

The Recolonization of Latin America and the War on Venezuela

James Petras

“The Western Hemisphere is our Region”

Michael Pompei, US Secretary of State

Introduction

Not since the US pronounced the Monroe Doctrine proclaiming its imperial supremacy over Latin America, nearly 200 years ago, has a White House regime so openly affirmed its mission to recolonize Latin America.

The second decade of the 21st century has witnessed, in word and deed, the most thorough and successful US recolonization of Latin America, and its active and overt role as colonial sepoys of an imperial power.

In this paper we will examine the process of recolonization and the strategy tactics and goals which are the driving forces of colony- building. We will conclude by discussing the durability, stability and Washington’s capacity to retain ownership of the Hemisphere.

A Brief History of 20th Century Colonization and Decolonization

US colonization of Latin America was based on direct US military, economic, cultural and political interventions with special emphasis on Central America, North America (Mexico) and the Caribbean. Washington resorted to military invasions, to

impose favorite trade and investment advantages and appointed and trained local military forces to uphold colonial rule and to ensure submission to US regional and global supremacy.

The US challenged rival European colonial powers – in particular England and Germany, and eventually reduced them to marginal status, through military and economic pressure and threats.

The recolonization process suffered severe setbacks in some regions and nations with the onset of the Great Depression which undermined the US military and economic presence and facilitated the rise of powerful nationalist regimes and movements in particular in Argentina, Brazil, Chile Nicaragua and Cuba.

The process of ‘decolonization’ led to, and included, the nationalization of US oil fields, sugar and mining sectors; a shift in foreign policy toward relatively greater independence; and labor laws which increased workers’ rights and leftwing unionization.

The US victory in World War II and its economic supremacy led Washington to re-assert its colonial rule in the Western Hemisphere. The Latin American regimes lined up with Washington in the Cold and Hot wars, backing the US wars against China, Korea, Vietnam and the confrontation against the USSR and Eastern Europe.

For Washington, working through its colonized dictatorial regimes, invaded every sector of the economy, especially agro-minerals; it proceeded to dominate markets and sought to impose colonized trade unions run by the imperial-centered AFL-CIO.

By the early 1960's a wave of popular nationalist and socialist social movements challenged the colonial order, led by the Cuban revolution and accompanied by nationalist governments throughout the continent including Argentina, Bolivia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic. US multi-national manufacturing firms were forced to engage in joint ventures or were nationalized, as were oil, mineral and energy sectors.

Nationalists proceeded to substitute local products for imports, as a development strategy. A process of decolonization was underway!

The US reacted by launching a war to recolonize Latin America by through military coups, invasions and rigged elections. Latin America once more lined up with the US in support of its economic boycott of Cuba, and the repression of nationalist governments. The US reversed nationalist policies and denationalized their economies under the direction of US controlled so-called international financial organizations – like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) Inter-American Development Bank.

The recolonization process advanced, throughout the 1970's and 1980's, under the auspices of newly imposed military regimes and the new 'neo-liberal' free-market doctrine.

Once again recolonization led to highly polarized societies in which the domestic colonized elites were a distinct minority. Moreover, the colonial economic doctrine allowed the US banks and investors to plunder the Latin countries, impose out- of -

control debt burdens, de-industrialization of the economies, severe increases in unemployment and a precipitous decline in living standards.

By the early years of the 21st century, deepening colonization led to an economic crisis and the resurgence of mass movements and new waves of nationalist-popular movements which sought to reverse – at least in part – the colonial relationship and structures.

Colonial debts were renegotiated or written off; a few foreign firms were nationalized; taxes were increased on agro-exporters; increases in public welfare spending reduced poverty ; public investment increased salaries and wages. A process of de-colonization advanced, aided by a boom in commodity prices.

Twenty-first century decolonization was partial and affected only a limited sector of the economy; it mainly increased popular consumption rather than structural changes in property and financial power.

De-colonization co-existed with colonial power elites. The major significant changes took place with regard to regional policies. Decolonizing elites established regional alliances which excluded or minimized the US presence.

Regional power shifted to Argentina and Brazil in Mercosur; Venezuela in Central America and the Caribbean; Ecuador and Bolivia in the Andean region.

But as history has demonstrated, imperial power can suffer reverses and lose collaborators but while the US retains its military and economic levers of power it can

and will use all the instruments of power to recolonize the region, in a step by step approach, incorporating regions in its quest for hemisphere supremacy.

The Recolonization of Latin America: Brazil, Argentina, and the Lima Pact Against Venezuela

As the first decade of the 21st century unfolded numerous Latin American governments and movements began the process of decolonization, displacing US client regimes, taking the lead in regional organizations, diversifying their markets and trading partners.

Nevertheless, the leaders and parties were incapable and unwilling to break with local elites tied to the US colonization project.

Vulnerable to downward movements in commodity prices, composed of heterogeneous political alliances and unable to create or deepen anti-colonial culture, the US moved to reconstruct its colonial project.

The US struck first at the 'weakest link' of the decolonization process. The US backed coups in Honduras and Paraguay. Then Washington turned to converting the judiciary and congress as stepping stones for launching a political attack on the strategic regimes in Argentina and Brazil and turning secondary regimes in Ecuador, Chile, Peru and El Salvador into the US orbit.

As the recolonization process advanced, the US regained its dominance in regional and international organizations. The colonized regimes privatized their

economies and Washington secured regimes willing to assume onerous debts, previously repudiated.

