

Does the Venezuelan Democracy, Peace and Constitutional Process Fit in the Corporate Mindset of US Secretary of State Tillerson?

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U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, has returned to Washington from his tour of Mexico, Argentina, Peru and Colombia, and a final stop in Jamaica on February 7. He must have surely reported back about his trip to his handlers. We will not know the details or content of his report, much less his personal impressions about the meetings he had with Latin-American heads of state. But we do know the messenger, the message he was carrying, and preliminary outcomes from his tour. We ask, do Venezuelan democracy, peace, and constitutional process fit in the corporate mind of Secretary of State Tillerson?

The messenger, Mr. Tillerson, has quite an extensive profile as a public figure in the private sector. A lot of information is readily available on Wikipedia. [1]

Mr. Tillerson has spent most of his professional life working for the oil and gas Exxon Mobil Corporation in different capacities. In the capitalist context he has done very well by becoming very wealthy, which is usually a prerequisite for jumping into public life. He has climbed the traditional business ladder from engineer in 1975 to CEO of Exxon Mobil in 2006, which has included conspicuous financial benefits in the order of millions of dollars as rewards.

“Mr. Tillerson is estimated to be worth at least \$300 million.” (Wikipedia) But that is nothing compared to the giant corporation he headed that “had 80,000 employees, did business in nearly 200 countries, and had an annual revenue of nearly \$400 billion.”

More interestingly, Mr. Tillerson lobbied against the Dodd Frank Act Rule 1504 reform and protections of 2010, which would have required Exxon Mobil to disclose payments to foreign governments. We can only guess the motive for him to reject more transparency in dealings with foreign governments. Then suddenly, in 2017, Congress voted to overturn Rule 1504 one hour before Tillerson was confirmed as Secretary of State. We can assume that now nothing will stop resource extraction businesses to make unspecified payments to foreign governments. That must be Mr. Tillerson legacy to the industry that treated him so well.



On the foreign front, Mr. Tillerson was also very successful and had made business deals on behalf of Exxon Mobil with President Vladimir Putin of Russia. In fact, in 2013, he was awarded the Order of Friendship by Vladimir Putin for his contribution to developing U.S.-Russia cooperation in the energy sector. Maybe Mr. Tillerson decided to oppose U.S. sanctions against Russia in 2014 in order to oblige?

That was Rex Tillerson wearing his corporate hat. But suddenly, Rex Tillerson, wearing his brand new Secretary of State hat, urged Russia to withdraw from eastern Ukraine stating

“the United States will consider working with Russia when we can find areas of practical cooperation that will benefit the American people. Where we do not see eye to eye, the United States will stand up for the interests and values of America and her allies.”

When did his view of the “interests and values of America” change since 2014?

The interaction of CEO Tillerson with Venezuela has also had a bumpy history. When the Hugo Chavez government re-nationalized the oil industry in 2007 Exxon Mobil claimed \$15 billion as compensation, an international arbitration court only granted \$1.6 billion. Is Mr. Tillerson seeking today a payback for his former friends?

These sketchy facts are important in order to establish the person’s character and level of integrity of his words. After all, the U.S. Senate must have reviewed Mr. Tillerson’s “performance” as a corporate citizen before confirming his appointment as one of the top U.S. official. So can we.

This is the person who has had a single-minded business view of the world who suddenly becomes the foreign arm of a U.S. president who has a similar single-minded business worldview. What kind of state diplomacy, morals, ethics, honour, and public sector experience are at play in running a corporation? Where do democracy, peace, and constitutional process fit in a corporate-trained mind? It’s anybody’s guess because those are values that are becoming scarce in U.S. foreign policy and are being replaced with sanctions, threats and actual military interventions in countries that dare to challenge the empire’s design of domination. Countries that cave in may be “rewarded” with trade deals that make sure “America first” is the outcome.

