

The U.S. Footprint in Bolivia's Incipient Colour Revolution

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*“Activist groups and members of the opposition reminded **President Evo Morales** that his policy of expanding the agricultural frontier to favor the country’s agribusinesses and ranchers is the cause of the environmental disaster,” wrote the opposition daily *Página Siete*, attributing responsibility to Bolivian **President Evo Morales** for the burning of 500,000 hectares of the Chiquitania Forest, located in the department of Santa Cruz.*

WE NEED HELP! EMERGENCY STATE DECLARED! #SOSBOLIVIA
#amazonasenllamas #soschiquitania pic.twitter.com/vBuHsHtXEv

- katerine Quispe Street (@Kattytatiana18) August 22, 2019

¡NECESITAMOS AYUDA! ¡DECLAREMOS ESTADO DE EMERGENCIA! #SOSBOLIVIA
#amazonasenllamas #soschiquitania pic.twitter.com/vBuHsHtXEv

— katerine Quispe Calle (@Kattytatiana18) [August 22, 2019](#)

The burning of the forest immediately gave way to an aggressive campaign in social networks and media against President Evo Morales, attributing the fires to Decree 3973 and Law 741 that supposedly allow deforestation and controlled burning for activities oriented to agriculture and cattle ranching.

“Las leyes de quemema y desmonte” (The laws of burning and clearing) was the qualification that the opposition daily *El Tiempo* used for both legislations, omitting that one of them was approved by opponents and government officials in Congress, according to the president of the Senate, Adriana Salvatierra.

However, the suspicions about the intentionality of the fire are completely ignored. They were found in some areas, remnants of bottles with gasoline and a group of people accused of starting the fires were arrested. The role of the mayor of San José de Chiquitos, the oppositionist **Germain Caballero**, also represents another clue, because of the granting of “chaqueo” permits, as deforestation is colloquially called in Bolivia.

The hysteria about this fire in the world’s best-preserved tropical forest contrasts with the fact that little has been reported: the number of sources of fire was reduced from 11,468 to 1,362 in the last week (85% of the total number of fires), as a result of the work of more than 4,000 people, and the deployment of 200 vehicles and five aircraft, among them the famous Supertanker.

The campaign and its dissemination principles

One of the figures of this campaign, marketing and neuroscience specialist **Jurgen Klaric**, demanded in a video that President Morales accept international aid and guarantees that donated medicines would reach those affected by the fires.

“Today we are Bolivians, there are no parties or private interests, the only interest is to save the lung of the planet,” he said in a speech aimed entirely at criticizing Evo Morales and his government. Along the same lines, a group of ecological lobbyists with celebrities recorded a video with the tag #SOSChiquitania to promote the campaign.

#SOSBolivia #SOSChiquitania
Let the world know #PrayforAmazonas pic.twitter.com/YjvT5uNeSy

- Lizbeth Mendoza (@lizzye812) August 25, 2019

[#SOSBolivia #SOSChiquitania](#)
Que el mundo se entere [#PrayforAmazonas pic.twitter.com/YjvT5uNeSy](#)

— Lizbeth Mendoza (@lizzye812) [August 25, 2019](#)

In the same way, **Ximena Zalzer**, former beauty queen and host of Bolivian television, is another of the protagonists of the campaign for the entry of “international aid” to deal with the fires in the Chiquitania forest. In fact, she is one of the main spokespersons of the campaign #SOSChiquitania which, on social networks, states that the Morales government is responsible for the origin of the fire and for refusing to receive “international aid”.

This posterization of citizen opinion, promoted from social networks and private media, also corresponds to basic principles of propaganda and marketing, focused on establishing a single enemy and a set of basic arguments repeated to the point of exhaustion, as happens with respect to the explanations for the fires and the responsibility of President Morales.

The Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels catalogued some of these techniques as principles of simplification, vulgarization and orchestration.

