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## FEATURED Q&A

# Is Bolivia's Evo Morales Poised to Win a Fourth Term?



Running for a fourth term in office, President Evo Morales campaigned in Riberalta on Monday.  
// Photo: via Twitter @evoespueblo.

**Q** As Bolivians prepare to elect their next president on Oct. 20, polls show current President Evo Morales in the lead with 33 percent support, seven percentage points ahead of opposition candidate and former President Carlos Mesa. To win in the first round, Morales would need to either receive 50 percent of the votes or 40 percent with a 10-point margin over the runner-up. Is a runoff expected, and how would that alter Morales' chances of winning? Will Morales' Movement for Socialism party lose its majority in the Legislative Assembly, and what implications could this have for Bolivia's next government? Can an eventual Morales victory be challenged constitutionally, and is that likely to occur?

**A** Robert Albro, research associate professor in the Center for Latin American & Latino Studies at American University: "Morales should win by just enough on Oct. 20 to avoid a runoff. The president's disregard for term limits remains contentious. His poll numbers have declined from the lofty heights he once enjoyed. He has endured personal scandals. His party suffered surprising setbacks in recent local elections. And his administration has provoked fights with indigenous groups—a core constituency. Bolivia was recently beset by catastrophic wildfires, with the administration criticized for its slow response and anti-environmental policies, provoking protests. Normally such missteps are opportunities for rivals. Morales' presidency is, however, not normal but rather historically transformative—responsible for the enfranchisement of Bolivia's indigenous majority and economic uplift

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### POLITICAL

## Mexico Sends More Troops to Michoacán

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador sent 80 soldiers and an army helicopter to western Michoacán State after a shooting there Monday killed 13 local police officers.

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### POLITICAL

## Brazil: Bolsonaro Approval Ratings Inch Upward

Thirty-three percent of those polled see Brazil's president as doing a good or great job, versus 30 percent in the previous poll.

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### POLITICAL

## Ecuador Officials Release Tally of Killed, Injured

Ecuadorian Interior Minister María Paula Romo said eight people died and more than 1,500 were injured across the Andean nation during 11 days of anti-government protests over fuel price hikes. She refused to resign over accusations that police used unwarranted force to quell protesters.

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Romo // File Photo: Ecuadorian Government.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Ecuador Gov't Says 8 Killed, Thousands Injured in Protests

Eight people died and more than 1,500 were injured across Ecuador during 11 days of anti-government protests over fuel price hikes, government officials said on Tuesday, El Comercio reported. A total of 1,330 people were arrested for protest-related crimes such as vandalism. Interior Minister María Paula Romo said at a joint press conference with General Commander of the National Police Nelson Villegas that police acted properly and did not use lethal force during the violent protests, which closed schools, left some government buildings and businesses badly damaged and cost the economy millions of dollars. As a result of the protests, 1,507 people were treated at public health facilities, including 435 police officers. Rights advocates such as the Ecumenical Commission for Human Rights (Cedhu) accused police of overreach in using tear gas and other heavy-handed tactics. Romo said Tuesday she would not resign over the accusations. "I have not made my resignation

available to the president," she said, adding that she serves at the pleasure of the president. The government and indigenous leaders on Sunday agreed to work on a new subsidy formula that helps vulnerable groups to afford fuel and public transportation. In a special session on Tuesday, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States approved a declaration supporting President Lenín Moreno and rejecting "any action aimed at destabilizing the legitimately established government and the rule of law."

## Mexico Sends Troops to Quell Violence in Michoacán

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador sent 80 soldiers and an army helicopter to the western Michoacán State after a shooting there Monday in which at least 13 police officers were killed in an ambush by drug gangs, El Universal reported. The brazen attack left pundits questioning whether López Obrador, in office less than a year, was losing ground to powerful drug cartels. In a news conference on Tuesday, López Obrador said the loss of life in Michoacán was "very regrettable" but added

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Brazil: Bolsonaro Job Approval Ratings Inch Upward

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's job approval ratings improved this month, according to an XP Ipspe Poll released Tuesday. Thirty-three percent of those polled see Bolsonaro's administration as good or great, versus 30 percent in the previous poll. Meanwhile, the percentage of those who believe his government to be bad or very bad decreased from 41 percent to 38 percent. The survey of 1,000 interviews conducted nationally between Oct. 9-11 has a margin of error of 3.2 percentage points.

## Renewables to Meet Most of Latin America's New Electricity Needs: Report

Growing electricity demand in Latin America will be met largely by renewables instead of fossil fuels as development costs continue to decrease, Moody's said in a report Tuesday. As electricity demand doubles in Latin America over the next two decades, wind and solar projects will account for an increasing share of energy supply while coal and oil-based energy generation fall out of favor. "The changes in the energy matrix will ... have broader economic and geopolitical implications that go beyond the energy sector," the report states.

## Petroperú Seeking Gov't Investment of \$1.5 Billion

Peruvian state oil company Petroperú is looking for the government to provide as much as \$1.5 billion in funds to finish the expansion of its Talara refinery, the firm's president, Carlos Paredes, said Tuesday, Reuters reported. Paredes said the money, of which \$1 billion would come from previously issued bonds and \$500 million from "fresh financing," would help the refinery begin operations early next year. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Sept. 20 issue of the Energy Advisor.]

