

# Geopolitics of the Amazon - Part I

Bolivian leader replies to critics of the Morales government's development strategy

Tuesday 18 December 2012, by [FIDLER Richard](#), [LINERA Álvaro García](#) (Date first published: 11 December 2012).

**See part II (ESSF, article 27324), [Geopolitics of the Amazon - Part II](#)**

**See part III (ESSF, article 27325), [Geopolitics of the Amazon - Part III](#)**

**See part IV (ESSF, article 27326), [Geopolitics of the Amazon - Part IV](#)**

**See part V (ESSF, article 27327), [Geopolitics of the Amazon - Part V \(Final\)](#)**

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## Introduction

Álvaro García Linera is one of Latin America's leading Marxist intellectuals. He is also the Vice-President of Bolivia — the “co-pilot,” as he says, to President Evo Morales, and an articulate exponent of the government's policies and strategic orientation.

In a recent book-length essay, *Geopolitics of the Amazon: Patrimonial-Hacendado Power and Capitalist Accumulation* [1], published in September 2012, García Linera discusses a controversial issue of central importance to the development process in Latin America, and explains how Bolivia is attempting to address the intersection between economic development and environmental protection.

The issues he addresses are of great importance not only in Bolivia but throughout Latin America, and in fact in most of the countries of the imperialist periphery. They are especially important to understand in the “First World,” where there is an increasing campaign in parts of the left to turn against the progressive and anticapitalist governments in Latin America on the ground of their alleged “extractivism.”

García Linera examines the classic Marxist criteria on the forms of appropriation of nature by humanity. “Extractivism,” he shows, is not synonymous with underdevelopment. Rather, it is necessary to use the resources gained from primary or export activity controlled by the state to generate the surpluses that can satisfy the minimal conditions of life of Bolivians and to guarantee an intercultural and scientific education that generates a critical mass capable of assuming and leading the emerging processes of industrialization and economic development.

A major theme of the book is to refute the allegations in the opposition media that the TIPNIS highway between Cochabamba and Beni is intended for the export of Brazilian products to the Pacific via Bolivian territory. The book clearly demonstrates that the route is intended as part of the

national unification of the country.

*Geopolitics of the Amazon* has attracted wide attention throughout Latin America. In a recent review, the eminent Brazilian sociologist Emir Sader says “it refutes each and every one of the allegations of the opposition in his country and their international spokespersons.” [2] He describes it as “an essential book, without which it is not possible to understand the present phase of the Bolivian process and the root of the conflicts affecting it.”

The book has sparked fierce debate in Bolivia itself, including a lengthy response by Raúl Prada Alcoreza [3], a former comrade of García Linera in the Comuna collective.

There is an extensive literature on these issues now being produced in Latin America. Another example is a book, *El desarrollo en cuestión: reflexiones desde América Latina* [4]. It includes articles by some of the authors cited in the debate between García Linera and Prada.

*Geopolitics of the Amazon* has attracted commentary in Quebec, including a favourable review by André Maltais [5] in the widely-read *L'aut'journal*. A compendium of articles by the legendary Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui recently published in Quebec [6] also includes writings by Álvaro García Linera. More of his texts may be found on-line (Spanish only) on his web site [7].

Starting in today's post, I am publishing my translation of the full text of *Geopolitics of the Amazon*. Because of its length (more than 25,000 words), I will publish it in five consecutive posts in coming days. [8]. [9].

García Linera's footnotes are included as well as a few of my own, the latter signed “Tr.” I have substituted English-language references, where available, for texts cited in the notes.

*Muchas gracias* to Federico Fuentes and Cristina Rojas for their diligent and critical reviews of my draft translation. I am of course solely responsible for the final text, published here.

**Richard Fidler**

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## **Geopolitics of the Amazon - Patrimonial-Hacendado power and capitalist accumulation**

*“The whole course of the ... revolution ... strikingly confirmed one of Marx's profound propositions: revolution progresses by giving rise to a strong and united counter-revolution, i.e., it compels the enemy to resort to more and more extreme measures of defence and in this way devises ever more powerful means of attack.”*

V.I. Lenin [10]

I want to welcome the initiative taken by Ana Esther Ceceña, and all the comrades who have commented on her article, [11] in opening the debate around the present political situation in Bolivia. The thoughts of each of the participants not only demonstrate the interest and greater or lesser revolutionary engagement with the events, but also help to shed light on the complexity of the political processes and possible ways to advance them.