In this way, the videos ranked as a trend in #SOSChiquitania appeal to the emotions of the public by reflecting the natural devastation and death of animals resulting from the burning of the forest.

In this way, Evo Morales is positioned as the “sole culprit” behind the fires. This basic idea circulates through viral stories on social networks, according to advertising principles that the theorist Edward Bernays collected in his work *The Engineering of Consent*, in which he elaborates a method for “people to support certain ideas and programs, from the application of scientific principles and public opinion studies”.

Evo Morales has two paths left, either he listens to his people and abrogates Law 741 and Decree 3973 or he will go down in history as the greatest criminal in our history. Already chingo 1 million hectares. Tonight all to the Plaza de las Banderas to... <https://t.co/9ZH9rrDKmW>

- Violeta Ayala (@violetablue007) August 29, 2019

A Evo Morales le quedan dos caminos, o escucha a su pueblo y abroga la ley 741 y el Decreto 3973 o pasara a la historia como el criminal mas grande de nuestra historia. Ya se chingo 1 millon de hectareas. Esta noche todos a la Plaza de las Banderas a... <https://t.co/9ZH9rrDKmW>

— Violeta Ayala (@violetablue007) [August 29, 2019](#)

In the same vein, the orchestrators of this campaign unilaterally established the figure of 1 million hectares burned to position the fires as an unobjectionable “natural disaster,” one of the strongest arguments for pressuring the Bolivian government to accept international aid, as demanded by environmental and indigenous groups.

Protests, agitation and contradictions in the discourse

The fire in social networks and private media concentrating on the same opinion matrix led to a series of street actions, spectacularized in social media to reinforce the campaign of agitation against the Bolivian government.

The first was the call for a march in La Paz, Bolivia’s capital, with a four-point agenda:

- “Immediate authorization of national and international aid already present on Bolivian soil.
- “Allow citizen organizations (read NGO) to carry out relief work.”
- “Issue a public document requesting assistance from the international community at the UN and OAS within 48 hours.”
- “Repeal of supreme decree 3973”

As is already common in these cases, the promoters of this call were celebrities, in this case Ximena Zalzer and Jurgen Klaric, as well as members of environmental groups influenced by NGOs.

In this manner, the call was “citizenized,” with no visible partisan features, in order to turn their demands against the Bolivian government into an apolitical center that would bring together more than those interested in the issue. This was precisely to create a lawsuit, apparently without political interest, that would become a mass issue for Bolivians, according to the propaganda principles explained above.

BOLIVIA needs international help - International Aid for BOLIVIA #SOSBolivia
#BOLIVIA DEMANDS... NOW!
-Abrogation of Law 741.
-Abrogation of DS 3973.
-Immediate entry of #International Help #SOSChiquitania#Chiquitania
pic.twitter.com/AKLR0pgZmR

- Samy Schwartz (@samyschwartz) August 25, 2019

BOLIVIA needs international help - Ayuda Internacional para BOLIVIA
[#SOSBolivia](#) [#BOLIVIA](#) EXIGE... ¡AHORA!

-Abrogación de la Ley 741.
-Abrogación del DS 3973.
-Ingreso inmediato de [#AyudaInternacional](#) [#SOSChiquitania#Chiquitania](#)
pic.twitter.com/AKLR0pgZmR

— Samy Schwartz (@samyschwartz) [August 25, 2019](#)

The action that followed this mobilization was the emergence of a group of environmentalists at an event for the first shipment of meat to China, which has a potential income of 800 million dollars for the country by 2030, a figure of enormous importance for the diversification of income for the nation.

“The Chiquitania is on fire and you are talking about exporting meat,” shouted the activists who claim the reasons for the deforestation are the extension of the agricultural frontier to produce meat and soy, as well as the granting of land to coca producers.

Denunciation @Csanchezberzain : The Amazon fire in #Bolivia has been promoted and sustained by Evo Morales to expand illegal coca crops, colonize for political purposes and expand agro-industrial areas for businessmen of his regime.

