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The US-Sponsored Coup that Ousted Evo Morales. Bolivia's Partnership with China in Lithium Production

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Any human being who values justice and freedom would condemn the coup that ousted the Bolivian president Evo Morales on the 10th of November 2019.

Morales obtained 47.08 % of the vote to secure a fourth term as president in the election held on the 20th of October. Since his vote was more than 10% of what his closest rival had harnessed, there was no need for a second round of voting according to the Bolivian Constitution. However his opponents did not want to accept the result. Neither did the Organisation of American States (OAS) nor the United States of America (USA) nor the European Union (EU). They alleged "electoral fraud" without providing any tangible evidence. It should be emphasised that international observers from a number of countries testified to the legitimacy of the polls.

To protest Morales's re-election, his adversaries organised strikes and boycotts. They disrupted public order and even resorted to violence. The police allowed this to happen because like the military it was also opposed to the president. Indeed, the military and the police played a critical role in undermining Morales.

It was partly because of the failure of the military and police to protect the Constitution and the rule of law that chaos escalated accompanied by the intensification of violence. Morales did not want the situation to deteriorate further and decided to resign as president. A number of other top leaders also chose to quit. Mexico offered Morales political asylum. An opposition politician with the full backing of the military, Jeanine Anez, declared herself interim president of Bolivia. Anez had garnered only 1.7% of the votes cast in the October elections.

It would be naïve to believe that the ouster of Morales and the installation of a new president was the result of the dynamics of internal politics alone. The US had a huge role in the entire episode. Some members of the US elite not only colluded with elements in the Bolivian military but also helped to engineer the convulsions that forced Morales out of office. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), an appendage of the US establishment with a reputation for orchestrating 'regime change' in a number of countries all over the world was allegedly heavily involved in Bolivian political and civil society activities long before the October elections.

Why is the US elite so determined to control and direct Bolivia? It is partly because Bolivia

since Evo Morales came to power in 2006 has sought to be a truly independent and sovereign nation. As the first president from an indigenous community (the indigenous constitute 63% of the population) Morales is deeply committed to protecting Bolivia's wealth and resources and ensuring that they are utilised for the well-being of the people. It is widely recognised that he has succeeded to a great extent to reduce poverty, improve the standard of health of the people, especially the rural folk, and expand educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. Morales has also tried to curb the power of mega corporations in the economy.

In this regard, just before he was ousted, Morales , it is reported, decided to partner with Chinese firms to develop Bolivia's lithium deposits since Western mining companies were not prepared to comply with the terms that the Bolivian government laid out. For Morales, the exploitation of lithium had to benefit the Bolivian people before anyone else. Western companies and the US elite saw the Bolivian president as a hurdle. They were convinced that Morales had to go.

In passing, it has to be highlighted that lithium is in great demand in the world battery market today. It is crucial for the electric car which is predicted to play a significant role in transportation in the near future. Bolivia claims to have 70% of the world's lithium reserves.

Will Bolivia's partnership with China in lithium mining come to an end with Morales's overthrow? It is very likely. But the larger trend towards change in Latin America and the Caribbean in which Morales's contribution was pivotal will continue. Opposition to the military backed coup in Bolivia is strong and sustained.

Though at least 23 Morales' supporters have been killed so far by the new regime, the protest against the usurpation of power by an unpopular elite remains unabated. In Venezuela all attempts, both external and internal, to crush a leadership that is determined to protect the nation's independence have failed. A right-wing government in Brasilia has not been able to extinguish the Brazilian people's desire for justice. In Argentina some of the progressive elements have returned to power through the ballot-box. Ecuador is another example of a country where those with a progressive orientation are prepared to resist the retrogressive forces that seek to re-shape the nation. The leadership of Nicaragua remains committed to people based policies in spite of all the challenges. The new president of Mexico is attempting to introduce reforms that matter to the people. Most of all, there is Cuba 60 years after a Revolution steadfast as ever in its pursuit of human dignity and national sovereignty and serving as a pioneer of that monumental transformation that awaits Latin America and the Caribbean.

All this has to be located within a broader tapestry – a tapestry in which US and Western power is declining significantly and new centres of power are emerging and becoming more assertive.

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