spending in order to reduce the public deficit. However, this proved impossible during the outbreak of the pandemic. This meant she continued the fiscal policy of the former minister of Economic Affairs and current president of the Plurinational State, Luis Arce. The de facto government expanded income transfers, reduced

public utility tariffs, reduced (or postponed) tax collection and loan repayments, and expanded spending on public health.

The de facto government clearly had a policy agenda that differed sharply from the elected government that preceded it. This can be seen, for example, in its labour market policies and cuts to public investment (even before the pandemic). These changes were made in spite of the fact that the de facto government claimed to be no more than an interim, caretaker government. The weakness of both counter-cyclical macroeconomic policies and measures to alleviate the growing poverty caused by the pandemic and recession were partially counteracted by the opposition (MAS) majority in the legislature (Carvalho, Johnston, Sammut, & Weisbrot, 2021).

Lastly, we look at Áñez' foreign policy. Although she claimed she was just heading a caretaker government, the actions of her government were anything but those a caretaker government would make, even with regards to international relations. The goal was not merely to organize new elections, but to take Bolivia back to the pre-MAS-IPSP era. The unelected Áñez government undid many decisions of the previous elected Morales government, like breaking off diplomatic relations with Cuba and Venezuela and recognizing Juan Guaidó as the president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Not only that, she developed close relations with the United States, reorganizing Bolivia's previous dependence on the USA, and she recognized Israel over Palestine (Wolff J. , 2020).

In the end, Áñez has to organize the new elections, and as said, they were to be held October 18, 2020. Although she originally intended to participate in the elections, she chose not to do that, as she was both personally very unpopular and she did not want to split the vote of the right. These elections saw three main candidates: MAS-IPSP could not nominate Evo Morales again, so they nominated his successful economic minister Luis Arce. Carlos Mesa again postulated himself. The third main candidate was the aforementioned far-right leader Luis Camacho.

The elections were closely monitored by the pro-Áñez Supreme Electoral Council, various European Union countries and the United States, who had all supported the 2019 coup. Various leftist organization also tried to monitor the elections, but they were refused, with Argentine Peronist lawmaker Federico Fagioli being detained at La Paz airport, and later expelled from Bolivia. The results showed a resounding victory for MAS-IPSP, with Arce winning in the first round with 55.10% of the votes. Mesa came second, with 28.83% of the votes (almost 10% less than the year before). Camacho came third with 14.00% of the votes. MAS-IPSP also won an

absolute majority in both the senate and the chamber of representatives. The results were accepted by almost everyone, including Áñez herself, who returned to her home city of Beni (Áñez volvió a su ciudad natal y no acudirá a la toma de posesión de Arce, 2020). Only far-right candidate Camacho claimed there was fraud, with his Committee for Santa Cruz organizing new protests (Conservatives in Bolivia protest against the inauguration of president elect Arce, 2020) One member of the Committee for Santa Cruz attacked President-elect Arce at his house with dynamite, to try and stop him from taking office.

The inauguration of Luis Arce on November 8, 2020 marked the return of the democratically elected MAS-IPSP government, thirteen months after it had been overthrown in a bloodless military coup. Arce immediately reversed all decisions taken by Áñez, restored Bolivia's internationally alliances and worked towards bringing those who were responsible for the coup and its excesses to justice. Arce promised to govern with the aim of inclusion, overcoming the previous de facto government's internal war and division amongst the people. Democracy was saved.

4. ANALYSIS

See annex 2 for an actors map of the Bolivian political history

I will continue conducting the analysis of the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état. This analysis will be twofold: first, I will apply dialectical and historical materialism to the Bolivian political history and the 2019 coup d'état. Then, I will apply the theoretical framework of imperialism in the Marxist-Leninist tradition to the coup d'état. I will then conclude on whether this coup d'état can be described as imperialist or not, based on the analysis I will conduct.

I will conduct the first part of this analysis, the application of dialectical and historical materialism, looking at different time frames of Bolivian political history, to showcase the different aspects that we can apply the materialist principles to. I will start with the moment of independence and the era of class struggle in the nineteenth century. This era was marked by significant challenges, including the persistence of class divisions and social inequalities.

4.1 Historical conditions and inequality in the nineteenth century

Historical materialism emphasizes the importance of material conditions in shaping the trajectory of societies. In post-independence Bolivia, the material conditions were characterized by an economy heavily reliant on mining, with the production of silver and tin at the forefront. The economic base was closely tied to the interests of the land-owning elite and foreign mining companies. These conditions laid the foundation for persistent class inequalities.

The mining industry, controlled by the upper classes, played a pivotal role in both sustaining the economic order and perpetuating social hierarchies. The indigenous and mestizo populations, who had been subjected to centuries of exploitation under Spanish colonial rule, continued to experience economic and social marginalization. This persistence of economic disparities was central to the dialectical struggle within Bolivia.

The economic structure of the time contributed to the exacerbation of class divisions in Bolivia. The wealth generated by the mining industry was largely concentrated in the hands of the creole elite and foreign companies. These powerful economic actors controlled the means of production and were able to influence political decision-making to protect their interests. Meanwhile, the indigenous and mestizo populations, who constituted the majority of the workforce in the mines, experienced harsh working conditions, poverty, and exploitation. This economic disparity perpetuated social inequalities, in line with the principles of historical materialism.