## Revolution and counterrevolution

It was Lenin who pointed out that any real revolutionary process will generate an even greater counterrevolution. This means that any revolution must advance in order to consolidate itself, but in doing so it arouses forces opposed to its advance that block the revolution, which in turn, in order to defend and consolidate itself, will have to advance further, arousing even greater reactions from the conservative forces, and so on indefinitely. In Bolivia, in the last 12 years, we have experienced an ascending revolutionary process which, emerging from organized civil society as a social movement, has affected and traversed the state structure itself, modifying the very nature of civil society.

This is a revolution that is political, cultural and economic. Political, because it has revolutionized the social nature of the state, having enshrined the rights of the indigenous peoples and given concrete expression to those rights through the actual occupation by the indigenous peoples of the state administration. We are talking about an act of social sovereignty that has made possible the conversion of the indigenous demographic majority into a state political majority; a modification of the social and class nature of control and hegemony in the state. This is in fact the most important and significant transformation in the country since its birth, a country characterized until very recently by the exclusion of the indigenous citizenry from absolutely all of the decision-making structures of the state. But it is also a radical political and cultural revolution, because this indigenous imprint on public decision-making as a state power has been the work of social movements and organizational methods derived from the trade-union, communal and plebeian nature of the indigenous-popular world. That is, the presence of the indigenous-popular world in the conduct of the state since 2006 has been concretely expressed not as a mere individual occupation by indigenous and popular representatives within the state but as an organic transformation of the state institutionality itself through the presence of organizational structures of the indigenous-popular community in the decision-making and deliberative structures of the state. Whereas during the last 100 years the masses built the citizenship of rights through their trade unions (and thus we used to speak of a *trade-union citizenship*), [12] now the takeover of state power by the social movements is a *takeover of the state power by the union*. And that is why the election today of authorities of the executive, legislative or judicial organs in fact proceeds fundamentally through processes of deliberation and the assembly-like structures of the agrarian unions, the rural communities and guild, popular and neighbourhood organizations of the society.

And we say economic revolution, because within a short historical period the structure of ownership of social resources and of their uses has been radically modified. Until seven years ago, Brazil, along with three oil companies, controlled 100% of the ownership of hydrocarbons and 30% of the GDP, while the state controlled only 16%. [13] But today, the Bolivian state controls 34% [14] of the GDP and 100% of the ownership of hydrocarbons throughout the chain of production. More than 10 million hectares in the hands of latifundistas, politicians and foreigners have been recovered by the state and handed over to indigenous peoples and peasant communities, putting an end to the latifundist nature of the lowlands agrarian system. Now that the hydrocarbon, electrical, telecommunications and in part the mining and metallurgical industries have been nationalized, the economic surplus, previously concentrated in a handful of foreign and private firms, goes directly to society through rents, cash transfers, services and productive state investment. In 2011, 1.2% of the GDP [15] was transferred directly to the most vulnerable sectors of the country (children, seniors and pregnant women) through this system of social protection. While in 2005 only 629 million dollars annually were invested because the economic surplus went abroad, today the state governed by the social movements invests just over 5 billion dollars, and with that we have beaten illiteracy; [16] in the rural diaspora, the difference between rich and poor has been reduced by exactly one half, [17] while the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty has fallen from 38.2% (2005) to 24.3% (2011). [18]

But, you will say, “obviously the structure of ownership of the means of production and public assets has changed, and the distributional structure of the economic surplus has been transformed, but the mode of production has not been altered.” And of course, fundamentally it has not been altered. How can we expect that a small country that defends itself day after day from the counterrevolution, organizes the unification of a profoundly fragmented and corporate-dominated society, carries out the most important political revolution in its history, alters the structure of ownership and economic distribution, all within six years — yes, within six years — can, in isolation, change a mode of production that took more than 500 years to establish itself and continues to expand even today? Isn't it intellectually nonsensical to demand this, in this space of time? And does it not demonstrate a mistake of basic historical location? Isn't it more sensible to discuss what type of tendencies are being driven forward in Bolivia to promote a transformation in the mode of production, in tune with the changes that each of us is making in other countries with the same objective? We will return to this question at the end.

Each of the political and economic changes that have been achieved within the country's revolutionary process has directly affected the foreign governments and corporations, capitalists, business people, elites and privileged social classes that have been monopolizing the material assets of the society, the political resources of the state, and the symbolic assets of social power. The dismantling of racial whiteness as capital, as a material component (or “asset”) of the class structure and class domination (so characteristic of all colonial societies) has smashed not only a centuries-old racialized imaginary of command over the indigenous peoples, but has also eroded a property, an “asset” that for centuries allowed a small caste to acquire power and legitimacy in the systems of political-cultural command and economic ownership. [19] This classist decolonization of society, anchored in the deeper habitus of all social classes, has radically modified the structure of political power and has unambiguously displaced the constituent dominant classes of the old state. This has led to the enraged reaction of the old ruling elites seeking to weaken and overthrow the government of President Evo Morales by every means: economic (freeze on bank deposits, 2006; sabotage of production, 2007-09, food boycott, 2007-08), political (sabotage in the Constituent Assembly, 2006-08; referendums in the autonomous regions, 2008; presidential recall vote, 2008), and armed (attempted coup, 2008; separatism, 2009).