The US advances in recolonization looked toward targeting the oil rich, dynamic and formidable anti-colonial government in Venezuela.

Venezuela was targeted for several strategic reasons.

First, Venezuela under President Chavez opposed US regional and global colonial ambitions.

Secondly, Caracas provided financial resources to bolster and promote anti-colonial regimes throughout Latin America especially in the Caribbean and Central America.

Thirdly, Venezuela invested in, and implemented, a profound and comprehensive state social agenda, building schools and hospitals with free education and health care, subsidized food and housing. Socialist democratic Venezuela contrasted with the US abysmal dismantling of the welfare state among the reconstructed colonial states.

Fourthly, Venezuela's national control over natural resources, especially oil, was a strategic target in Washington imperial agenda.

While the US successfully reduced or eliminated Venezuela's allies in the rest of Latin America, its repeated efforts to subdue Venezuela failed.

An abortive coup was defeated; as was a referendum to impeach President Chavez.

US boycotts and the bankrolling of elections failed to oust the Venezuelan government

Washington was unable to pressure and secure the backing of the mass of the population or the military.

Coup techniques, successful in imposing colonial regimes elsewhere, failed.

The US turned to a multi-prong, continent-wide, covert and overt military, political, economic and cultural war.

The White House appointed Juan Guaido, a virtual unknown, as 'interim President'. Guaido was elected to Congress with 25% of the vote in his home district. Washington spent millions of dollars in promoting Guaido and funding NGOs and self-styled human rights organization to slander the Venezuelan government and launch violent attacks on the security forces.

The White House rounded up its recolonized regimes in the region to recognize Guaido as the 'legitimate President'.

Washington recruited several leading European Union countries, especially the UK, France and Germany to isolate Venezuela.

The US sought to penetrate and subvert the Venezuelan populace via so-called humanitarian aid, refusing to work through the Red Cross and other independent organizations.

The White House fixed the weekend of Feb. 23 – 24 as the moment to oust President Maduro. It was a total, unmitigated failure, putting the lie to all of Washington's fabrications.

The US claimed the Armed Forces would defect and join with the US funded opposition – only a hundred or so , out of 260,000 did so. The military remained loyal to the Venezuelan people, the government and the constitution despite bribes and promises.

Washington claimed 'the people' in Venezuela would launch an insurrection and hundreds of thousands would cross the border. Apart from a few dozen street thugs, tossing Molotov cocktails there was no uprising and less than a few hundred tried to cross the border.

Tons of US 'aid' remained in the Colombian warehouses. The Brazilian border patrol sent the US funded 'protestors' packing for blocking free passage across the frontier

Even US provocateurs who incinerated two trucks carrying 'aid' were exposed, the vehicles in flames remained on the Colombian side of the border. US sponsored boycotts of Venezuelan oil exports partially succeed because Washington illegally seized Venezuela export revenues.

The recolonized Lima Group passed hostile resolutions and re-anointed Trump's President Guaido, but few voters in the region took their pronouncements serious.

Conclusion

What are the colonized states expected to serve? Why has the White House failed to recolonize Venezuela as it did in the rest of Latin America?

The recolonized states in Latin America serve to open their markets to US investors on easy terms, with low taxes and social and labor costs, and political and economic stability based on repression of popular class and national struggles.

Colonized regimes are expected to support US boycotts, coups and invasions and to supply military troops as ordered.

Colonized regimes take the US side in international conflicts and negotiations; in regional organizations they vote with the US and meet debt payments on time and in full.

The recolonized nations ensure favorable results for Washington by manipulating elections and judicial decisions and by excluding anti-colonial candidates and officials and arresting political activists.

The colonized regimes anticipate the needs and demands of Washington and introduce resolutions on their behalf in regional organizations.

In the case of Venezuela, they promote and organize regional bloc like the Lima Group to promote US led intervention.

As Washington proceeds to destabilize Venezuela the colonized allies recycle US mass media propaganda and offer sanctuaries for opposition defectors and refugees.

In sum the recolonized elites facilitate domestic plunder and overseas conquests.

Venezuela success in resisting and defeating the US drive for reconquest is the result of nationalist and socialist leaders who re-allocate private wealth and re-distribute public expenditures to the workers, peasants and the unemployed.

Under President Chavez, Venezuela recruited and promoted military and security forces loyal to the constitutional order and in line with a popular socio-economic and anti-colonial agenda. Venezuela ensured that elections and judicial appointments were free and in-line with the politics of the majority.

The Venezuelans ensured that military advisers were independent of US military missions and aid agencies which plot coups and are disloyal to the nationalist state.

Venezuelan social democracy, its social advances and the massive reduction of poverty and inequality, contributed to reinforcing commitments to endogenous cultural values and national sovereignty.

Despite the US accumulation of colonial vassals throughout Latin America and Europe, Venezuela has consolidated mass support. Despite Washington's capture of the global mass media it has not influenced popular opinion on a world scale. Despite US threats of a 'military option' it lacks global support. In the face of prolonged and large scale resistance, Washington hesitates. In addition the Latin Americans colonized states

face domestic social and economic crises and political resistance. Europe confronts a regional break-up. Washington is riven by partisan divisions and a constitutional crisis.

The failure of the imperialist ultra's in Washington to defeat Venezuela can set in motion a new wave of decolonization struggles which can force the US to look inward and downward – in order to decolonize its own electorate.