

Obama's War on Democracy in Latin America

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In June 2009, Obama orchestrated Honduran President Manuel Zelaya's ouster. A US supported fascist despot replaced him.

For good reason, Honduras is called the murder capital of the world. Independent journalists are killed. So are protesters for democratic change.

After its calamitous January 2010 earthquake, Obama militarized Haiti, plundered it freely, opposed Jean-Bertrand Aristide's return, orchestrated the nation's rigged elections, and prohibited the emergence of democracy.

On September 30, 2010, his attempt to oust Ecuador's Rafael Correa failed. Coup plotters shut down airports, blocked highways, burned tires, and roughed up the president.

They also took over an airbase, parliament, and Quito streets. They acted on the pretext of a law restructuring police benefits. Ignored was that Correa doubled their wages.

Obama's fingerprints were all over the scheme to oust a business-friendly leader who fell short of a neoliberal perfection.

If Correa grants Julian Assange amnesty, perhaps his long knives won't fail next time.

In the interim, he added another democrat to his trophy collection. On June 22, he plunged a dagger into Paraguayan democracy. Parliamentary impeachment was his weapon of choice.

A former Roman Catholic Bishop, Fernando Lugo was elected president in August 2008. Noted liberation theologian/philosopher/author Leonardo Boff attended his inauguration.

He said it was "an extremely happy moment." He called Lugo a "true bishop of liberation. We are celebrating the rise to power of one more liberator of Latin American."

Called both "the Bishop of the Poor" and "the Red Bishop," his election ushered in hope for change. Ordained in 1977, he worked as an indigenous community missionary until 1982.

He spent 10 years studying at the Vatican. He was appointed Paraguay's Divine Word head. In 1994, he became Bishop of the Paraguayan San Pedro Department.

Three of his brothers were exiled. Conservative Paraguayan Catholic leaders pressured him to resign because he supported landless family settlements on large latifundio estates.

On Christmas day 2006, he announced his presidential candidacy. Popular support made him a threat to Colorado Party rule. In September 2007, he formed a multi-party opposition coalition. He registered as a Christian Democrat Party (PDC) candidate. He ran as the Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC) nominee.

Winning nearly 41% of the vote, he failed to gain an absolute majority. Colorado's Blanca Ovelar got 31%. He pledged a government "characterized by honesty and not by corruption."

He called for "unity" and extended "a very special invitation to the entire political class, to all without exception" to participate in his government.

Colorado leaders vowed to regain power as soon as possible. With others on the far right, it controls parliament.

Lugo said "Latin America is living a different moment." His inauguration ended six decades of right wing Colorado rule.

Paraguay's population is around seven million. It's one of South America's poorest countries. Nearly half the population lives on less than \$2 a day. Unemployment or underemployment runs almost 40%.

Social inequality is among Latin America's highest. Powerful interests run the country. One man alone can't change things. Governing as a centrist, he tried, but now he's gone. He called himself a proponent of "socially responsible" capitalism. Washington considers him a closet communist.

He vowed to be a uniter, not a divider. "I will not be a Paraguayan Morales," he said. He promised "a middle path between Chavez and Lula."

From 1947 - 1989, mostly junta power ran Paraguay. General Alfredo Stroessner was in charge from August 1954 - February 1989. After falling out of favor with Washington, General Andres Rodriguez's coup ousted him.

In May 1993, Colorado's Juan Carlos Wasmosy became Paraguay's first civilian president in four decades. Lugo's ouster reestablished hardline neoliberal rule. Right wing

parliamentarians assure it.

After a five-hour trial, 39 senators voted to remove him. Washington controlled things behind the scenes.

Ahead of proceedings, Venezuela's Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro traveled to Asuncion with 11 other regional foreign ministers. He denounced them as a "new type of coup." He called it a "truly shameful act..."

Lugo didn't attend. He watched on television. His lawyers spoke on his behalf. They got virtually no preparation time. Their request for 18 days was denied. Doing so violated Paraguay's constitution.

Their arguments on behalf of Lugo fell on deaf ears. Proceedings were rigged to convict. Orders came from el norte.

Ahead of his ouster, Venezuela's Union of South American Nations ([UNASUR](#)) Secretary-General Ali Rodriguez denounced the attempted coup.

He said "UNASUR's greatest concern is the legitimate exercise of democracy, and within that, that there be a guiding principal of the administration of justice and conditions, (that's) absolutely indispensable."

Following the coup, [ALBA](#) (Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas) countries condemned it. Lugo attorneys got one day's notice and two hours to defend him. Charges against him were spurious.

Ahead of them in mid-June, clashes between landless peasants and police left 17 dead. Lugo named a new interior minister and national police chief.

The confrontations followed weeks of peasants occupying wealthy latifundista land. They called it illegally acquired public land.

The combination was pretext to act. Parliamentary palace coup proceedings followed.

Charges brought included signing a Mercosur Southern common market Protocol for Democracy, allowing a military installation youth meeting, clashes described above, deaths resulting from them, and failure to capture leftist guerillas.

The indictment said evidence supporting charges wasn't necessary. Lugo was guilty by accusation. Ousting him was prearranged. Latin American democracy sustained a body blow.

Lugo called his removal “a parliamentary coup against the will of the people.” He called the new government illegitimate. He said democracy must be restored.

ALBA members expressed solidarity. Liberal Party member Federico Franco replaced him. He served as Lugo’s vice president. His neoliberal advocacy is business friendly. Recognition wasn’t extended.

He’s extrajudicially forming a new government. He promised to respect big money’s private property and honor Paraguay’s foreign commitments. He meant those benefitting elite interests.

He asked other regional leaders not to call him a pariah for spurning the rights of impoverished Paraguayans desperate for help to survive.

Venezuelan Vice President Elias Jaua blamed Washington and elitist Paraguayans for what happened. He denounced efforts to weaken revolutionary Latin American change, saying:

“The battle of the Paraguayan people is that of the Venezuelans, and we are committed to thwart this new attempt by the oligarchies and imperialism as we did in Venezuela in 2002....”

He added that regional popular struggles are about “letting imperialism know that our Latin America is no longer their backyard.”

At the same time, ending its last vestiges takes time. Lugo’s ouster set things back.

It’s for regional campesinos to regain lost ground. It’s crucial they continue struggling against neoliberalism’s death grip. It’s that or perish. There is no other choice.

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