There has not been any governmental measure in favour of equality, national sovereignty or redistribution of wealth that has not had a counter-action from the conservative forces. And in this inevitable reaction to the revolutionary measures it is possible to single out two forms:

First, the one in which the forces displaced from economic and political power act as an organized class body with its own spokesmen, slogans and organizational forms. Examples are the energy and food boycotts launched by factions of the foreign and national business community, acting as an organized political force through its federations or confederations, in opposition to the government measures. In this case it is relatively easy for the social movements to figure out the difference between popular and anti-popular objectives and to polarize the conflict; accordingly the key to confronting the counterrevolution lies in the reaffirmation of popular unity against their class enemies and the use of democratic and revolutionary methods to achieve victory.

Secondly, there is the type of measures in which the reactionary forces act in a diffused way, indirectly, and through popular or middle-class social sectors. In this case, the contradiction does not assume a polarity between popular and anti-popular forces but is contained within the popular movement itself, that is, it occurs “among the people” as Mao Tse-tung would say, [20] and the counterrevolutionary forces are in control, complicating the correct handling of the contradictions.

In that case, the reactionary action does not have a conservative class subject, but it channels its expectations and needs, taking advantage of the mobilization of the segment of the popular camp

itself that, in its attachment to corporatist or individualistic perspectives — often without realizing it — serves the interests of its own enemies who by and large will end up turning against them. To some extent it is a strategy of colonial mobilization and domination: using the contradictions within the popular bloc to set two factions of the popular forces against each other from within and materially and symbolically establish the domination of the “dominant third party” upon the exhaustion and defeat of one or both of them. This is what happened in the colonial invasion of the continent. That is how colonial domination was consolidated, and how the republican peace was imposed on the emerging neocolonial states. A less euphemistic variant of this logic of intra-popular confrontation is the one used by the news media, portraying conflicts with great drama and media hysteria in order to mobilize “public opinion” against popular governments.

The tragic course of history so unfolds that the counterrevolution can come hand in hand with a faction of its own builders which, without necessarily advocating it, may as a consequence of the exacerbation of its corporatist, regional or sectoral particularism, and without taking into account the general configuration of overall social forces nationally and internationally, end up defending the interests of the conservative forces of the right and undermining its own revolutionary process. That is precisely what came to happen with the so-called “TIPNIS march.”

### **The Amazon and patrimonial despotic power**

When one observes Bolivia’s geography, four regions can be clearly distinguished: the altiplanicie [high plateau], which comprises the departments of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí; the valleys, in Cochabamba, Tarija, and Chuquisaca; the Chaco, south of Santa Cruz and east of Tarija and Chuquisaca; and the immense Amazon, which includes the departments of Pando, Beni, the north of La Paz and Santa Cruz.

One third of Bolivia is Amazon, and it is by far the most isolated region of the country. Whether through wars or unjust treaties, Bolivia has lost some 750,000 km<sup>2</sup> of its Amazon,[12] an area equivalent to more than three times that of the department of Beni (213,564 km<sup>2</sup>). The highest number of indigenous nations in Bolivia live in the Amazon region, but the population density is low; according to the latest Population and Housing Census (2001), less than 4% of the total indigenous population of Bolivia lives in the lowlands, and in particular in the Amazon.



The heirs of great hydraulic cultures, the indigenous nations of this region were not central to the organization of domination during the Colonial period, and can be said to be part of the vague colonial frontier; thus the institutions of colonial domination of both lands and labour force, which transformed the economy and society in the lowlands and the *altiplano*, had only a marginal



