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## *Bolivia: the right and the networks of the empire*



*Espionage, coups d'état, arms smuggling, massacres, repression, political persecution, censorship, proscription attempts and assassination plans, in addition to the evident articulation of Washington behind the coup against Evo Morales: the Bolivian case shows that, in order to defend its interests and sustain itself in power, the right has no limits.*



Jeanine Áñez with David Hale, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs

Last October 18 marked the first anniversary of the recovery of democracy in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and in a few days it will be two years since the coup d'état that interrupted the successful democratic process that that country was experiencing. The multiplicity of actors who intervened in that coup evidences, every day with more force, the articulation of Washington in the onslaught against democracy.

### **Delegitimization as a basis for the coup**

In October 2019, presidential elections were held in Bolivia. The then president and candidate for re-election, Evo Morales, won the first round. As determined by the Constitution of that country, the Movement to Socialism – Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples (MAS-IPSP), led by Morales, exceeded 40% of the votes (obtained 47%) and achieved more than ten points of difference with the second, the candidate Carlos Mesa (who obtained 36%).

La derecha se negó a reconocer el resultado y denunció fraude. Apoyada en la estructura de medios hegemónicos en manos privadas, profundizó la campaña de deslegitimación del proceso electoral y difamación de la imagen del presidente Morales (campaña que tomó mayor peso en ese momento, pero que venía desde mucho tiempo atrás).

A ello se sumó un discurso que tiene décadas, que ha sido instalado desde los medios de comunicación que atacan los procesos populares y desde cierto sector del «intelectualismo», que ha sedimentado en el «sentido común» la idea de que quien conduce un proceso popular por largo tiempo es un dictador demagógico, un líder

autoritario que mediante el engaño (cual flautista de Hamelin) embrutece a las masas para intentar perpetuarse en el poder.

Esos mismos discursos jamás cuestionan la perpetuación de monopolios económicos o mediáticos, la reproducción endogámica del Poder Judicial o el rol hegemónico de los imperios. Pero sí denuncian con supuesto horror cuando un líder o una lideresa se ha transformado en la máxima expresión de un proceso popular y lo conduce por varios años.

Como tantos otros líderes regionales (Cristina Fernández, Lula da Silva, Rafael Correa, Hugo Chávez, etcétera), Evo Morales fue producto de esta estigmatización.

La coordinación de la Embajada

La derecha boliviana, racista y clasista, actuó en el golpe motivada por sus propios intereses y, además, con clara participación, apoyo y articulación del Gobierno de Estados Unidos. Como bien describe la periodista y escritora Stella Calloni en su libro *Evo en la mira: CIA y DEA en Bolivia*, el Gobierno norteamericano intentó, incluso cuando Morales era solo un líder cocalero, frenar el proceso boliviano por todas las vías posibles, incluso con el asesinato. Una vez en el Gobierno, Morales sufrió varios intentos de desestabilización, el más claro de ellos fue el intento de golpe en 2008



In 2019, after the installation of the fraud discourse, within Bolivia various sectors of the right were plotted represented by the hegemonic media, the hierarchy of the Catholic

Church, sectors of the Armed Forces, the Police, the Civic Committees, and key political actors such as Luis Fernando Camacho, Carlos Mesa, Jeanine Áñez, Arturo Murillo, Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga and others.

Also playing a key role in the coup were Luis Almagro, secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Argentine government of Mauricio Macri, the Brazilian government of Jair Bolsonaro and the Ecuadorian government of Lenin Moreno, members of the European Union (EU), the Embassy of the United Kingdom and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

All this structure of interests and local and international actors could only be articulated by the sectors of power that from Washington share interests with many of those sectors or directly digitize their policies, as is the case of the neoliberal governments of the region.

### **Push, support and sustain the coup**

The OAS report released by Almagro was key to sustaining the discourse of fraud that was the flag of the coup plotters. This report was strongly denied by several investigations by recognized entities and by the review of the total of the minutes carried out by the Attorney General's Office of Bolivia.

In a video that was recently released, the current governor of the department of Santa Cruz, Luis Fernando Camacho, tells how his father, José Luis Camacho, was the one who "closed with the military" and with the police so that they did not go out to avoid the coup of November 10. "When we were able to consolidate that both of them were not going to leave, we gave him 48 hours."

Once the coup was completed, the persecution of the MAS leaders was unleashed. When the lives of President Evo Morales and his vice president Álvaro García Linera were in danger, the Government of Mexico, led by Andrés Manuel López Obrador, sent a plane to rescue them, but the governments of the region aligned with Washington tried to prevent the rescue by denying him authorization to transit their airspace. The intervention of Alberto Fernández, then president-elect of Argentina (but not yet in office) managed to get the Paraguayan Government of Mario Abdo Benítez to allow the Mexican Air Force aircraft to land in its territory, refuel and leave for the Aztec country.