In this context, class conflicts were made evident. The aforementioned elite, comprising of the creole and mestizo population, sought to maintain their economic privileges and power. They tried to achieve this through collaboration with foreign companies, especially Chilean companies in the Litoral Department, to exploit the country's mineral wealth. On the other side, the indigenous and mestizo populations, began to mobilize. The rising class consciousness among the oppressed population fueled movements and revolts, representing the dialectical response to the entrenched class system.

Political developments in post-independence Bolivia were heavily influenced by these class struggles and economic structures. The nation experienced frequent changes in leadership, coups, and shifts in governance, often reflecting the interests of the dominant classes. These political shifts were not merely random occurrences but were deeply connected to the class contradictions and material conditions of the time. For example, Bolivia's early political history was characterized by instability and the rise of the caudillos, many of whom aligned with the elite class interests. This instability was a manifestation of class struggles and the inability of the ruling classes to maintain stability in the face of growing discontent from the exploited masses. A great example was the presidency of General Belzú, between 1848 and 1855. He was the first president to fight against the white elite. During his presidency, he faced constant threats by former President Ballivián and by General Linares. He was forced to resign in 1855 to 'respect democratic norms', and his successor was coupéd within two years by General Linares, which marked a return to elitist rule in Bolivia.

Dialectical materialism underscores that change and development occur through the resolution of contradictions. In this period, Bolivia was undergoing a dialectical process, with the contradictions between the ruling elite and the oppressed masses gradually intensifying. The demands for land reform and more equitable distribution of wealth represented the synthesis that emerged from this dialectical struggle. The 1899 Civil War, for example, was a significant event that embodied these contradictions. It was a civil war characterized by regional, ethnic, and class divisions, with the elite being represented by the Conservative Party and the oppressed peoples being represented by the Liberal Party, ultimately leading to a shift in political power and the emergence of a more centralized government. The resolution of this war demonstrated how class struggles contributed to Bolivia's political evolution.

4.2 Revolutions and social movement in the first half of the twentieth century

This period in Bolivia's history was marked by a series of social uprisings and revolutions, reflecting the dialectical struggle between the ruling classes and the exploited masses. The material conditions of this era were characterized by the continued dominance of the mining industry, controlled by foreign companies and the land-owning elite. This economic structure perpetuated social inequalities, with the indigenous and working-class populations experiencing economic exploitation and marginalization. The dialectical materialist perspective highlights the emergence of class struggles as a response to these oppressive material conditions. The exploited masses sought to address economic disparities and assert their rights, leading to organized social movements and, eventually, revolutionary action. This was especially clear after Bolivia's defeat in the Chaco war, which saw Generals Germán Busch and David Toro try to break with the previous elitist social and economic relations by implementing a military style of socialism, nationalizing various sectors of the economy and writing a new, more inclusive constitution. This military socialist project could not be concluded, however, as Conservative General Carlos Quintanilla took power, who in turn was overthrown by Gualberto Villaroel, who embodied the irreconcilability of the elite and oppressed classes by trying to appeal to both indigenous and proto-fascist sectors of society.

An important moment during this period was the 1952 National Revolution, led by the MNR, in Bolivia. This revolution represented a dramatic shift in the country's political and social landscape, as it replaced the traditional oligarchic elite with a broadly leftist MNR government. It was characterized by a series of demands, described by three central pillars of the MNR thought: universal suffrage for everyone in Bolivia, nationalization of the country's mines and a far-reaching land reform. Historical materialism emphasizes how the demands of the revolution were deeply rooted in the economic base of society. The exploitation of the working class and indigenous populations, coupled with the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, prompted this revolutionary response.

However, while voting rights and land reforms were mostly met, the nationalization of the country's mines created a rift within the MNR, which shows that even within the MNR, there were conflicting class interests, with those representing the countries oppressed masses stating that the foreign owned mines should be expropriated without compensation, while those in the MNR representing the oligarchy wanting to, at least, offer compensation for the expropriated mines. In the end, this also led to the creation of a third wing in the MNR, that of the reformists, who tried to use divide and conquer tactics to prolong their wing's stay in power, thereby using

the class conflict to its advantage. This, however, also led to the demise of the MNR, as neither the oppressed masses nor the oligarchy felt represented by the MNR, thereby intensifying the class conflict again along material lines.

4.3 The era of neoliberalism and class conflict

In the mid-20th century, Bolivia, like many other countries in Latin America, began to embrace neoliberal economic policies, which started during the presidency of General René Barrientos. These policies were influenced by international pressures and centred on the liberalization of markets, privatization of state-owned industries, and reduced government intervention in the economy. Neoliberal policies included trade liberalization and privatization of key industries, which affected different social classes differently. While they promised economic growth, they also deepened inequalities. Historical materialism underscores the role of these policies in maintaining or exacerbating class divisions. The economic restructuring that accompanied neoliberalism often benefited the upper classes and foreign corporations, while the working-class and indigenous populations experienced job insecurity, wage stagnation, and reduced access to social services. The material conditions of the country contributed to growing class conflicts.

