



Winter 12-23-2005

## **Bolivia Election Sends Warning to U.S. Diplomacy, IWU Professor Says**

University Communications  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

---

### **Recommended Citation**

University Communications, "Bolivia Election Sends Warning to U.S. Diplomacy, IWU Professor Says" (2005). *News and Events*. 3743.  
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/3743>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

## Bolivia Election Sends Warning to U.S. Diplomacy, IWU Professor Says

December 23, 2005

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – The election in Bolivia this week of a populist candidate for president who campaigned on promises to defy U.S. anti-drug efforts in his country is a “warning shot across the diplomatic bow of the United States,” according to a political scientist at Illinois Wesleyan University who has monitored previous South American elections with the Carter Center.

It was significant that even the defeated candidate, Jorge Quiroga, who received his college education in the United States, sharply downplayed his ties to the U.S. during a final debate with the victorious Evo Morales, said Associate Professor of Political Science Frank Boyd.

“I think that gives us a good idea of the kind of damage that has been done to the United States’ reputation in the region and how there are considerable domestic political benefits to be gained when Latin American leaders assume an antagonistic posture toward the United States,” Boyd said.

[- Hear an interview with Boyd on Minnesota Public Radio.](#)

[- Read a \*Newsday\* article about Morales quoting Boyd.](#)

Boyd said the United States has strongly promoted but not adequately supported the eradication of coca crops in an effort to stem cocaine supplies. The U.S.-sponsored policy has not provided sufficient alternatives for the poor Bolivian farmers, who also grow the crop legally for local uses such as chewing and brewing into tea. Morales, himself a coca farmer, campaigned on a socialist platform that included nationalizing Bolivia’s natural gas production and reversing the U.S.-backed crusade against coca. Morales has ties to leftist leaders including Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Fidel Castro of Cuba.

While Morales’ views about coca drew headlines, to Boyd the key issue is that “Bolivia represents a failure of diplomacy. The Bush administration, until the last year or so, seemed to view diplomacy as an episodic activity designed to achieve a discrete policy goal. To be effective, diplomacy must concentrate on maintaining long-term international relationships with allies and other countries.

“President Bush has shown little interest in the world outside of Iraq. And so, though (former and current secretaries of state) Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice are very skilled diplomats, their attention and energy has been focused almost exclusively on the Middle Eastern region,” Boyd said. He added that the United States is likely to spend much more time repairing relationships with South American countries if it doesn’t engage with them soon.

“The real disaster scenario is for Bolivia to break up, and that’s not an unthinkable possibility, because it’s a country that’s divided sharply along regional lines” between the poverty-stricken western plateau and business centers rich with natural gas resources in the east, Boyd said. “It is noteworthy that the Peruvian stock market plummeted in the days following the Bolivian election. Clearly, the surrounding countries recognize that a destabilized Bolivia on their borders is not a good thing.”

Boyd met previous Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in La Paz and when Lozada visited Illinois Wesleyan in 2003. Lozada reported that he had pleaded with President Bush to intervene in Bolivia before the situation there worsened. Lozada and his successor each were later ousted from office amid protests fueled by inequality and poverty. Morales is the first indigenous president to win election in Bolivia, where previous rulers were of European descent.

Boyd said Morales was able to demonize Sanchez de Lozada and his successor, Carlos Mesa, and their economic policies by associating them with the United States.

“Populist leaders like Morales are able to identify a cluster of policies and political relationships – free markets, close diplomatic ties to the U.S. – and package that with populist rhetoric to suggest that the U.S. and international economies are benefiting at the expense of Bolivian citizens.

“What will be very interesting will be how and if (Morales) moderates his populist rhetoric, because now he’s got to govern,” Boyd said. “To date, he has shown few signs of moderation. In fact, on his recent trip to Venezuela, President Morales referred to Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, and himself as an ‘axis of good’ in obvious reference to President Bush’s use of the phrase ‘axis of evil.’”

To speak with Boyd about Bolivia, contact Ann Aubry at (309)556-3181.



Frank Boyd