presence in the Amazon, which was considered a “frontier.” However, the institution that did take on the job of recruitment and elusive discontinuous domination over the Amazon indigenous nations was the Catholic Church, through the “*reducciones*” [confined reservations] of the Jesuits and later the Recollets and Franciscans. [21] The Jesuits managed to capture peoples throughout Chiquitanía (Chiquitanos), Moxos (Moxeños, Trinitarios, Yuracarés, etc.), and also in the Chaco, but intermittently between what is now Bolivia and Paraguay. In 1767, the Spanish Crown expelled the Jesuit missions; by 1830 they were partially replaced by the Franciscans in their presence on the Amazon frontier. The reservations were authentic artisanal fortresses built to assemble the indigenous population who were hunted down in the jungles, “tied up and then taken to the missions, often to Concepción or Santiago de Chuquitos,” [22] and it was there that the indigenous souls were moulded and their productive habits modified. While the missions were unable to control the Amazon territory, its natural resources or social organization, they did manage to permanently alter the political, spiritual and economic organization of a great many nomadic indigenous nations. The missions were precisely the point of departure for the annulment of the traditional religious authorities, the institution of the *cabildo*, and the gradual transition to a sedentary lifestyle of the Amazon peoples. For example, the Jesuit production schemes favoured approaches that were almost ascetically capitalist (they incorporated accounting, registries, reinvestment, dimensions, schedules, days, proportions, in various industries such as agriculture, tile and brick making, ceramics, weaving, cattle raising, etc.). Nor should we forget that the Jesuit reservations were to a large degree self-sufficient and sold their surpluses.

After the abandonment of the Jesuit missions and the decline of the other missions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the republican state presence in the Amazon was weak. For example, it was not until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the Sirionó were permanently contacted; the Ayoreos continued to be nomads to a large degree until the Seventies; and it was not until the battle of Kuruyuki (1892) that the colonial-republican state finally managed to “defeat” the Guarani, notwithstanding that relations with them date back to very early in the Colony. Even after the founding of the Republic, the Brazilians were crossing the border to capture Indians as slaves, without the state being able to prevent this activity.

In reality, it was at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the republican stage (when, through the institution of the *hacienda*, enclave economies were established for the harvesting of rubber, quinine, chestnuts and wood), that a generalized offensive was launched against the indigenous peoples of the Amazon through the expropriation of their territories, their forced recruitment as labourers and the definitive subjugation of their political and cultural structures. It is estimated that in the case of rubber alone — in the first peak period (1870-1917), the second (1940-47) and the third (1960-70) — some 6,000 persons with their families [23] were employed in rubber tapping. In the course of all those years, about 80,000 persons were displaced throughout the Amazon region, from Santa Cruz to Beni and Pando especially.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, rubber accounted for up to 15% of state income. [24] All of this wealth generated through the harvesting of rubber was the product of the rubber tappers, the majority of them indigenous peoples who were forcibly recruited and trafficked by dozens of businessmen — both Bolivians and others of German, Portuguese, English and Japanese origin:

*“It is common knowledge that the indigenous peoples were forced to work for meagre pay which in many cases simply went to the sustenance of the rubber tapper but not his family if he had one. Especially given the exorbitant prices of the products they received in return. In other cases, as frequently happens, they were baited with alcohol to take other advances and articles from the company store, false pretences being used to bind them to a lifetime of exploitation. With the rising debts, the lying pretences would stretch like bubble gum.... And even worse, when the rubber tapper*

*died, his debts were passed on to his wife or children as an abusive inheritance imposed by the bosses and contractors under the applicable Debt Law.... In 1914, the newspaper La Voz del Pueblo, commenting on this malicious pettifogging, reported: 'There have been cases in which indigenous peoples have left for the rubber regions and when one died the boss went back to the deceased's home village to present the widow with the imaginary debt, violently taking away the sons of majority age and, if there was no family, throwing her out of her miserable hovel in payment of what she was alleged to owe.'..." [25]*

From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1938, there was a kind of political trial of strength between the ranchers, rubber producers and government authorities, on the one hand, and the Franciscans on the other, to get the latter to "lend" indigenous peoples for production (of rubber in the north, and for harvest and seeding in the south) and to work in public works. Finally, in 1939 the missions were secularized, supposedly because of the death of an engineer at the hands of the Siriono. The description of this people in Holmberg's classic book [26] dates from the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when they were still nomadic. The Ayoreos engaged in major migrations during the Chaco War, fleeing to the north as a result of the pressures on them in the war.

While the huge territorial expanses subject to the semi-nomadic wanderings of some of the Amazon indigenous nations allowed the existence of family systems of production and autonomous authority, they could not prevent the consolidation of the territorial power of the landowners, ranchers and private resource extraction firms which over the last century became established as a real power in the Amazon. The consolidation of this estate-based land ownership in the Amazon regional power structure occurred at a time when the governing mining and *latifundista* elites of the highlands were founding — so to speak — the extractivist latifundist, and later Amazon ranching, enclaves along with the state structure. The republican state thereby became a latifundist state and the private *latifundio* became a regional power of the state, giving rise to the hereditary nature of the state power in the lowlands. Strictly speaking, the state abdicated its class "autonomy" and became an extension of the family legacy of the businessmen and *latifundistas*. Thus, through ranching and the extraction of rubber and quinine, now chestnuts, lumber, or simple possession of lands, big landowners and businessmen have over the last 150 years consolidated a landholding and hereditary territorial power structure over all the urban and rural inhabitants of the region. The state would delegate regional political power to the landowners, for whom the ownership of political life would be yet another of "the assets" of the estate or company; and the state would receive a portion of the rent of the land from the extractivist activity in the Amazon. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this rent accounted for 5 to 15% of the state income.