The adoption of neoliberal policies in Bolivia led to the emergence of social movements and labour strikes. These movements represented the dialectical response to the economic disparities and inequalities created by neoliberalism. An example was the Ñancachuzú Guerrilla, a Marxist-Leninist group led by Che Guevara, who tried to change the class dichotomy in Colombia by establishing a socialist State through revolution. The implementation of neoliberal policies also brought about political instability in Bolivia. As class conflicts intensified, governments faced challenges in maintaining social order and political authority. This period was marked by frequent changes in leadership, including coup attempts and protests, reflecting the dialectical tensions between competing class interests.

This is demonstrated through the different Presidents that came to power through coup d'états. After Barrientos, a conservative, died, the leftist Alfredo Ovando took power through a coup against Barrientos' Vice-President. Ovando immediately started expropriating American companies, which led to an almost complete embargo of the Bolivia economy. He was overthrown by General Juan José Torres, who thought that Ovando's plans did not go far enough. Torres broke off diplomatic relations with the United States, sought closer cooperation with the socialist bloc and nationalized large parts of Bolivia's economy. After just one year,

he was in turn overthrown, with the help of the United States, by Hugo Banzer who was a staunch anti-communist. Not only did he privatize large parts of the economy that were nationalized by Torres, he also conducted a brutal campaign against leftists as part of the larger Operation Condor, which further demonstrated the irreconcilability of the classes through their material relations. During Banzer's presidency, the extreme neoliberal policies he implemented led to further inequalities. These quick successions of presidents are therefore a prime example of change and development are achieved through the dialectical process of contradictions and struggles of the different classes.

The late seventies and early eighties saw an even more extreme form of schisms between the different classes. After Banzer stepped down, and elections proved inconclusive, congress named left-wing Senate president Walter Guevara as interim-president. He was overthrown by a right-wing general, Alberto Natusch, who was supported by the country's traditional oligarchy. When he failed to consolidate power, congress opted to make left-wing senator Lidia Gueiler president. When new elections were held, and leftist candidate Hernán Siles Zuazo won, a coup d'état by the most extreme conservative faction occurred, with Luis García Meza, Celso Torrelio and Guido Vildoso leading a far-right military junta, that would uphold extreme neoliberalism.

When democracy returned, the economic policies remained the same, with extreme neoliberal policies leading to even deeper social and economic inequalities. The dialectical response to this extreme neoliberalism was manifested in strikes, protests, and political unrest. This period saw the rise of labour unions and indigenous movements as they demanded workers' rights, land reform, and more equitable social policies. This class struggle, rooted in the contradiction between the elite and the marginalized, significantly shaped Bolivia's political landscape during this time, especially during the presidencies of Hugo Banzer (who returned to power democratically), Jorge Quiroga, Gonzalo Sánchez and Carlos Mesa. The protests were organized by Evo Morales, who managed to organize and unify the different sectors of Bolivian society, including campesinos, cocaleros, mine workers, syndicates and other indigenous groups, into the MAS-IPSP, a political instrument that fought against neoliberalism and imperialism.

4.4 Evo Morales and MAS-IPSP

In the early 21st century, Bolivia's material conditions were characterized by a continuing concentration of wealth, resource exploitation, and economic disparities. The country's wealth,

particularly in the natural gas and minerals sectors, remained concentrated among a small, predominantly elite group. This deepening schism between the two classes led to Evo Morales winning the presidency in 2005. The dialectical materialist perspective highlights how these material conditions contributed to the ongoing class struggles in Bolivia. The exploited and marginalized populations sought to address these economic disparities and assert their rights. Evo Morales' rise to power represented a response to these material conditions, promising to address class inequalities and redistribute wealth.

Morales' election was a significant departure from traditional Bolivian politics, as he was the first indigenous president in the country's history. Morales ran on a platform of socialism and promised to address issues related to land reform, nationalization of key industries, and indigenous rights. Historical materialism underscores the economic and social conditions that made Morales' election possible. The persistent class divisions, the concentration of wealth, and the exploitation of resources set the stage for the rise of a leader who championed the interests of the marginalized and exploited.

Morales implemented a series of reforms aimed at shifting control over key industries and resources from foreign corporations to the state. This included the nationalization of natural gas and other strategic sectors. Land reforms were also undertaken, aimed at redistributing land to indigenous communities and peasants. The nationalization and land reforms were manifestations of a dialectical response to the historical material conditions in Bolivia. These policies sought to address the economic disparities and social inequalities that had persisted for centuries, albeit through a non-Marxist way, as Morales implemented these reforms through the bourgeois State.

Morales' government also emphasized indigenous rights and the recognition of indigenous cultures. This was a significant departure from previous administrations that had marginalized indigenous communities. The recognition of indigenous rights and the elevation of indigenous cultures into the national consciousness were important components of his socialist agenda. This recognition of indigenous rights was a response to the historical material conditions of indigenous marginalization and exploitation. It represented a shift in the superstructure of society, reflecting changes in the broader economic and social relations.

