

LATIN AMERICA: THE GEOPOLITIC OF IMPERIALISM, AND THE ADVANCEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIALISM

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We are, as Samir Amin said, not in a capitalist crisis, but rather a terminal crisis of the capitalist system. There will not be a solution within the system; the only solution is to get out. We are at a point of no return. The various crises we live are facets of the same problem: contemporary capitalist globalization.

Amin, Harvey and others have theorized that real capitalism is associated with successive forms of accumulation by dispossession. In the centre, the productive base of society is dismantled; on the outskirts, the peasantry and natural resources are exploited.

The inequality produced by capitalist accumulation has shifted the "periphery" from Latin America to southern Europe, which is increasingly impoverished. Meanwhile Latin America is regaining its sovereignty over its communities, peoples and nature.

There are differences between the current crisis and the previous two. The Long Depression 1873-1896 only affected the United States, Canada, the British Isles, and part of Western Europe, some areas of Latin America integrated into the world economy, and also India and Japan. By 1929, the picture had changed. Capitalism had spread, but the Great Depression still only affected (in addition to the West) the Soviet Union, the weak capitalist presence in China and India, and forms of pre-capitalist economy in much of Asia and Africa. However, the current crisis is global, and compiled with the energy crisis.

What are the components of the current crisis of capitalism? The first two components are that it is a global crisis and an energy crisis. Thirdly, in the face of climate change, nature is seen as a commodity and exploitation makes Mother Earth a "natural resource". The fourth component of the crisis is the water crisis (20 % of the world's population lacks access to water and 33 % do not have adequate sanitation). Meanwhile, Latin America has 50% of the fresh water reserves in the world. Fifthly, the food crisis and lastly, the militarized management of the world (there are about 1180 military bases in 128 countries of the world).

Imperialism, the highest stage of Capitalism

These data break misconceptions Negri, Hardt and others have imperialism is extinct and that a "regime of global sovereignty" exists where classes are blurred in crowds. Clearly, imperialism exists, and Latin America is an important territory for its project.

Latin America has a combined GDP of 6 trillion, becoming the fourth largest economy in the world (second only to the EU, USA and China and above Japan and India). Latin America has the largest reserves of oil (in Venezuela—nothing is a coincidence!) as well as large gas reserves. Latin America has the half of the world's water reserve, the world's mightiest river (Amazon) and two of the major aquifers. As for minerals, from 10 mineral producing countries, six are in South America (Peru, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Venezuela). If we think about biodiversity, over 40 % of all species of animals and vegetables on the planet are in Latin America, as well as five of the 10 most biodiverse countries in the world (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru according to

UNEP UN). Latin America has also the 90% of tropical glaciers, and the source of 10% of water on the planet are in the Andean region.

This lays out the incentives for a country such as the United States, despite its relative decline, to advance their war machine and boost their imperialism in a desperate search for natural resources.

Transition to a new era

Latin American is transitioning into a new era, leaving behind 500 years of colonialism and twenty years of neoliberalism. The processes associated with this change are similar to those of the Cuban revolution, though with different rhythms and intensities. We see them in the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the Democratic and Cultural Revolution in Bolivia, and the Revolution of the Citizenry in Ecuador. Each process has been accompanied by other progressive governments from Latin America such as Nicaragua, El Salvador, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.

Even beyond such concrete advances, the importance of these processes is that they have built a new era on the horizon, a new common sense (following the concept of Gramsci), and a new historical subject. In the case of Bolivia, this is seen in the indigenous-cum-peasant movement, as it was defined in the Political Constitution of the State in 2009.

Another fundamental element being built is integration across Latin America, especially as evidenced by the ALBA project. ALBA is the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America and is a project of political and economic integration within the framework of socialism. Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and many Caribbean countries form this alliance.

However, in the twenty-first century, a handful of coup d'etats of Latin American Leftist governments have occurred. We have undergone coup d'etats such as Haiti in 2004, Honduras (an ALBA member) in 2009, and Paraguay in 2010. Additionally, there have been attempted overthrows of Leftist governments in Venezuela, Bolivia in 2008, and Ecuador in 2010. Currently Venezuela, the most advanced country in terms of building socialism, is being sedated by a strategy that combines economic warfare with a weak coup d'etat, showing many similarities to the recent demolition of the Ukrainian government.

Advancements

Which are the main advancements that have consolidated the revolutionary processes in the Latin American continent?

Through such processes of change, new constitutions have emerged that cover the socio-political ruptures (such as the people's struggles for water and gas) and the new epistemologies (such as the Living Well-Buen Vivir concept). These are the very ruptures that gave way to the new era in the first place

After its destruction by Colonialism and Neoliberalism, the state is being rebuilt. This has become a key socio-political act. In the case of Bolivia, the state has been defined in the new model as "Plurinational," leaving behind a failed state and building a new integral state following Gramsci and the famous Bolivian theorist Rene Zavaleta.

