

“Exporting Democracy” to Bolivia

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On October 23rd, Bolivian president Evo Morales gave a press-conference in which he stated that a right-wing coup d'état was underway in the country. With victory practically assured in the first round of the presidential election, the returning incumbent claimed that widespread right-wing extremist violence was being used in an attempt to interfere with vote counting and certification of the election's results.

Morales said

“A coup is underway, carried out by the right-wing with foreign support...what are the methods of this coup attempt? They're not recognizing or waiting for election results, they're burning down electoral courts, they want to proclaim the second-place candidate as the winner.”

This bears many parallels with Bolivia's regional geo-strategic partner, Venezuela. Following the clear victory of Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro in his 2018 bid for re-election, the US regime-change machine went into fifth gear, with the attempt to install the usurper Juan Guaidó as president through a combination of right-wing extremist violence and quasi-legal subterfuge. Both countries possess extremely valuable natural resource deposits which make them compelling targets for American neo-imperialism in what many American foreign policy thinkers (including, most famously, John Bolton) see as “our hemisphere.”

Morales also stated that one of the strategies of right-wing extremists attempting to disrupt the election was to find ways of rendering the votes of rural and indigenous communities uncountable or otherwise irrelevant. He has always received the overwhelming electoral support of rural and indigenous communities. This is entirely predictable, considering that rural and indigenous communities in Bolivia have been the principal economic beneficiaries of the revolution which has been undertaken since Morales was first elected president in 2006.

It is indisputable that Bolivia's politico-economic spectrum has an ethnic dimension, just as Venezuela's does. Both countries are highly multi-ethnic, but the overwhelming majority of right-wing extremists using violence in an attempt to unseat Maduro and Morales have been urban, middle-class and, broadly-speaking “white.” In Bolivia, some of these elements resent the effects of Morales' revolution, which has been to redistribute wealth to rural and indigenous communities through land-reform, but also through the state-sponsored modernization of agriculture. Poverty has been cut in half since 2006.

The seed-capital for this modernization of agriculture was generated by the nationalization of certain strategic industries, including the country's natural gas sector, lithium-mining, telecom, public transport, airlines, airports and some manufacturing. The profits generated

from these nationalized industries have totalled \$74 billion since 2006, money which has been invested in infrastructural development (including renewable energy) and agriculture, both of which have immensely benefitted rural and indigenous Bolivians. Significant investments have also been made in public healthcare and education, both of which the government classifies not as “services,” but as matters of national security.

The next phase in Bolivia’s plan for economic “self-strengthening” will be to seed industrialization, making it possible to create a more value-added economy. High-end processing of natural resources at home is by far preferable to the export of raw materials. It is this development, wherein Bolivia creates its own value-added industrial economy rather than simply continuing as an economic colony for cheap resource-extraction, which threatens US economic interests more than any previous development over the timeline of Morales’ 13-year revolutionary process.

However, more broadly, it is the success of this economic model which poses an immense ideological threat to American imperial interests throughout South America. Unlike Venezuela, Bolivia has a high degree of food-security, making it much more difficult for international agri-business conglomerates to attempt to starve the population into submission in an effort to dissuade them from the revolutionary path. As with Venezuela, 2 of the factors which would make direct US military intervention extremely difficult are Bolivia’s physical geography and logistics. While the US has client-states in the region, none of them have signaled that they would be willing to allow their territories to be used as staging-areas for a US invasion. In the case of Venezuela, the availability of almost 2 million well trained and ideologically committed military reservists is another factor.

Therefore, regarding Bolivia, the Americans are left with no other strategy but to sponsor low-level terrorism, enacted by domestic reactionary elements, which the western media refer to as “civil society organizations.” However, this is combined with quasi-legal methods, insofar as the purpose of the terrorism is to prevent the counting of votes and the certification of election-results. This combination of legal and illegal methods in synthesis has always been a hallmark of fascist movements worldwide, going all the way back to the 1930’s – they use violence to seize power, but always attempt to construct a veneer of legality while doing so. As a methodology, the “quasi-legal coup d’etat” is a historically defining characteristic of fascism.

This attempt to invalidate the election’s results is conducted in coordination with an international component, which then pushes for another election or refuses to recognize the election-result. The US-controlled Organization of American States, headquartered in Washington DC, has stated that there should be a run-off if Morales’ margin of victory in the election’s first round was not more than 10% of the vote. In similar fashion, regarding Venezuela, the OAS voted in April to recognize the “ambassador” chosen by Juan Guaidó as Venezuela’s official representative to the organization.

On that basis, we should not be so surprised if the United States and its allies and clients choose to arbitrarily declare that they recognize Morales’ defeated opponent, Carlos Mesa, as president. Mesa’s party (the so-called “Revolutionary Left Front”) sold out to Bolivia’s land-owning class decades ago, and he has spent several years moonlighting in Washington DC-based think-tanks. He’s Uncle Sam’s boy in La Paz. The Bolivian government’s non-compliance with these international quasi-legal diktats would then be used as a pretext for economic terrorism and the imposition of economic sanctions.

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