Another point that represented a change was Morales' staunch anti-imperialist point of view, favouring having close relations with other anti-imperialist nations, such as Venezuela, Cuba, Russia and Iran. This represented a change in the economic relations of Bolivia, as the elite has

close relations with the imperialist core, represented mostly by the United States. This shift in international perspective refocused Bolivia's international relations to mutually beneficial relations, instead of dependency on the imperial core.

Dialectical materialism underscores that change and development occur through the resolution of contradictions. Despite the transformative policies implemented by the Morales government, class struggles and social tensions persisted. Opposition from sectors of the population who felt marginalized, which constitutes the elite, mostly centred in the eastern regions of Bolivia, as well as debates over resource distribution, continued to shape Bolivia's political landscape well into the 2010's.

4.5 Class struggle and its role in the 2019 coup d'état

The 2019 Bolivian coup d'état can be seen as a continuation of the irreconcilability of class interests through the Bolivian State, as it represented a difference of interest of the oppressed masses, represented by Evo Morales, and that of the oligarchic elite, represented by the opposition. The material conditions leading up to the elections showed that the elite were unhappy with the redistribution of wealth from the elite to the oppressed masses, the continued ideological polarization between MAS-IPSP and the opposition and the historical class contradictions that I have described above.

Dialectical materialism emphasizes change and development through the resolution of contradictions. The 2019 coup was a culmination of dialectical processes that had been evolving over time. The coup was marked by class struggles and social movements. Protests and clashes between supporters and opponents of Morales represented the ongoing dialectical tensions within Bolivian society, which supported representing the historically oppressed masses and the opponents of Morales representing the country's traditional oligarchic elite. The coup also represented a shift in the political landscape. It led to the departure of Morales, an indigenous and socialist leader, and his replacement by a de facto government with different political and class interests.

Historical materialism underscores that political developments are shaped by the underlying material conditions. In this context, the 2019 coup can be seen as a reaction to the perceived threats to existing economic interests and the challenges posed by the Morales government's policies. The oligarchic elite, particularly in the natural gas and mining sectors, had concerns about nationalization and resource ownership policies. They saw Morales' socialist agenda as a threat to their economic interests and sought to protect their wealth. A segment of the urban

middle class, influenced by ideological and political differences, also saw the Morales government as infringing on democratic principles and feared the concentration of power in the executive branch, even though a decision of the constitutional court allowed Morales to run. Lastly, the coup can be seen as an expression of historical class divisions. The opposition to Morales represented those who had historically held power in Bolivia and who wanted to regain its position as the dominant class.

4.6 Imperialism and its influence on the 2019 coup d'état

I will now continue the Marxist-Leninist analysis, using the theoretical framework of imperialism to analyse the coup. The historical context shows that Bolivia's history is marked by centuries of colonial exploitation, starting with the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. The Spanish crown extracted vast wealth from the region, primarily through the exploitation of silver mines, leading to the infamous Potosi silver mines. This early exploitation set a precedent for the economic dominance of foreign powers in Bolivia. Although this was not during the capitalist era, colonialism is a form of pre-capitalist imperialism, which falls in line with the historical materialist way of analysing the world.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Bolivia's vast reserves of minerals, particularly tin, became a focal point for foreign economic interests. American companies played a significant role in the tin industry, generating enormous wealth for themselves while leaving the majority of Bolivians in poverty. This historical experience reinforced the notion of Bolivia as a resource-rich country exploited by foreign powers. While several Presidents during this period tried to nationalize important sectors of the economy, this was always met by resistance of both the Bolivian elite and the United States. An example would be that of President Ovando, who in 1969 started nationalizing the mining sector. Immediately, the United States imposed an embargo, which affected 75% of Bolivia's economy, thereby forcing it to comply with America's interest, or being economically destroyed.

When we look at the interest of the imperial core in Bolivia, we need to go back to what imperialism exactly is, according to Lenin. He characterizes imperialism as a stage of monopoly capitalism marked by monopolies, cartels, the role of banks as monopolists of finance capital, and a new colonial policy centred around the struggle for raw materials and capital exports. This is also seen in regards to the 2019 coup d'état: Bolivia has the world's largest reserves of lithium, which is used to make batteries for electric cars, mobile phones, laptops and digital cameras. This is of great interest to the monopolies in the imperial core, especially companies

like Tesla, Apple, Microsoft and other monopolist enterprises. A good example of the fact that at least the monopolies economically benefited from the coup d'état is when we analyse how Tesla reacted to it. Not only did its stock prices go up considerably, Tesla's CEO Elon Musk also publicly supported the coup d'état (Elon Musk under fire after expressing support for Bolivian coup, 2020).

4.7 Recreation of dependence on the United States by the de facto government

Another example, which continues with the example of Tesla, is the idea of creating new dependency of the Bolivian economy on the United States economy, using the theory of imperialism and dependence of Theotonio dos Santos. Bolivia, as stated, has a history of economic dependence on more powerful nations. This economic dependence is rooted in the extraction and export of valuable natural resources, such as minerals and, in Bolivia's case, natural gas. Foreign corporations, often representing imperialist interests, have historically profited from these resources, while Bolivia has remained reliant on commodity exports. As stated before, imperialist powers, including multinational corporations and foreign governments, have a vested interest in maintaining control over the resources and markets in dependent countries. Bolivia's significant natural gas reserves were particularly appealing to these interests, as they sought to secure access to these valuable resources. The Morales government, during its time in power, challenged Bolivia's economic dependence by implementing policies that sought to increase state control over natural resources and redirect revenue toward social programs and development.