The agrarian structure of Santa Cruz prior to 1952, described by Nicolás Laguna, [27] is a mould that with slight variations recurs in the Amazon regions of Beni and Pando, including since 1952:

*"The big landowners (between 20 and 50,000 hectares or more, only small portions of which were cultivated and on which they generally had no title) were the hacendados, who preferred to call themselves finqueros. Their haciendas were not commercial plantations but instead nearly autonomous and self-sufficient productive units, relatively isolated, in which the use of machinery and improvement of the land were almost non-existent. The hacendado and his family lived on them with their workers who remained there throughout the year. The self-sufficiency of the finca enabled the finquero to live well and obtain whatever he did not produce with the small income he got in exchange for selling his surpluses in the local market. Those living and working in the finca were the jornaleros [labourers] who, in exchange for a house and meals, and in some cases a wage, were to cultivate the employer's lands; in addition, they might work small parcels (no more than a hectare) for themselves. There were also pequeños propietarios [small proprietors] (no more than 20 hectares, generally 8 to 10, of which no more than 5 were cultivated), who were few in number and*

*cultivated the land with their families, seeking self-sufficiency and independence, although normally they performed odd jobs during harvest and seeding. The *inquilinos* [tenants] rented lands (one to three hectares) from the *finqueros* in exchange for 10 to 20% of their production, cultivating lands that the *finquero* was not using in order to bring in some extra income without too much effort or loss. The *tolerados* ["tolerated ones," or colonizers], the true pioneers of the east according to Heath, occupied lands in the unoccupied strips of the *fincas* and cultivated them until they were evicted. The *finqueros* allowed these occupations for a time since the *tolerados* cleared the forest, planted fruit trees, improved the area and were hired as *jornaleros* at harvest and seeding times. Conditions had hardly changed since the time of the prospectors of El Dorado or Gran Paitití; the security and prestige of the *finqueros*, whose wealth counted for little in any other part of the country, based themselves on ownership of the land and servitude, spending practically their entire income to maintain the traditional form of life to which they were accustomed. The land had no value in commercial terms (which is why no one took the trouble to acquire legal title) and was non-negotiable in terms of status, security and self-sufficiency."*

In the Amazon, until fairly recently, the employer or *hacendado* was the lord of everything within his purview, using the violence of paramilitary forces to occupy lands and impose his law over the surrounding peons, indigenous peoples and poor peasants. [28] To the degree that power was structured around the land and its violent occupation, a conservative employer logic — the most conservative in the country — prevailed in the Amazon region. And consistent with this the *hacendados*, lumbermen, landlords and their intermediaries had established, since the beginning of the republican state, a sort of pact with the rulers to exercise, through their family and local networks, a limited state presence in the area; lands, state resources and impunity had become to a large degree the hereditary form of the state in the Amazon. As such the state appeared as an extension of the family influences of a small *hacendado*, rubber, rancher and lumber elite, wielding state violence to legitimize and impose their ownership as employers over the population.

This patrimonial-*hacendado* power in the Amazon is even now the most conservative and reactionary form of regional domination existing in the country as a whole. In a certain form, the figure of the landlord personifies the most despotic powers in existence: not only is he the owner of the land, he is also the one who hires workers and purchases wood from the forest, the provider of market goods to the remote populations, and the influential politician whose family monopolizes public responsibilities and as such is the provider of public lands and public favours to a population that is lacking in everything: lands, property, public authority and the state. So the landlord is not infrequently as well the axis of popular rituals such as the celebration of festivals and weddings or the one who determines whether and where your children will be educated. The entire warp and woof of hereditary colonial power converges in the figure of the *hacendado* and his ubiquitous and paternal command. And while the dispersed indigenous organization has maintained its local autonomy at the level of its small towns, councils, union centrals and subcentrals, it has not managed to convert itself into a leading force at the local or regional level, much less challenge the hereditary-landowner authority and command structure.

In fact, faced with the ongoing *hacendado*-corporate encroachment, the indigenous communities, in order to be able to preserve some part of their territorial occupation, have had to come to terms with the structure of dominant landowner power in a subordinate and vertical manner, as do the other popular classes. Hence the very discourse of legitimation and regional identification has been until recently that issuing from the nucleus of the regional employers' power.