Almost immediately after the de facto government led by Jeanine Áñez and Arturo Murillo took office, and in the face of the certain social reaction in defense of democracy, the Governments of Ecuador (Lenin Moreno) and Argentina (Mauricio Macri) sent arms to collaborate in the repression of that people. Days after the arrival of the weapons coming (illegally) from Argentina, the Massacres of Sacaba and Senkata took place, which claimed the lives of dozens of Bolivians.



Speaking to *Contexto*, when the arms trafficking scandal came to light, Argentina's now ambassador to Bolivia, Ariel Basteiro, said: "Every day more evidence about arms smuggling appears. Every day more witnesses appear, more involved, more documents, more testimonies that make the panorama very difficult for Patricia Bullrich, Macri, the ministers, the former ambassador [Normando Álvarez García] and the authorities of the Gendarmerie.

"In a case of this kind, there has never been so much evidence and so much documentation against the accused. Macri and half of the Cabinet are involved in arms smuggling. It's a huge scandal," Basteiro said.

### **A support that came from before**

The repression unleashed by the de facto government was brutal and the support of the right-wing governments in the region was key. But it is now known that, in the case of the Argentine government of Mauricio Macri, support for the coup plotters was earlier.



The governor of Jujuy, Gerardo Morales receives the daughter and adviser of the president of the United States, Ivanka Trump.

Not only has it been denounced that the visit of Ivanka Trump (daughter of the then US president, Donald Trump) to the Argentine province of Jujuy (bordering Bolivia) during September 2019 (shortly before the elections and the coup) was intended to finish outlining actions against the Government of Evo Morales, channel funds and coordinate support for the coup plotters; it has also been pointed out that, some time before the coup, the Argentine government sent an intelligence agent named José Sánchez to gather information on MAS officials and deliver it to the CIA (which reaffirms the coordination of the US intelligence services with the coup plotters inside and outside Bolivia).

Parlasur deputy Oscar Laborde, in a previous *Context* interview, said: "Even more serious than helping a coup government is helping the coup plotters to reach the government, and that was what Macri would have done. All indications indicate that the collaboration was earlier. Two years before the coup took place, Argentina sent a second intelligence agent



to Bolivia. Some Argentine embassies have an intelligence attaché, but neither has two. In Bolivia there was Luis Varela and then came José Sánchez, who was based in Santa Cruz. Sanchez is a man whose ties to the CIA are known and there is no justification for Argentina to have sent a second attaché."

### **From blow to assassination**

The resistance of the Bolivian people managed to twist the hand of the de facto government and forced it to call a new presidential election. With a brazen judicial persecution, the government of the dictatorship managed to proscribe Evo Morales and tried to prohibit the participation of the MAS-IPSP, but did not achieve this last objective.

On October 18, 2020, Luis Arce won by 55% of the votes and more than twenty-six points of difference over Carlos Mesa, who again entered in second place.



Luis Arce has exceeded the expectations of two polls that already gave him as the winner. (Photo: AFP). Arce won 55% of the vote. In this way, the dolphin of [Evo Morales](#) achieves a crushing victory in the first round at the head of the Movement to Socialism (MAS).

But the coup plotters did not want to sit idly by. A recent investigation by the US media *The Intercept* revealed a series of audios in which Luis Fernando López, then Minister of Defense of the Government headed by Jeanine Áñez and Arturo Murillo, negotiated the hiring of a group of mercenaries to assassinate the then president-elect (not yet in office), Luis Arce.

According to the Bolivian government, the mercenary group was composed of the same members who assassinated the president of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse.

Government Minister Eduardo Del Castillo reported at a press conference that the mercenaries would have entered the country on October 16, 2020 and, not finding conditions to carry out their assassination plan, they would have ruled out the operation, withdrawing from the country four days later.

After that, and before Arce's inauguration, Áñez's former defense minister fled to Brazil. The Telam news agency reported that the Bolivian government "will ask Brazil to extradite Luis Fernando López," "for his alleged responsibility in an 'assassination attempt' of President Luis Arce."

At present, the coup plotters continue with their threats to the democratic government, insist with the script that in 2019 there was fraud (although it is already more than proven that it was not so) and deny that a coup has occurred. The media that follow at his service replicate that discourse.

Espionage, coup d'état, arms smuggling, massacres, repression, political and judicial persecution, censorship, disinformation, attempted proscription and assassination plans. The Bolivian case shows that, in order to defend its interests and sustain itself in power, the right has no limits.

Héctor Bernardo for La Pluma, October 21, 2021

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