Interview with @PaulSfeir pic.twitter.com/fitMlwLJVq

- CarlosSanchezBerzain (@Csanchezberzain) August 27, 2019

In the same narrative exercise of consolidating Evo Morales as the only culprit, environmental groups called him the “saint of ranchers” with the clear intention of placing him as protector of the Santa Cruz Federation of Ranchers and the Confederation of Bolivian Ranchers, both organizations present at the event. It is a clear manoeuvre to construct the president of Bolivia as the “constituted power” that must be confronted in order to stop the “chaqueo”.

#Now #LoUltimo

Artist Rilda Paco Alvarado painted a painting she called “San Evo Morales,” the “saint” of cattle ranchers, amid the forest fires caused by the burns at #Chiquitania pic.twitter.com/R0WRwXulKn.

- @DavidOvando (@Davicko3) August 29, 2019

Denuncia @Csanchezberzain : El incendio del Amazonas en #Bolivia ha sido promovido y es sostenido por Evo Morales para expandir cultivos de coca ilegal, hacer colonización con fines políticos y ampliar áreas de agroindustria para empresarios de su régimen

Entrevista con @PaulSfeir pic.twitter.com/fitMlwLJVq

— CarlosSanchezBerzain (@Csanchezberzain) [August 27, 2019](#)

However, the discursive nucleus overexposed by influencers and trolls of few followers, surely paid by some advertising agency, is totally unaware that President Morales completely stopped the allocation of land in Chiquitania, and ordered that international aid be received from eight countries in the amount of 2.2 million dollars, in addition to

announcing that a new “chaqueos” law will be adopted.

Obviously this type of omission is aimed at sowing disinformation, favourable to the campaign against the Bolivian government, in order to maintain on the agenda a claim that in due course will radically change to a single focus: the questioning of the figure of Evo Morales and his government in the face of the presidential elections.

Among the accounts presented as influential in the campaign by Bolivian digital strategist Carlos Andrés Peredo is that of environmental NGO Ríos de Pie founded by Jhanisse Daza, a member of the Human Rights Foundation (HRF) of Thor Halvorssen Mendoza, cousin of Venezuelan businessman Lorenzo Mendoza.

Daza is one of the main promoters, for example, of the protests against President Morales in Bolivian embassies abroad, just as was done in previous weeks in Brazil’s diplomatic headquarters against Jair Bolsonaro for burning the Amazon.

#Bolivia: protests continue across the country asking the government to let international help in. We hear reports of volunteers passing out due to intoxication since they don't have masks.
Yup, this is me giving a speech outside the Cathedral and holding tears.
#SOSBolivia pic.twitter.com/Z2UQIHsSWG

- Jhanisse V. Daza (@JhanisseVDaza) August 29, 2019

[#Bolivia](#): protests continue across the country asking the government to let international help in. We hear reports of volunteers passing out due to intoxication since they don't have masks.
Yup, this is me giving a speech outside the Cathedral and holding tears.
[#SOSBolivia](#) pic.twitter.com/Z2UQIHsSWG

— Jhanisse V. Daza (@JhanisseVDaza) [August 29, 2019](#)

The HRF belongs to the Atlas Foundation network, financed by the American industrialists of the Koch oligarchy, which has financed movements such as “Brasil Livre”, which in 2013 took to the streets against Dilma Rousseff in the Gold Cup for the rise of bus fare. Paradoxically, this movement shaped the prelude to the process that led to Rousseff’s illegal dismissal, turning into a coup d’état, similar to “La Salida” in Venezuela in 2014.

Daza, on the other hand, was educated at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, where he participated in the program “Leading the Nonviolent Movement for Social Progress”.

In February, he gave a TED-style lecture, sponsored by the Spanish Embassy in Bolivia, in which he described the “non-violent strategy” he is developing to overthrow Evo Morales.