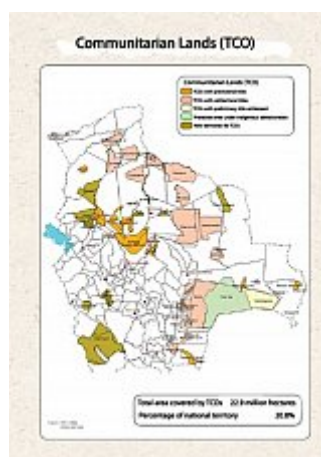
In the Amazon, then, it is not the indigenous peoples who have taken control of the territorial power, as occurred years ago in the highlands and valleys, where the peasant unions and communities have performed the role of indigenous micro-states with a territorial presence, and in reality were the material foundation for the construction of the present Plurinational State. In the Amazon region,

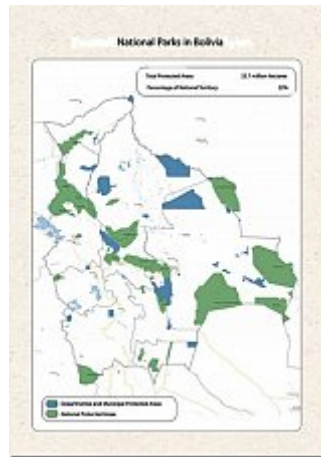


things occurred in a very different way. The despotic landowner order predominates and neither the indigenous organizations nor the peasants or the workers of recent creation have managed to create an organizational or discursive counter-power that begins to crack this hereditary-landowner system.

A partial modification of this system of despotic landowner domination has been produced by the NGOs, which have managed to create a clientelist relationship with the indigenous leadership, promoting levels of interregional organization like the Regionales Indígenas or the CIDOB itself. [29] But to the extent that those levels of organization, with little contact with the Amazon indigenous bases, function exclusively with external (NGO) funding, which pays the salaries of the leaders, in reality they actually develop as NGOs, reproducing mechanisms of clientelist cooptation and ideological and political subordination to the funding agencies, most of them European and North American, as in the case of USAID. [30]

While in the first world countries NGOs exist as part of civil society — in most cases funded by transnational enterprises — in the third world, as in the case of Bolivia, various NGOs are not really NON Governmental Organizations but Organizations of Other Governments on Bolivian territory; they are a replacement for the state in the areas in which the neoliberalism of the past initiated its exit, encompassing such sectors as education (through the attempts at privatization or through the convent colleges) and health (for example, Prosalud of USAID). The NGO, as an organization of another government and possessor of financial resources, defines the subject matter, the focus, the line of funding, etc. based on the priorities of this other government, constituting itself as a foreign power within the national territory. It could be said that the neoliberal system in the periphery has been shaped between a state that is reduced in its capacities and its power of economic and cultural intervention (through privatization and downsizing), NGOs that have replaced it in specific areas (social, cultural, struggle against poverty, indigenous peoples, environment, etc.) and a private foreign economic sector that has been appropriating public resources. [31]





In fact, some NGOs in the country have been the vehicle for introducing a type of colonial environmentalism that relegates the indigenous peoples to the role of caretakers of the Amazon jungle (considered extraterritorial property of foreign governments and corporations [32]), creating de facto a new relationship of privatization and alienation of the national parks and Communitarian Lands (TCOs) over which the state itself has lost custody and control. [[The process of saneamiento performed by the INRA was financed almost exclusively with foreign funds until 2008. The European cooperation agencies (of Denmark, Holland and the EU) undertook to pay 36% and USAID 23% of the costs in the planned areas (2008). The rest was distributed among agencies of the UN, multilateral funds, private interests and the Bolivian state. These proportions began to change in 2009, with the access of the applicants in communitarian lands to the resources of the IDH and an increase of funding from the TGN beginning in 2008, which among other things allowed the securitization of various applications by highland TCOs that had been rejected by external funding sources notwithstanding a formal application. (Sources: SIG database of the Deputy Ministry of Lands concerning INRA planning, 2008. Unidad de Planificación del INRA, 2011.) In this form, whether by means of the hard power of the property-owning despotism that controls the processes of intermediation and semi-industrialization of Amazon products (lumber, alligators, chestnuts, rubber, etc.) or through the *soft power* of the NGOs, the indigenous nations of the Amazon are being economically dispossessed of the territory and politically subordinated to external discourses and powers. In short, economic and political power in the Amazon is not in the hands of the indigenous peoples or the state. Power in the Amazon is in the hands, in part, of a landowner-business elite, and in part, of foreign businesses and governments that negotiate the care of the Amazon jungles in exchange for a reduction in taxes and control of biodiversity through their biotechnology.