The policies pursued by Morales, particularly the nationalization of the natural gas industry, generated resistance from foreign corporations and governments that benefited from Bolivia's economic dependence. They perceived Morales' government as an obstacle to their profit-making activities. This opposition, driven by imperialist interests, played a significant role in the events leading up to and following the coup. Dos Santos' theory of dependence emphasizes the role of international actors, such as the United States and multinational corporations, in perpetuating economic subjugation. In the case of Bolivia, there were allegations of foreign involvement in the coup, through the Organisation of American States. The U.S. government's initial response to the 2019 elections raised suspicions of support for the opposition, further underscoring the role of international actors in Bolivia's political dynamics. Following Morales' exile and the rise of Jeanine Áñez to power, the Bolivian government shifted its economic policies to align more closely with international financial institutions and foreign investors.

This shift reflected the interests of imperialist powers and their desire to reassert control over Bolivia's economy.

The economic dependence of Bolivia on the imperial core was recreated by Áñez through different ways. First, after Morales was forced to resign by the army and leave Bolivia, the transitional government led by Jeanine Áñez moved swiftly to implement a set of market-friendly economic policies. These policies aimed to create a more favourable environment for foreign investment and multinational corporations. This shift represented a departure from the economic policies pursued by Morales, which emphasized resource nationalization and wealth redistribution. Also, the de facto government received support and recognition from international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These institutions often advocate for policies that prioritize fiscal austerity, privatization, and deregulation, aligning with the interests of foreign investors. Áñez' willingness to embrace such policies demonstrated its commitment to the economic reorientation favoured by these institutions.

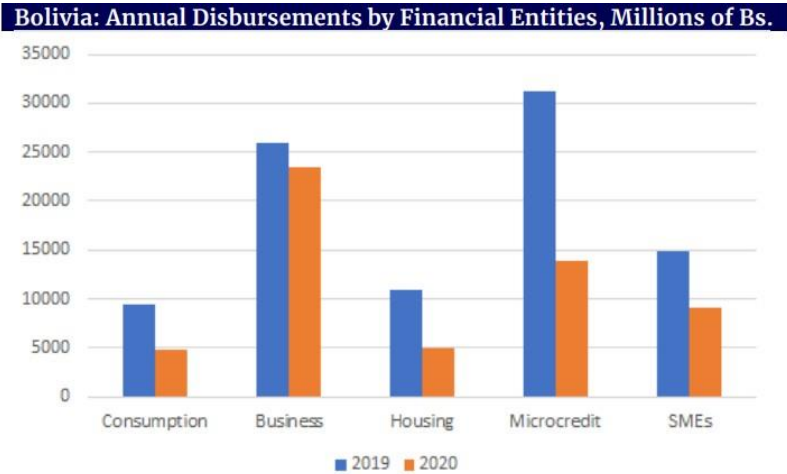
One of the key elements of the post-coup economic reorientation was the potential reversal of resource nationalization policies enacted under Morales, and to bring them back in the hands of monopolies of the imperial core. This involved opening up sectors of the economy, particularly the natural gas industry, to private investment and foreign corporations. Also, while the Morales government had implemented social programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, the post-coup regime de-emphasized these initiatives in favour of more business-friendly policies. The focus shifted from wealth redistribution and social development to creating an environment conducive to foreign investment and market-driven economic growth. This led to a decrease in real wages in both the public and private sectors of Bolivia, as can be seen in this graphic:

Bolivia: Public and Private Median Remuneration, Percent Change (Year-Over-Year)		
	Public Sector	Private Sector
2019	2.18%	2.50%
March	4.52%	1.06%
June	2.14%	0.97%
September	0.82%	2.29%
December	1.33%	5.74%
2020	-2.02% (p)	-3.16%
March	-1.73% (p)	3.00%
June	-1.57% (p)	-4.66%
September	-2.39% (p)	-3.75%
December	-2.39% (p)	-7.08%

Sources and Notes: INE (N.d. d) and INE (N.d. e). Remuneration includes salaries and other monetary benefits received by employees. A (p) indicates that the data is preliminary.

(Carvalho, Johnston, Sammut, & Weisbrot, 2021, p. 24)

The economic reorientation faced significant controversy and opposition from Morales' supporters and social movements that had benefited from the previous government's policies, with many campesino groups and syndicates taking to the streets, to which the de facto government responded with brute force, going as far as giving a carte blanche to Bolivian soldiers committing crimes against humanity. It is clear that the new economic direction undermined the interests of the majority, instead solely catering to the wants and needs of the Bolivian elite and the imperial core. Financial institutions were, for example, ordered to disburse less to citizens and enterprises, in order to facilitate a neoliberal shock therapy, as shown in this graph:



Source: Adapted from BCB (2021c), 21, figure 6a.

Consumption	Business	Housing	Microcredit	SMEs	Total
-49%	-9%	-55%	-56%	-39%	-39%

Source: Adapted from BCB (2021c), 21, figure 6a.