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of a large swath of previously impoverished citizens. The country's economic growth has averaged 5 percent since Morales entered office, with GDP increasing fourfold and export revenue sixfold. Government debt has been reduced, inflation remains low, the minimum wage substantially increased, and the currency kept stable. Energy sector profits have been reinvested in popular social programs, including pension benefits, agricultural subsidies and free universal health insurance. During this period, Bolivia has significantly reduced extreme poverty, moving approximately one million, largely indigenous, citizens into the middle class. Morales' party, meanwhile, has evolved from a social movement into a dominant political

force. The candidate polling second, Carlos Mesa, has failed to unify a fractured opposition. Originally coming to power when mass protests forced his predecessor from office in 2003, Mesa is connected to a troubled era to which most Bolivians do not want to return."

**A** **Holly Sonneland, editorial manager for AS/COA Online:** "It is an utter toss-up if there will be a runoff. In past elections, Morales performed a few points better than he polled since Bolivian polls tend to oversample urban areas where he is weaker, a difference that could be enough this year to get him to 40 percent, but in recent weeks

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that his commitment to tackling the root causes of violence will eventually pay dividends. "I'm optimistic we'll secure peace," he said. The leftist leader said his focus on social policy will help draw people away from crime, and that expanded roles for National Guard to take on local policing and border control duties will succeed. At the news conference, Mexican Security Minister Alfonso Durazo said the use of force is a legitimate tool to fight lawlessness but should be considered as a last resort. "We will pacify the country without using violence, without repression," Durazo said. In related news, 14 armed civilians and a soldier died in a gunfight in the western State of Guerrero on Tuesday, BBC News reported. Local officials said authorities were responding to an emergency call in the town of Tepochica, near the city of Iguala, when they were attacked by the gunmen and returned fire.

#### BUSINESS NEWS

## Russian Firm Aims for Stake in Chile Lithium Project

A subsidiary of Russian state nuclear company Rosatom is in talks to buy a controlling stake in a lithium project in Chile, Reuters reported. Canada-listed Wealth Minerals said in a statement Tuesday that it signed a memorandum of understanding providing Uranium One with up to a 51 percent stake in its lithium project in northern Chile, where it hopes to capitalize on high demand for the mineral, which is used in electric car batteries. Rosatom would bring the company new technology that could boost the company's output of lithium, according to the report. No financial details were disclosed. South America's "lithium triangle" holds 70 percent of the world's lithium reserves, according to Bloomberg News. Bolivia, among the poorest countries in the region, holds the largest reserves, but neighboring Chile has attracted major international investment with its more stable business climate, analysts say. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Feb. 27 issue of the Advisor.]

## Save the Date

# Nov. 14

## 5G and the Evolution of Smart Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean

### FEATURED SPEAKER

**The Hon. Ernesto Muyschondt**  
Mayor of San Salvador,  
El Salvador

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## FEATURED Q&amp;A / Continued from page 2

a tepid response to forest fires has tarnished his image. Mesa meanwhile has won the support (albeit not full-throated endorsements) of important opposition figures and blocs but is still battling to get to 30 percent. If Morales cannot win in the first round, his chances of winning in December diminish considerably but not completely. Whatever the election's outcome, Morales and MAS getting around 40 percent of the nationwide vote will have implications for Congress, as seats are allotted by proportional representation. Based on July polls, it's possible MAS loses the two-thirds majority—and therein the ability to nominate judicial candidates and make constitutional changes—but retains a slim absolute majority in both houses. If Mesa wins and MAS retains any majority, how oppositional the party is toward Mesa will depend on how antagonistic Morales intends to be out of office and if MAS can reinvent itself without its figurehead. Beyond the election, there's a petition before the IACHR to rule on the Bolivian courts' decision that allowed Morales to run this year, which is at odds with the country's constitution and a referendum. The commission has yet to put the issue on the docket but is due to meet next in November."

**A** **Kathryn Ledebur, director of the Andean Information Network in Cochabamba:** "Polls give Morales a solid chance of a first-round win, with an 11-12 percent widening advantage against Carlos Mesa. Voter intention surveys also suggest that the polarization of the opposition could lead to a Morales runoff victory. Third-place candidate Oscar Ortiz's supporters appear to lean toward supporting Morales in this scenario. English-language reporting frequently misrepresents the contest as a close race, selectively highlighting two polls with high Mesa numbers and relying on exter-

nally focused political analysts. They cite Morales' noncompliance with the electoral referendum results as alienating voters but omit that his closest contender also rejected the results of national referendum on hydrocarbons. Senatorial and half of lower house congressional seats depend on the percentage of presidential vote garnered. MAS is likely to lose its two-thirds majority but maintain control of more than 50 percent. They would have reduced, but still

“English-language reporting frequently misrepresents the contest as a close race.”

— Kathryn Ledebur

significant, legislative influence, except in key issues such as constitutional changes, appointments of high-ranking officials and major reform legislation. Continued high levels of opposition absenteeism would somewhat strengthen MAS' congressional position. Undoubtedly, the opposition would contest a Morales victory. Opposition supporters already denounce pending electoral fraud, apparently in an effort to undermine an eventual incumbent victory. The accusations lack credibility; teams of international electoral observers from the Organization of American States, European Union, Mercosur, the United Kingdom and accredited diplomats will monitor the process. Furthermore, there is no clear procedure constitutionally challenge his victory. The OAS said it will not question the process and Constitutional Court decisions are not subject to appeal."

*The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at [gkuleta@thedialogue.org](mailto:gkuleta@thedialogue.org).*

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