

Bolivia, Venezuela, Paraguay and Argentina: threatened by one and the same enemy

By [Guillermo Almeyra](#)

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Things have reached boiling point in Bolivia, where right-wingers emboldened and encouraged by Washington have set out on an upsurge in violence likely to culminate in civil war. Venezuela, in turn, is facing a possible media-backed coup d'état also orchestrated in the United States. Paraguay's Fernando Lugo warned of a coup in the making while the country is still under pressure from the State Department's demands for the resignation of the Foreign Minister, whom the US accuses of being linked with Hezbollah and Hamas, and the IMF's opposition to the Paraguayan government's plans to tax soy exports. For its part, Argentina is enmeshed in the Miami-based trial of a Venezuelan-American criminal who tried to smuggle \$800,000 in a cash-stuffed suitcase into Buenos Aires. Despite the fact that the money was seized by and remains intact in the hands of Argentine customs officials, and after three requests for extradition so far unacknowledged by the US authorities, the FBI is playing into the Argentine right's hands with claims that it was an outside -and thus illegal- operation to fund Cristina Fernández's presidential campaign. In the meantime, the US reestablishes its Fourth Fleet, which will be in charge of patrolling not only Latin American coasts but also rivers flowing through Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Venezuela, Argentina and Paraguay, under pretext of conducting anti-drug trafficking missions.

Bolivia expelled the U.S. Ambassador after proving he was aiding and abetting secessionist Media Luna (Half Moon) groups who block highways, tamper with the supply of natural gas to Brazil and Argentina, and threaten Paraguay. The same measure was taken in Venezuela, while Honduras has yet to accept the U.S. Ambassador's credentials and Argentina made it known that it feels under attack. Latin America is on the alert as tensions rise in the continent.

Any government trying to keep at a safe distance from Washington is exposed to the danger of a growing US economic crisis and the fall in the price of oil and raw materials, which also boosts the struggle in each country between the bourgeoisie and the oppressed and the fight for state revenue and power between the capitalistic agricultural and financial sectors supported by foreign capital and the much weaker elements who, unlike the former, strive to foster their domestic markets and find ways to help the poor for that purpose.

While these sectors seek US support and the reformists and distributionists hesitate, all efforts to defend national development and sovereignty fall entirely on the shoulders of the indigenous, peasants, workers and poorest layers of the urban and rural middle class. This situation further exacerbates classist and racist discrimination by the ruling capitalists, who sometimes fool popular sectors into thinking they're above the "Indians" or "Blacks" and therefore closer to their masters' ideology. That's what imperialists do: when unable to send

the Marines, they engage their mass media in socio- and psychological warfare in the voice of their reactionary middle class. Washington sets in motion by remote control the most conservative ruling class elements in every country, as it did in Salvador Allende's Chile.

Furthermore, McCain's vice-presidential candidate –Alaska's governor Sarah Palin– has just said that the U.S. must prepare for war with Russia (and ergo with Moscow's ally China) as Washington refuels Cold War on a worldwide scale. Such is the origin of decisions to overthrow even capitalist governments if they fail to take sides with the Empire. Venezuela buys Russian weapons to defend itself, and Bolivia leans on Iran, which turns Presidents Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales into instant targets.

The Bolivian government has just declared a state of siege in Pando while holding talks with the right. However, even if the country is ruled by the left, the State is still owned by capital, like in Venezuela, where a part of the State apparatus plots against Chávez. Unobstructed by a corrupt legal system, the Bolivian right wing intends to sic the State on the indigenous president, and it will neither conciliate nor negotiate, because it counts on the racist and fascist masses of Santa Cruz and the backing of the State and the military. Therefore, State repression is the only way to tackle the right-wingers, impose respect for the Constitution, and supply the peasants with arms to protect helpless workers –as well as democracy itself– from being killed by racist mobs.

Bloodshed must be avoided as much as possible, and not everything should depend on soldiers and policemen. Yet, peasants have been killed, and those in uniform are beaten by racist gangsters who find in their total impunity an incentive to become more and more daring, while the armed forces are disheartened by the government's political weakness and unable to deal with pro-coup tendencies. Chávez is right, then, to say he will get involved in any armed conflict intended to topple Evo Morales's legitimate government. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Peru also offered Morales their "unconditional, unlimited support", as should all Latin American governments. On behalf of Juárez and Zapata, we must demand similar support from the Mexican government.

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