(Carvalho, Johnston, Sammut, & Weisbrot, 2021, p. 12)

This newly created dependency on the United States' economic growth therefore also makes Bolivia a capitalist colony of the United States, because not only is capital being exported to Bolivia through this way, it also makes Bolivia's economic development secondary to the economic development of the United States. In other words: the only chance in which Bolivia might economically develop, if it is continues to serve the economic interest of the imperial core. If it does not do this, it will be punished and cut off from economic integration, as shown by the United States responses to Bolivian nationalization projects during the Presidencies of

Ovando, Torres and Morales, who were are subject to embargoes and economic punishments by the United States.

4.8 The role of rational fascism in the 2019 coup d'état

In the last part of this analysis, I will look at the role that rational fascism has played in the coup d'état. Rational fascism suggests that authoritarian regimes often hide their true intentions under the cloak of legality and democratic norms. In Bolivia, the coup leaders, supported by various domestic and international actors, portrayed their actions as a defence of democracy and the rule of law. They claimed that Evo Morales' re-election in the 2019 presidential election was fraudulent, using this alleged electoral irregularity as a justification for his removal from office. This electoral irregularity was reported by the Organisation of American States, who relied entirely on mere statistical analysis, which can easily be disproved.

In this final report, the OAS took a sample of 4692 tally sheets, in which they found that 226 cases in which two or more tally sheets were filled out by the same person, which according to the OAS, amounts to fraud. 91% of the votes of these tally sheets were for the MAS-IPSP (Electoral Integrity Analysis General Elections in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2019, p. 56). First, it is important to note that the OAS only selected tally sheets where MAS-IPSP had won at least 71% of the votes, and not in other areas. This shows that the OAS was trying to confirm a preconceived conclusion. Also, the Bolivian electoral law does not prohibit a person from filling out multiple tally sheets, only from signing multiple tally sheets. This renders the argument from the OAS baseless (LEY DE 16 DE JUNIO DE 2010, 2010). Besides this, we can also compare the results of the tally sheets between the 2019 and the 2020 elections. In the 2019 elections, the average percentage of voted for the MAS-IPSP in these 226 tally sheets was 91.6%. In the 2020 elections, organised and monitored by the de facto regime, 97.0% of the votes went to MAS-IPSP (Gómez, 2020). If you take into account that the OAS, in their report, claimed that these tally sheets in the 2019 election were completely fraudulent, we can conclude that there was no basis for this whatsoever, and that the OAS had a clear agenda. Also, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology also analysed both the elections results and the OAS report, and concluded the following:

We run 1000 simulations on what the vote margin between Morales and CC might be, given the vote trends that occurred in the same localities and municipalities as the precincts yet uncounted. We find that Morales could expect at least a 10.5 percentage point lead over the CC, and on average a more than 10.3 percentage point lead over CC.

Therefore, the results suggest that Morales's victory can be explained by his electoral performance before the *trep* (preliminary results) vote count halted. Following our reproduction of the OAS results and simulations of what the Morales vote share might be given his earlier voter support, we cannot find evidence of an irregular trend. First, there is no actual "drastic jump" in voter support for Morales at the halt in the *trep* count of the vote. Insofar as the second place winner placed close to Morales, their support spiked only during the first initial votes counted in the *trep*. Further, if one estimated the Morales winning margin only given his performance against the other parties prior to the halt in the *trep* vote count, his victory margin can be entirely explained by how well he did before the halt in the *trep* vote count. Therefore, we cannot find results that would lead us to the same conclusion as the OAS. We find it is very likely that Morales won the required 10 percentage point margin to win in the first round of the election on October 20, 2019. (Williams & Curiel, 2020, pp. 6-7).

We can therefore see that the belligerents used a cloak of legality to justify the coup d'état, even though the reports do not hold up and do not prove anything. The coup leaders' selective concern for democracy is also a key element of rational fascism. While they presented themselves as defenders of democratic principles, the removal of an elected president without due process, the suppression of opposition, and the appointment of a non-elected leader in Jeanine Áñez raised questions about their true commitment to democratic values. Furthermore, the coup received support from international actors, including the United States. This external support added a layer of legitimacy to the coup, as the U.S. and its allies emphasized their concern about the alleged electoral fraud. The involvement of foreign governments, however, suggested an ulterior motive, raising suspicions about their true objectives in Bolivia.

The coup narrative focused on electoral fraud and democracy, deflecting attention from the economic interests of powerful actors who sought to regain control over Bolivia's valuable natural resources, particularly natural gas. This emphasis on electoral concerns distracted from the economic motivations underlying the coup. Also, the *de facto* government selectively applied the law, targeting Morales and his supporters with legal actions and allegations of sedition, (online) terrorism, and corruption. This use of legal mechanisms furthered the impression of legality while serving to suppress opposition voices.

