

Please advocate accountability in mainstream press Bolivia coverage and  
opinion pieces

Dear Friends,

International coverage on the referendum has been biased and inaccurate, and, in some cases sensationalist. Here¹s the most recent example from the Wall Street Journal Opinion page. As a group, our views on Morales vary.

The referendum results appear accurate transparent and reflect the views of Bolivian voters. Morales had conceded defeat and promises not to run in 2019. As Bolivians, Bolivianists, and Bolivia-watchers with year of experience and knowledge I think it¹s important to write letters to the editor, send comments online and use social media to push for accurate,   
nuanced reporting, instead of innuendo charged inaccuracies.  It may well be a tumultuous three and a half years until the next presidential elections.

English language reporting should be balanced, precise and well-documented. Opinion pieces should be substantiated with solid arguments. Please share this with friends and colleagues. I am planning to send several installments. (Coming soon: How the New York Times went wrong it in its election coverage. That will be a long one).

Today's WSJ editorial

<<http://www.wsj.com/articles/rejecting-a-latin-power-play-1456531301>>

Includes inaccurate information and insinuations:

1. Respect for a loss in a transparent referendum is not a ³power play²" power grab" or ³undemocratic.² The decision for a fourth run without a vote, would have been.  
2. The constitutional change authorizing two term was approved in a referendum with more than 60% of the vote. It is accurate that there was no clear justification for his third presidential run.

3. It is inaccurate to assert that ³in many small towns there is no secret vote² and that Morales ³controls the electoral council in many rural areas.²

International electoral observers have not reflected these concerns in their reports.

4. This phrase is absurd:  "But the country is awash in dollars generated by the legalization and expansion of coca growing that fuels the global cocaine trade.² Coca growing has always been legal. The US drafted Law 1008 permits 12,000 hectares for traditional use.  During Morales¹s tenure Bolivia has grown considerably less coca than its neighbors, according to UNODC and less solid US figures.  According to UNODC data the extension of coca grown has gone down 34% in the last four years. In 2014, Coca production in Bolivia was 20,400 hectares ­8,400 hectares in excess of the US set limit, compared to 69,000 hectares in Colombia and 49,800 in Peru.

5. Another problematic phrase: "Mr. Morales has also made cronies out of many capitalists in order to reduce their resistance to his antidemocratic ways.² Support from Bolivian private enterprise and large-scale agriculture resulted from a growing licit economy and Bolivian government activities in conjunction with the Financial Times to engage international investment is the prerogative of any state. Capitalist seek to maximize their profit. As a result, they are not prone to political cooptation.

6. In the days following the referendum, Morales officials did make ill-advised comments about regulating social media, they have since backed down.

7. The vote was to authorize a fourth presidential run, not to make Morales king. Hyperbole is not helpful here.

8. Morales¹s reference to a ³dirty war² against him refers to social media and press coverage.  The inaccurate and exaggerated arguments in this WSJ do little to refute that clam.  
9. In spite of press assertions and coverage focusing on a baby born out of wedlock, allegations of influence peddling, and a tragic fire in el Alto leaving six dead, the percentage that gave NO its its several  point advantage appears to be from Bolivian citizens concerned about the health of democratic practices and leadership renewal. Sadly, the US mainstream press provided almost no coverage of these crucial issues.

 The Wall Street Journal requires a subscription, which makes comments and Letters to the Editor more difficult.  Social Media may prove more accessible:  On Twitter tag @WSJForero <<https://twitter.com/WSJForero>>

(South American Bureau Chief) and @WSJ.

Thanks, Kathryn