**Álvaro García Linera**

*(to be continued)*

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**P.S.**

\* TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2012:

<http://lifeonleft.blogspot.ca/2012/12/geopolitics-of-amazon-part-i.html>

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## Footnotes

- [1] [http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.bo/IMG/pdf/libro\\_final.pdf](http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.bo/IMG/pdf/libro_final.pdf)
- [2] <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elmundo/4-204735-2012-10-03.html>
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- [6] [http://www.prologue.ca/537382-livre-Politique/Indianisme\\_et\\_paysannerie\\_en\\_Amerique\\_latine.html?&EditeurID=473&tri=1\\_asc\\_2\\_asc&id1Retour=0&pRetour=03\\_100&page=1](http://www.prologue.ca/537382-livre-Politique/Indianisme_et_paysannerie_en_Amerique_latine.html?&EditeurID=473&tri=1_asc_2_asc&id1Retour=0&pRetour=03_100&page=1)
- [7] <http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.bo/spip.php?page=publicaciones>
- [8] To see the Table of Contents, click here:  
<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0Q-0xxlqzOeX2NCWXhRZUt6djQ/edit?pli=1>
- [9] A glossary of terms and acronyms appearing in the text will be found here:  
<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0Q-0xxlqzOeZk1kQkdTTWxsbsms/edit?pli=1>
- [10] “Lessons of the Moscow Uprising,” Complete Works, Volume 11, p. 172. [Note by editor: “Lenin cites the proposition put forward by Marx in his Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850 (see Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Vol. I, Moscow, 1958, p. 139).”] – Tr.
- [11] Debates que tejen emancipaciones,” by Ana Esther Ceceña, published in Rebelión (26/05/2012). Available at: [www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=150260](http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=150260).
- [12] “For the workers, mainly miners and industrial workers, for at least 50 years (1940-1990) the union was the organizing network of class identity and accumulation of experience as a class... the assimilation of class experience came exclusively through the union, and that, in the last analysis, was all the workers had with which to confront life, repression and death. The union was the sole enduring place in which to experience the ups and downs of collective existence; it was the sole ongoing network of support, friendship and solidarity, and the authentic place in which to assert themselves as a collective body. What the workers did in history from 1940 to 1990 was done as trade unionists; the union was the instrument of their struggle, in which they made a revolution (and that is no small thing), they won rights, they won healthcare and housing, they protected their families, they buried their dead. Hence its durability and pre-eminence in the construction of working-class memory....” – Álvaro García Linera, “Sindicato, multitud y comunidad. Movimientos sociales y formas de autonomía política en Bolivia,” in Tiempos de rebelión, Comuna y Muela del Diablo, La Paz, 2001
- [13] Public enterprises 1% and Public administration 15%. (UDAPE).
- [14] Public enterprises 19% and Public administration 15%. (UDAPE).
- [15] UDAPE, Informe 2011.

[16] In 2006, 823,256 of the country's inhabitants were illiterate, but by 2008, thanks to the "Yo, sí puedo" Literacy Program, 824,101 people had been taught to read and write, and Bolivia was that year named a "Territory Free of Illiteracy." In 2009 it started up the National Post-Literacy Program.

[17] In 2005, the richest 10% of the population earned 30 times more than the poorest 10%, while in 2009, the richest 10% earned only 15 times more than the poorest 10%. (UDAPE and INE).

[18] UDAPE, Informe 2011.

[19] [On the concept of ethnicity, in this case "racial whiteness" as a form of capital and of the material components of the class structure in colonial societies, see Álvaro García Linera, "Espacio social y estructuras simbólicas. Clase, etnicidad y estructuras simbólicas en la obra de P. Bourdieu," in Bourdieu Leído desde el Sur, Alianza Francesa/Instituto Goethe/Universidad de la Cordillera/Plural editores, La Paz, 2000.

[20] "Two types of social contradictions — those between ourselves and the enemy and those among the people themselves — confront us. The two are totally different in their nature.... In the conditions prevailing in China today, the contradictions among the people comprise the contradictions within the working class, the contradictions within the peasantry, the contradictions within the intelligentsia, the contradictions between the working class and the peasantry, the contradictions between the workers and peasants on the one hand and the intellectuals on the other, the contradictions between the working class and other sections of the working people on the one hand and the national bourgeoisie on the other, the contradictions within the national bourgeoisie, and so on.... The contradictions between the enemy and us are antagonistic contradictions. Within the ranks of the people, the contradictions among the working people are non-antagonistic..." On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People, Speech delivered by Mao Tse-tung, February 27, 1957.