This clearly shows the use of rational fascism during the Bolivian coup d'état of 2019, as the imperial core, in this case the United States, saw Bolivia as force of instability, as Morales had dared to go against the interests of the imperialist core. To combat this, the United States

mobilized both the Bolivian elite and the international community (the Organisation of American States) to discredit the 2019 election results by utilizing rational fascism. The Bolivia elite were framed as a majority of Bolivians who were fighting against the 'Morales dictatorship', while the OAS conducted a very clearly biased investigation that 'proved' the existence of fraud, something that I have shown to be incorrect.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This work has shown how we can explain the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état based on the theoretical basis of Marxism-Leninism with the focus on class struggle, explained using dialectical and historical materialism, and imperialism, explained by the Leninist theory of imperialism, Theotonio dos Santos' theory of dependence and Michael Parenti's theory of rational fascism. The 2019 coup is therefore, when used these theoretical foundations, a clear expression of intense class struggle, the irreconcilability of class interests and imperialist forces having interest in Bolivia.

Bolivia has always been divided, economically, racially and geographically, but these divisions have always run along the lines of the bourgeois and proletariat classes. From the moment of independence, there was a marked class struggle, which is a result of the Spanish colonial social structures, continued class antagonisms perpetrated by the different caudillo rules, the elite's relation with the imperialist core and the subsequent intervention of the imperialist core during various moments in Bolivia's history. The 2019 coup was therefore marked by intense class antagonisms, in which the Morales' government represented the oppressed masses, and the opposition and the de facto government representing the country's elite.

Imperialism also played an important role in the 2019 coup. The imperial core has always influenced Bolivia's internal policies since its independence, as the United States always had an interest in Bolivia's resources – tin, lithium etcetera. The naturalization of these resources, done by multiple governments, has always been met with hostility. While in the twentieth century, the imperial core resorted to direct economic sanctions, in the twenty-first century, it has resorted to more subtle ways, them being dependence and rational fascism. Rational fascism was used to discredit the 2019 election results as being fraudulent, even though there is not actual evidence for that, and it used the de facto government of Jeanine Áñez to create an economic dependence of Bolivia on the United States, thereby tying Bolivia's economic development to the United States' economic development.

When looking at the different analysis that have been conducted in English on the 2019 Bolivian coup d'état, we see that this analysis offers a counterweight to the other analysis that exist. I am in complete opposition to Nicolás Russo, who used the Lockean idea of the right to rebel against dictatorships, thereby affirming that Morales was a dictator. I have tried to show that this is more nuanced, and that there are various legal, democratic and moral arguments that can be made when describing the presidency of Morales. While certainly controversial that he was a

candidate in the 2019 presidential election, there was a decision by the constitutional court that allowed him to run after the referendum he organised – a referendum that was influenced by disinformation – failed to pass. Russo’s argument that the constitutional court was somehow pro-Morales also does not hold up, as the same court, with the same judges, approved of Áñez taking the presidency after the forced resignation of Morales, García Linera and the two next in the line of succession.

In regards to the analysis of Aponte-García, I share the idea that superpowers, and in Bolivia’s case, the United States, played a role in the 2019 coup d’état. However, I do think that the neorealist approach to the theme leaves out the historical importance of class struggle. Also, according to imperialist theory, imperialism can only be conducted by late-stage capitalist nations in the imperial core. Thus, I do not think that this is necessarily a fight between the United States and China to who should have control over Bolivia’s resources, I see it as a fight of Bolivia as a nation against the imperial core – i.e. the United States.

Democracy in Bolivia was restored in 2020, with the win of MAS-IPSP candidate Luis Arce, who continued the road to economic independence for Bolivia, by breaking the dependence on the United States created by the de facto government of Jeanine Áñez, and by continuing to empower the historically marginalized groups of Bolivia, the oppressed masses. A good example of this continued struggle for emancipation was the creation of the Bolivian ministry of Culture, Decolonialization and Depatriarchalization, which is headed by the Quechua social leader Sabine Orellana. Bolivia is continuing its anti-imperialist path, and it will need to overcome many more hurdles in the future.