Mr. Tillerson, the U.S. messenger to the world, travelled to some Latin American countries not to promote real democracy, peace and respect for constitutional process but just the

opposite. By his own words, he has incited a military coup in Venezuela, immediately echoed by senator Marco Rubio on Twitter:

“The world would support the Armed Forces in #Venezuela if they decide to protect the people & restore democracy by removing a dictator”

This is a diabolical “marketing-style” means to sell havoc and death. A commercial would probably say, “Your family members would love you if you would protect them by buying our life insurance policy.” One day we hope we would declare similar words to Rubio’s as hate speech, or worse, as words inciting to genocide, as Peter Koenig called Washington policy recently. [2]

Days after Mr. Tillerson’s tour, Argentina said it would consider an embargo of Venezuelan oil. Colombia, mimicking the U.S., declared that it would be impossible to recognize the upcoming elections in Venezuela. Colombia and Brazil have just announced a build up of their troops close to the Venezuelan borders, which is the single most treasonous action by regional compatriots. The Lima Group has also joined the chorus of protests against Venezuela.

It is hard to believe that the U.S. does not pursue regime change in Venezuela. The U.S. government has declared Venezuela a threat to its national security. It has applied multiple sanctions to the country including a virtual financial blockade that only intend to promote discontent, not to mention suffering, in the population. It has issued threats of military intervention, and it has called the Venezuelan armed forces to rebel. Canada and the EU have followed suit at least on sanctions. The U.S. government actively seeks unlawful regime change in Venezuela.

Equivalent in spirit to Trump’s “shithole” remark, Mr. Tillerson said that the military “oftentimes” handles regime change in Latin America. That is insulting, to say the least, but more seriously it is an undiplomatic seditious message to the Venezuelan military. It totally forgets the long history of violent U.S. military interventions in Latin America.

This gross ignorance of history cannot be an excuse for his recent praise of the outdated 1823 Monroe Doctrine as a “success”. The implementation of that doctrine has had a devastating impact in the region. It is seen by many as raw U.S. imperialism, precisely the kind that the Bolivarian Revolution wants to eradicate to put an end to the rapacious exploitation of Latin America.

In the meantime, while Mr. Tillerson was on his tour planting seeds of treason in Latin America, the Venezuelan government has continued its dialogue with the opposition in the Dominican Republic. When it came time to signing an agreement last February 6, the opposition did not show up after reportedly receiving a phone call from Colombian President Santos. Mr. Tillerson happened to be in Colombia at the time. The unsigned agreement had an election date already set. Responding to the no show of the opposition, the Maduro government was consistent with its promise of going to elections with or without agreement: it then released the unratified agreement with the date that was set: April 22, 2018.

Without an understanding of the historical U.S. imperial role in Latin America it would be impossible to comprehend the level of contradiction between preaching democracy and at the same time stopping the only viable process that promotes democracy, that is dialogue

and a peaceful electoral process without preconditions or threats.

However, after the Secretary of State returned to Washington, it is precisely more threatening statements that we hear. The State Department has already issued on February 8 a statement questioning the upcoming elections in Venezuela and supporting “the decision by opposition parties” to reject the elections. But even before then, the U.S. government had stated that it would not recognize the elections. Showing a great deal of consideration, President Maduro immediately tweeted

“Venezuela is open to giving all of the necessary guarantees and to receive all international observers who would like to come [observe our elections]. Beyond inspecting, they may learn from the impeccable electoral system that we’ve built.”

How will the U.S. respond to that? A sensible government with serious intentions towards peace would immediately seize the opportunity through a mutually agreed mediated effort.

Venezuela is a country that refuses to fit the neoliberal, right wing mold of the U.S. empire. It has an internationally recognized sovereign right to do so within the legality of its own constitution, legislation and the will of the people. As the often repeated slogan says, everybody else should keep their #HandsOffVenezuela.

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Notes

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rex_Tillerson

[2] <https://www.globalresearch.ca/genocide-washington-style-venezuela-next/5628521>

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