She also considers herself an admirer and a close friend of Srdja Popovic, a member of the Serbian Otpor movement that ousted **President Slobodan Milosevic** in what is believed to be one of the world’s first colour revolutions.

Thanks to her membership in the HRF-sponsored Oslo Forum, the young Bolivian frequently exchanges ideas about “non-violent strategies” with U.S.-funded leaders in other parts of

the world, such as those who are now leading the protests in Hong Kong.

A colour revolution or a prelude to a phase of harassment and demolition?

The campaign is quite similar to what in 2011 gave rise to protests against the construction of a road in the Isiboro Sécure National Park Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS). Needless to say, several environmental NGOs, funded by the United States, and Bolivian-Israeli photographer Sammy Shwartz, were among the main promoters of the #SOSChiquitania campaign.

At last! #Bolivia is mentioned in a report in #France that puts Evo Morales in his place as the president who allowed the disaster to happen. #SOSBOLIVIA#SOSCHIQUITANIA#ACTFORAMAZONIA @AFPespanol @CNNEE @amnestyusa @BBCNews @mathildeamnesty @ValerieCabanés @Francetele pic.twitter.com/7kOjSzQGCq

– All Together for Bolivia (@TjxBolivia) August 25, 2019

AL FIN! #Bolivia es mencionada en un reportaje en #Francia que pone en su lugar a Evo Morales como el presidente que permitió que el desastre suceda. #SOSBOLIVIA#SOSCHIQUITANIA#ACTFORAMAZONIA @AFPespanol @CNNEE @amnestyusa @BBCNews @mathildeamnesty @ValerieCabanés @Francetele pic.twitter.com/7kOjSzQGCq

— Todos Juntos por Bolivia (@TjxBolivia) [August 25, 2019](#)

In this context, it is to be expected that the target audience of this new regime change operation will be the upper middle class, traditionally anti-evista, and the new middle class born as a result of the Bolivian process.

It is to be expected that the most heavily targeted, through social networks, will be the youngest who grew up during the governments of Evo Morales, considered 39% of the electoral roll. Given that this sector in general, is receptive to the propaganda that may establish it as a “rebellion” to oppose the government of the day, even though the administration of the Movement Toward Socialism has assured them economic stability.

In a context where Evo Morales leads the polls with 43% before the presidential elections, such a coup can also change the course of the electoral process in order to lay the foundations for a process of delegitimization against him.

The singularity that Bolivia is today is that it integrates the regional bloc of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), where three of its main members (Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela) are regarded by the United States as the “troika of evil,” and two of them (Ecuador and El Salvador) have changed their orientation through betrayals and changes of government.

In this sense, the failed colour revolutions in Nicaragua and Venezuela, manufactured under the same paradigm, allowed the United States to launch new forms of warfare against the two countries through sanctions, and in the case of Venezuela, the promotion of a parallel government.

Bolivia, in this context, may be in the forefront of a similar process of softening that will

allow them to attack the main source of political stability: the economy.

In a paper by Russian Ukrainian analyst **Rotislav Ishchenko** on “coups or colour revolutions”, it is stated that the “aggressor-state” generally seeks to drive the “victim-state” to face violent street protests. Through these, the “aggressor-state” forces the attacked government to choose between capitulating or repressing the protests so that, if the latter happens, it will be described as “dictatorial” and that it has lost its legitimacy.

This enables the “aggressor-state” to interfere in the internal affairs of the affected country, if possible through mandates from multilateral organizations such as the UN or the OAS, using as a pretext the protection of human rights and the democracy institutions supposedly violated by the “victim-state”.

Furthermore, in this way, international coalitions can be formed to cover up the aggressions against the nation-victim, as is the case in Venezuela with the notorious Lima Group. In this regard, there are already steps in the OAS to condemn the re-election of Evo Morales under the auspices of Colombia and Brazil.

However, in Bolivia history has yet to be written, but it is framed in a regional context in which the United States has opted to criminalize and persecute its regional geopolitical adversaries until they fall.

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