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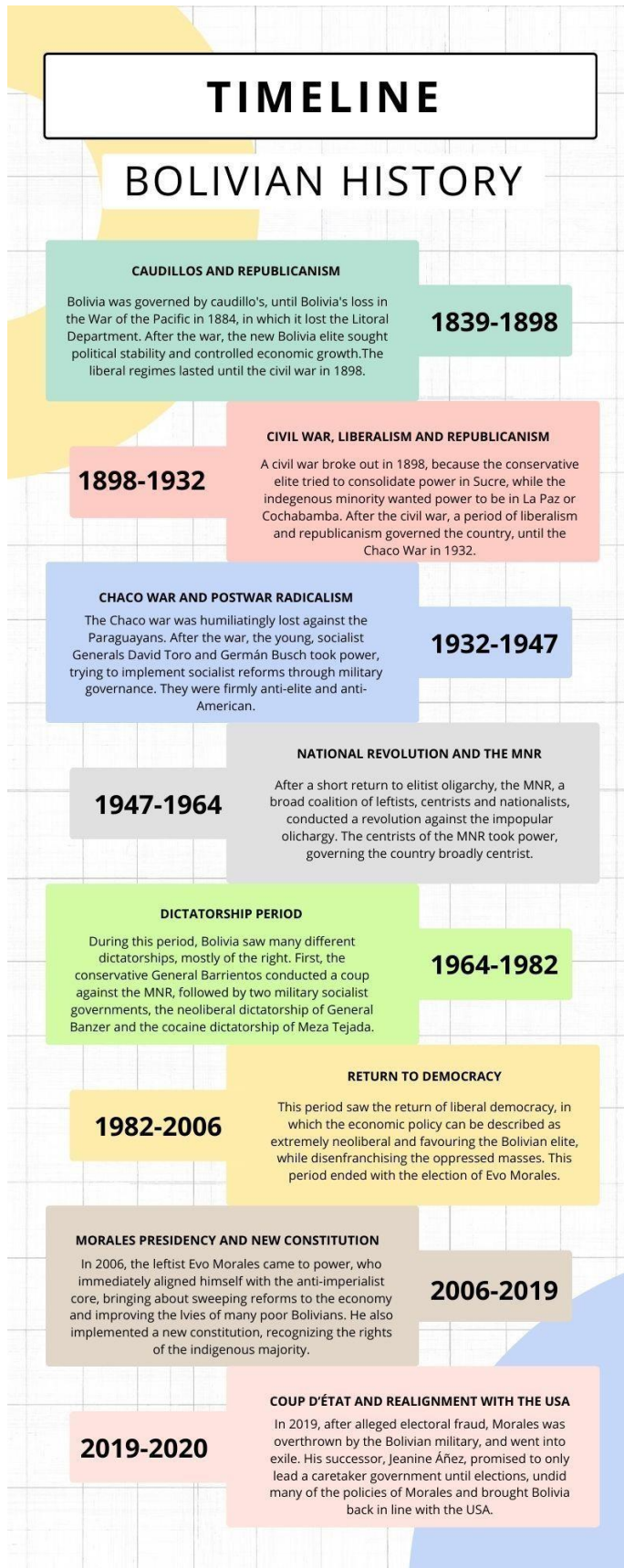
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7. ANNEX 1: TIMELINE OF THE BOLIVIAN POLITICAL HISTORY



8. ANNEX 2: ACTORS MAP OF BOLIVIA

	Elite with power	Elite without power	Masses with power	Masses without power
1839-1898	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All presidents were elitist with power, except for the presidency of Manuel Isidoro Belzú. The peoples of the east, who inherited colonial wealth and land from the Spanish after independence. Mostly of Spanish descent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1848 - 1855: presidency of Belzú The elites retained economic power during this period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1848 - 1855: presidency of Belzú 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The indigenous peoples of the west, who did not have voting right, did not speak Spanish and were forced to work in a quasi slave system.
1898-1932	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The elites continued to govern the country. First through the Liberal Party, then through the Republican Party 	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bolivian masses, mostly represented through indigenous social groups, syndicates and other organisations, conducted protests against Sucre being appointed capital of Bolivia.
1932-1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old elite lose power over young veterans of the Chaco War with Socialistic ideals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military Socialists take power and try to achieve socialism through militaristic governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Toro, Germán Busch and Gualberto Villaroel tried to improve the live of the oppressed masses by implementing socialist and protectionist policies and by nationalizing the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the new military leaders tried to improve the lives of the oppressed masses, they did not come from grassroots organizations, as they were military men.
1947-1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The old elite took power after Villaroel was overthrown. However, this old elite was soon replaced by a new, syncretic political elite, made up by international mining corporations and their affiliates in Bolivia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new MNR government consisted of left-wing grassroots movement, centrist technocrats and a chunk of the right-wing political elite. As such, the elite lost a great deal of power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Revolution of 1952, which brought the MNR to power, largely consisted of strikes organized by grassroots movement. The MNR therefore partly represented the oppressed masses, through their left-wing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> However, as the MNR came to power, the more centrist, technocratic wing took power. The left-wing lost their influence over government as the technocrats sought to government with the old elite. Organizations representing cocaleros, campesinos and other indigenous- and worker groups started gaining traction.
1964-1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The elite had their power strengthened through the various dictatorships of the period, especially those of Banzer and García Meza. They pursued neoliberal policies that disenfranchised the masses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the dictatorship of Juan José Torres, a militaristic, communist line was followed, temporarily undermining the power of the elites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the one year dictatorship of Juan José Torres, their interest was defended. However, this was done through militaristic, non-grassroots ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The neoliberal dictatorships participated in operation Condor, attacking and exterminating left-wing grassroots groups.
1982-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The return to democracy meant a continuation of the extreme neoliberal policies of Banzer, thereby strengthening the position of the elite. 	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extreme neoliberalism, that sought to privatize basic rights like drinking water and which led to extreme inequality, worsened the position of the Bolivian masses.
2006-2019	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With Morales winning the presidency in 2006, supported by the growing indigenous and social movements, the elites lost their political and economic power for the first time in Bolivia's history as an independent country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Morales, an indigenous cocalera syndicate leader, brought political power to the marginalized group through a new, pro-indigenous constitution. He also brought economic power through redistributive policies. He was supported by various syndicates and social groups, organized through the overarching Central Obrera Boliviana 	-
2019-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the de facto government, the elite saw their economic and political power reinstated, as the de facto government represented the traditional Bolivian elite. 	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The masses were oppressed through military means, having their economic position taken away by the de facto government. The organizations responded to this by taking to the streets.