
RESEÑAS DE LIBROS / BOOK REVIEWS

ADRIAN J. PEARCE (ed.): *Evo Morales and the Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia: The First Term in Context, 2006-2010*. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 2011.

The government of Evo Morales in Bolivia has elicited tremendous interest from scholars and other observers. How did Latin America's first "indigenous" president rise to power? Has he managed to achieve his ambitious goal of re-founding Bolivian democracy and bringing significant improvements for the poorer majority? And how has the governing experience affected his *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS)?

In addressing these questions, Adrian Pearce's edited volume elucidates the historical background of the Morales administration and arrives at a fairly positive assessment of its political activities. Herbert Klein sets the stage with a comprehensive overview of recent Bolivian history. He stresses that the nationalist revolution of 1952 was followed by substantial socioeconomic and political modernization, but massive poverty and stark inequality persisted. While political capabilities increased, grievances intensified. This disjuncture triggered contentious mobilization, which rocked established parties and governments from 2000 onward and propelled the MAS into government in 2005.

Sven Harten then explains how the MAS itself changed along its path to power. Social movements, especially coca growers, had founded the party and spearheaded the early mobilizations. But the quest for broader electoral backing brought an opening to urban middle classes and intellectuals, who quickly won important leadership positions. Although President Morales maintains informal consultations with social movements, the party's connections to its erstwhile base have therefore loosened. Moreover, as John Crabtree points out, the MAS leadership has made a concerted effort to extend its popular support beyond the indigenous Andean highlands and into Bolivia's Eastern lowlands; to overcome the fierce, dangerous regional conflicts raging in recent years, it has reached out to opposition sectors concentrated there. In all these ways, the MAS has changed considerably in socio-political composition and internal organization, turning from a mere "instrument" of social movements into something resembling a political party.

As Crabtree stresses, this expansion of electoral appeals has brought impressive success at the polls, allowing the MAS to make substantial inroads into opposition territory and giving it hegemonic predominance at the national level. Willem Assies analyzes how the party has used this power to revamp Bolivia's institutional framework through the elaboration of a progressive constitution. The new charter seeks to favor poorer, indigenous and mestizo sectors in socioeconomic and political terms by recognizing and re-asserting Bolivia's ethno-cultural diversity and by moving away from the neoliberal model implanted after 1985.

Martin Sivak extends the analysis beyond domestic politics and highlights how the MAS administration has succeeded in turning Bolivia from a target of constant U.S. pressures into an autonomous actor that defines its own foreign relations, despite U.S. opposition. The U.S., in turn, has tried to regain leverage by getting more deeply involved in internal Bolivian politics, especially by supporting the opposition to Morales that is concentrated in the Eastern lowlands. James Dunkerley concludes the book with a multiplicity of reflections in the unusual form of a "personal diary."

With these main insights and arguments, the book offers a solid and thorough analysis of the politics of the MAS's road to power and the first Morales government. The authors are longstanding and outstanding Bolivia experts or younger scholars who have recently conducted in-depth research in the country. The sections that draw systematically on primary evidence, such as the chapters by Harten and Sivak, are particularly valuable in their empirical contribution.

Thematically, the book focuses on the quest for political power and its exercise. It thus captures the main meaning of the MAS's rise, namely the dramatic replacement of the established political class and the domestic and international assertion of a new force that claims to represent and act on behalf of the poor, indigenous and mestizo majority, for the first time in Bolivian history. These developments are of major significance and merit sustained scholarly analysis.

Notwithstanding these strengths, the book suffers from three important weaknesses. First, edited volumes need a strong introduction and conclusion that frame the study theoretically, discuss the major issues systematically, and interpret the principal findings in a comparative perspective. Pearce's introduction, by contrast, merely summarizes the individual contributions, and a concluding chapter is conspicuous by its absence. The broader implications of this analysis of a prominent case of Latin America's left turn remain unexplored.

Second, the book concentrates almost exclusively on politics and largely neglects economic and social policy. The authors examine how the MAS won power, but not what socioeconomic changes it is effecting with this power. Except for some brief remarks (e.g., pp. 137-38), they do not assess how—and espe-

cially, how successfully—the MAS is realizing its promise to revamp Bolivia’s development model and boost the living conditions of the popular majority.

Third and most problematically, the book does not investigate the flipside of its central theme, the MAS’s conquest of power. The authors fail to examine the threats that the party’s sweeping political-electoral success and its ever clearer quest for long-term hegemony have posed to the flourishing, and even the survival, of democracy in Bolivia. Whereas contributors stress and condemn the protest tactics of the opposition, they lack evenhandedness in not emphasizing the extra-institutional transgressions of the MAS as well. Above all, after winning the recall referendum of 2008 and thus breaking the long stalemate with the opposition, the MAS has systematically used discriminatory legalism as well as sheer harassment to put an ever more serious squeeze on the political and regional opposition of all stripes, including alternative sectors of the left. Numerous political leaders have been removed from their elected offices on trumped-up charges, have received problematic threats of “legal” action, or have otherwise been forced into exile. These questionable practices systematically stifle political competitiveness. Therefore, one crucial outcome of Morales’ first term is that Bolivia’s classification as a democracy is ever more questionable. It is a serious omission of the present volume that it barely touches on this important issue.

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SEBASTIAN EDWARDS: *Left Behind: Latin America and the False Promise of Populism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

La reaparición a principios de este siglo de la inestabilidad económica en América Latina enfrió las expectativas de que las reformas pro-mercado anteriormente realizadas hubiesen introducido definitivamente a la región en una senda de crecimiento y prosperidad. Esta decepción tuvo consecuencias en el ámbito político y académico. Si en el primero contribuyó a la reaparición de un populismo anti-mercado, al menos verbalmente, en el plano académico se comenzó a pensar que las reformas económicas se debían complementar con reformas institucionales, a las que se denominó de “segunda generación”.

El libro de Sebastian Edwards se inserta aparentemente en este debate académico, revisando igualmente sus consecuencias políticas. En principio, pretende contestar a las preguntas de por qué América Latina no acaba de progresar económicamente y, además, por qué es difícil que lo haga en el futuro. El autor considera que las reformas económicas necesitan de las institucionales. Sólo así se pasará por las tres fases del progreso económico y social que, según él,