[21] To Brazil, by treaties (1867) and by the Acre War (1903), 490,430 km<sup>2</sup>; and to Peru, by diplomatic treaties (1909), 250,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

[22] The purpose of the missions was to shield the indigenous peoples from "the dangers of turning into beasts" and to "improve them, that is, to humanize them through education as a first step toward their Christianization": José de Acosta, "De procuranda indorum salute I", quoted in Fran Helm, *La Misión Católica durante los siglos XVI-XVII: contexto y texto*; UCB/Verbo Divino/Editorial Guadalupe, Bolivia, 2002. In the case of the Jesuit missions, the objective of having control of the spiritual authority was combined with guaranteeing a stable economic base that would secure the maintenance of the catechumen [religious pupils] and avoid their dispersion. See F. Armas Asin, Editor; *La invención del Catolicismo en América. Los procesos de evangelización, siglos XVI-XVIII*, Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, Perú, 2009. Also, Jonathan Wright, *Los jesuitas. Una historia de los soldados de Dios*, Debate, España, 2005. On the presence of the Jesuits in Chiquitos and Moxos, see Javier Baptista, "Las Misiones de los Jesuitas en Bolivia: Mojos y Chiquitos," in Manuel Marzal and Luis Bacigalupo Editores, *Los Jesuitas y la Modernidad en Iberoamérica. 1549-1773*, IFEA/Universidad del Pacífico/Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica, Peru, 2007. On the Franciscans, see Padre Fray Bernardino Izaguirre, *Historia de las misiones franciscanas*, 12 volumes, 1619-1921, Lima, 1922.

[23] Oscar Tonelli Justiniano, *El Caucho Ignorado*, Premio Nacional "Serrano" 2009 de Investigación en Historia, Editorial El País, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 2010.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 112.

[26] Allan R. Holmberg, *Nomads Of The Long Bow: The Siriono Of Eastern Bolivia*, American Museum, 1969.

[27] "La burguesía cruceña. Concentración y centralización de capital y organización corporativa empresarial en el departamento de Santa Cruz (1988-2005)". Draft thesis of Nicolás Laguna, Sociology, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA), pp. 47-48.

[28] The borders of the haciendas were often defined in gunfights using hired thugs.

[29] CIDOB since its birth has depended on direct funding from international cooperation through NGOs. Thus the NGO APCOB (Apoyo para el Campesino Indígena del Oriente Boliviano) received money from USAID and the Ford Foundation through the NGO Culture Survival in the 1980s for the creation of the CIDOB, as did other indigenous organizations in Peru and Ecuador: Cultural Survival, Final Report, "Strengthening pluralism: a combined human rights/grass roots development program for Indians of Latin America and the Caribbean Basin," 1987. In the 1990s, the director of IBIS-DINAMARCA said they supported the creation of CONAMAQ under the ethnic model of the CIDOB because they needed an organization of that type in order to be able to work cooperatively. Likewise, the CSUTCB was identified as a class organization with a discourse from the Seventies, with which they could not work. And in an OXFAM document we can read: "The ayllu is a form of Andean organisation [that maintains] principles... opposed to the peasant unions, which are organisational forms imposed on the ayllus [...]." Quoted in Andolina, Robert; Radcliffe, Sarah; Laurie, Nina, *Development and culture: Transnational identity making in Bolivia*, *Political Geography* 24 (2005) 678, at p. 695.

[30] The process of delimitation of TCOs and "social control" of the subsequent saneamiento process after 1996 was for the most part financed by the Danish bilateral cooperation organization DANIDA. From 2005 to 2009 this agency invested more than \$13.36 million, of which \$2.4 million was assigned to a technical project of the CIDOB, the Centro de Planificación Territorial Indígena (CPTI). In the highlands, the same scheme was applied with the NGO ISALP, which received \$700,000 during the same period. Other NGOs like CEJIS and AVSF receive similar funding in the framework of other components of European assistance. U.S. funding did not participate directly in supporting the TCO but did in many wooded areas in the context of the BOLFOR project and the individualized pruning in areas of coca leaf cultivation, in collaboration with the European Union. (Source: Ministry of Foreign Relations, DANIDA 2004, Component 2: Saneamiento y titulación de tierras comunitarias de origen, Document Ref. No. 104, Bol.808.200, DANIDA).

[31] That is the project promoted for the poorest countries of the world by the World Bank and the IMF, supported by the United States and the European Union. It ensures that dependency is sustained, sovereignty is minimized or nullified and the transnationals appropriate the wealth of the world.

[32] This relationship between some environmental NGOs, the protection of parks, and the mechanisms of transnationalized capitalist accumulation, we will see a bit later.