A new economic model has been formed, which in the Bolivian case recognizes four different types

of economies: private capitalism, public state-based, social-cooperative, and the communitarian economy.

This new economics, and very importantly, the nationalization of natural resources such as petroleum and gas which in the case of Bolivia are now property of the Bolivian people, has made possible a redistribution of wealth never before seen in the history of Bolivia. In the 8 years of the transition under the Evo Morales government, according to the United Nations poverty has reduced from 38.2% in 2005 to 21.6% in 2012. The rate of unemployment has declined from 8% to 3%. The minimum wage has increased by 173% while accumulated inflation is only 68%.

Without a doubt, there has been an expansion in the political, economic, and territorial sovereignty of Bolivia that comes with the expansion of democracy. For example, the Ambassador of the United States, the US Drug Enforcement Agency, and the USAID cooperation agency have been kicked out of our country.

Democracy in Bolivia is a democracy of economic well-being, according to the theoretical framework of Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera, a Marxist and ex-guerrilla and counterpart of President Evo Morales, himself an indigenous man of the countryside. In this democracy of well being, there are increased social rights, such as economic and cultural rights. Democracy is not only about political institutions but also about a practice of social equality.

As Garcia Linera has theorized, democracy in Bolivia has a very high institutional density. It is a combination of liberalism and communitarianism. Political parties are mechanisms of political mediation surrounded and oftentimes overwhelmed by other mechanisms of political representation, such as social movements, unions, and indigenous peoples (as seen in the Constituent Assembly). This produces an objective duality in the mechanisms of political deliberation, action, and representation. Democracy in Bolivia is a combination of regional autonomy (including indigenous autonomy) and state unity. This comes from the perspective of intercultural citizenship.

Creative tensions

What are some tensions that emerging governments face?

The relationship between the state and social movements is the first tension. If the state by definition has a monopoly on force and violence, if it is centralized and monopolizes decision-making – such as the Bolivian government does – creating a government made of social movements is a permanent contradiction.

Another creative tension is what Garcia Linera define as both hegemonic flexibility and firmness in the core. How can you grow your base for a hegemonic project by incorporating other sectors of society such as business for increased employment without making so many concessions that your “core” – social movements – abandon you?

The third tension is how to combine the general interests versus particular and private interests. During the overthrow of a government and during the first few years of a new government, the right must be confronted to make a constituent process. All sides come together to defend the same project of change. Nevertheless, after this passes and now of hegemonic consolidation, every social sector demands its own particular interests, of class, sector, trade...

In addition, the fourth tension is the construction of the communitarist socialism of Living Well. How do we manage the tension between the need for development of a society, which has been exploited and ransacked for five hundred years, the need for industrialization, and the right to development of the Bolivian people along with the rights of Mother Earth?

Challenges

What are the challenges we face in Bolivia and in the general processes of change in Latin America, starting from the advancements and tensions mentioned earlier?

Starting from the last tension, the tension between the right to development and the rights of Mother Earth, we must think about how to shift from the post neoliberal projects to a post capitalist project. How can we reconcile the urgency of public policy – responsible for feeding millions of Bolivians and Latin Americans every day – with the need of changing the relations of production of our society?

It is urgent and necessary to continue expanding the limits of democracy. The right has robbed us of the banner of democracy and human rights and we need to recover it. We need to expand its horizons, build a high intensity democracy, deeper than the formal, liberal, and bourgeois one.

Our processes democratize the access to basic services and redistribute wealth through nationalization and recovery of sovereignty: political, economic, territorial, and popular. However, we must continue even further to build a political project whose framework comes from socialism

Construction of socialism

History is not linear, nor is the construction of an alternative to capitalism, but we can still draw some conclusions.

The first wave of struggles for socialism in the twentieth century has shown the limits of European social democracies, the Communisms of the Third International and the collapse and demise of the socialist ambitions of the popular nationalism of the Bandung era. The second wave of socialism of the 21st century must learn from the 20th century lessons.

In particular, one lesson is to pair the socialization of economic management with the deepening of the democratization of society. There will be no socialism without democracy, but equally there will be no democratic advancement outside a socialist perspective as Samir Amin tells us.

These strategic objectives invite us to think about the construction of “convergences in diversity” in struggles and organizations of dominated and exploited classes.

We have to give also a great importance to geopolitics in the construction of a socialist project. We have to face the global project of military control.

Reclaiming the heritage of Commander Chavez, “The End of History” did not indeed happen. We have to build an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-colonial international of peoples and workers. We need an articulation of political parties, social movements and intellectuals engaged in a structure of South-South relations to deepen the construction of a socialist future.