

# In Bolivia, the American Empire Strikes Back

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***Evo Morales'** fourth term was over before it began. After winning the latest presidential election by over 600,000 votes, a flurry of violence on the part of the U.S.-backed opposition in Bolivia pressured Evo to step down. Evo's home was vandalized and several party members of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) threatened with violence. The coup in Bolivia, which was solidified by recommendation from the military, is the latest of [dozens of military coups spearheaded by the United States](#) over the last century and a half. U.S. imperialism has viewed Latin America as its backyard since 1823 when it declared the "right to protect" the region in the Monroe Doctrine. It was at this time that the American Empire replaced the Spanish Empire as the foreign power responsible for keeping Latin America in a state of oppression, dependency, and poverty.*

After over a century of U.S. imperial aggression, Evo Morales arose as one of the most revolutionary leaders of the movement for socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Latin America—a movement that gained significant traction after the election of former Venezuelan president **Hugo Chavez** in 1998. MAS has been in power since 2006. The MAS has acted as a vehicle for workers and peasants to assert their dignity and self-determination. Trade union, indigenous, and women's organizations have all played a major role in the [implementation of social policy](#) under Evo's leadership. [Economic growth in Bolivia](#) has increased by an average of [five percent per year](#), with many of the gains distributed to the indigenous populations formally dispossessed by centuries of colonial and neocolonial rule. Extreme poverty has been cut in half over the same period.

U.S. imperialism sought to dispose of Evo Morales and his indigenous-led movement even before it came to power. A FOIA request found that in 2002, the [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) had [earmarked 97 million dollars](#) to assist "regional autonomy" projects and right-wing opposition political parties in Bolivia. These funds helped develop a U.S.-aligned political infrastructure in Bolivia responsible for the coup. The USAID has acted as the political arm of [the IMF](#), World Bank, CIA, and the Bolivian elites who do their bidding. One of the "protest leaders" of the right-wing opposition, Luis Fernando Camacho, is the son of the founder of Sergas, [a gas corporation which owes over two million USD](#) to the Bolivian state for tax evasion and fraud. Under U.S. leadership, petty capitalists such as the Camacho family have used [NGOs funded by USAID](#) to overthrow Evo and his [nationalization decree](#) that placed petroleum, electricity, telecommunications, and mining sectors under the direction of the state.

The coup being waged by the right-wing opposition has been labeled a "protest movement" by the U.S. corporate media. Coup plotters such as oligarch and former Bolivian President Carlos Mesa have alleged that their protests have come in response to election fraud.

According to the [Center for Economic and Policy Research](#), no evidence of irregularities or fraudulent activities were found in the election results. The baseless claim was used by the imperialist corporate media to provide cover for the violent military coup. MAS politicians have been [forced to flee their homes](#), government buildings have been burned, and the Bolivian economy has been ground to a halt. The oligarchy in Bolivia is out for blood and it has the police and military on its side.

This is not the first time that the American Empire has waged a violent coup in Bolivia. The CIA provided military and technical support to right-wing military dictator René Barrientos. Barrientos took power by way [of military coup in 1964](#). His brutal suppression of the peasant uprising to his rule led to the assassination of Che Guevara. In 1971, the U.S. backed right-wing general Hugo Bánzer Suárez with the help of the U.S. Air Force. Hundreds of leftists and political activists [would be murdered by his regime](#).

The coup of Evo Morales comes as the left in Latin America was making a resurgence amid countless attempts by the American empire to destroy their social democratic project. In late October, Argentina elected [Alberto Fernandez and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner](#) as president and vice president, effectively ending the right-wing and neoliberal rule of **Mauricio Macri**. Tens of thousands took to the streets in Ecuador and forced **Lenin Moreno** to back away from an IMF deal which would have imposed [harsh austerity measures](#) on workers, students, and peasants. **Lula Da Silva** was [released from prison](#) to begin November. Lula's freedom represented a concrete victory for a Brazilian left currently facing enormous challenges under the rule of former officer of the fascist military dictatorship, **Jair Bolsonaro**.

The American Empire has struck back against the left in Latin America with a devastating blow in Bolivia. There are many lessons to learn from the U.S.-backed coup. For one, too few in the belly of the U.S. empire are prepared to come to the defense of the peoples' struggle in Latin America or anywhere else. The corporate media has placed a national blinder on the host of coups staged by the American empire in the last ten years alone, whether we are talking about the Clinton-Obama coup [in Honduras in 2009](#) or the ouster of Brazilian **President Dilma Rousseff in 2016**. Awash in white supremacist ideology and confined to the most unrestrained form of capitalism on the planet, workers and poor people in the U.S. have few avenues from which to express concrete solidarity with the Bolivian masses.

Another lesson of the U.S.-backed coup in Bolivia is that the so-called "end of history" proclaimed by the American empire after the fall of the Soviet Union was a complete and utter lie. The American empire is "capitalist to the bones" and its rulers believed the world would remain under its thumb indefinitely. Evo Morales and the rest of the socialist left in Latin America, while unable to completely expropriate the property and power of the oligarchs, were able to lead a mass movement toward the dignity and self-determination of the oppressed. This path required that the seeds of socialism were sewn into the fabric of governance throughout Latin America. Whether it's called "Chavismo," "21<sup>st</sup> century socialism," or the "pink tide," this movement has empowered workers and peasants to unify across borders to alleviate poverty, underdevelopment, and imperial dependency.

Evo Morales was at the forefront of Latin America's burgeoning internationalism. He was a huge supporter of [Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America \(ALBA\)](#). Furthermore, Evo challenged the American empire on the military front by advocating for [the development of a continental military](#) united in defending the sovereignty of Latin America.

The so-called “end of history” was thus nothing more than an arrogant display of American imperial hubris that only clouded its true interests abroad. Socialism has remained the American empire’s public enemy number one even after the end of the so-called Cold War. The American Empire does not respect democracy or elections, just the profits of the few. Evo’s Bolivia is paying the price for placing the needs of poor Bolivians ahead of the riches of the elite.

Perhaps the most important lesson from the coup in Bolivia is that the struggle for socialism and self-determination is far from over. The oligarchs seeking to wrestle control of Bolivia and the entire continent back from the workers and peasants will stop at nothing to lynch Evo Morales. A warrant is out for his arrest even though he has committed no crime. The oligarchs want to bring the working class back into a state of total misery. While the ouster of Evo Morales is indeed a significant defeat, the socialist movement in Latin America will no doubt fight back. The people of Bolivia will fight back. Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and other allied nations will do everything they can to support the MAS through a difficult transition. It is important that the left living in the belly of the American empire find a way to do the same.

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