

The Organization of American States (OAS) without the US. An Alternative

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Global Research, March 23, 2010

[Strategic Culture Foundation](#) 21 March 2010

Region: [Canada](#), [Latin America & Caribbean](#), [USA](#)

The parties to the Ninth International Conference of American States, held in Colombia's capital Bogota in late April 1948, signed an agreement on creating the Organization of American States, OAS, which Washington conceived as a Cold War instrument to fight "communist penetration" into the Western Hemisphere.

In the run-up to the conference the popular politician, Bogota Mayor Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was treacherously murdered by three shots in the back. His killing is still the CIA's top secret. All documented evidence of the preparation and execution of the operation has been destroyed. Nonetheless, it follows from recollections by some of those involved in the operation that the CIA station in Colombia had referred to Gaitán as a "potentially dangerous" politician for the United States. He was seen as a likely winner of the next presidential election in the Latin American nation, which was absolutely unacceptable to the US President Harry Truman, who believed Gaitán to be Stalin's "secret stooge".

The assassination of the Colombian politician sparked people's protests throughout the country. The OAS statutory documents were signed to the sound of machinegun fire and the sight of entire homes set ablaze. It was against that symbolic background that the regional organization came into being.

The Mexican city Cancun has recently played host to the 23rd summit of another Latin American organization, the Rio Group. The summit meeting took a sensational decision to set up yet another regional organization, – Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC), or a Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. A future organization will basically differ from the OAS in that it will not comprise the United States and Canada. CELAC will be mostly centred on speeding up regional integration, defending common positions on the international scene and spreading Latin American and Caribbean identity.

Work on the future Community's statutory documents has already got under way. There are, of course, quite a few problems to address. The parties to CELAC should patch up many differences, from ideological to territorial. But everyone realizes that the need to pool efforts to meet the dramatic 21st century challenges is long overdue, everyone from those representing conservative forces (Calderon of Mexico, Uribe of Colombia and Garcia of Peru), to the opposing "populist" alliance (Chavez of Venezuela, Morales of Bolivia and Correa of Ecuador). That is why the parties to the Cancun summit agreed that the CELAC statutory documents should be drafted at an early date and approved by a founding summit that's due in Caracas on July 5th 2011. The Rio Group will become a thing of the past, with CELAC due to take over to resolve a host of problems, including the launching of interaction

with Mercosur, the Andes Community, the Union of South American Nations, the Organization of Ibero-American States and ALBA, – the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas.

There is little, if any, doubt that the future Community will be at loggerheads with the OAS, since Washington is used to bossing Latin America around and imposing on the region what strategically important decisions suit it best. The United States is certainly not about to trust some newly-formed organization with control of the processes under way in the countries south of the Rio Grande. Speaking on behalf of the US Administration, the US Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere affairs Arturo Valenzuela said that Washington would not take a new organization as a problem until the latter tried to replace the OAS. In other words, the OAS should, from the US perspective, remain in place so that Washington could remain in control of all developments in the Western Hemisphere. CELAC could function on the fringes without interfering in things of major importance, for self-consolation, if you like. Washington will find it hard to forgo the OAS as a time-tested (almost unfailing) instrument of pursuing the North-American policy on the continent.

But many Latin American leaders see prospects for this kind of “co-existence” quite differently. The “populists” are determined that all future community members should pull out of the OAS. The “populists” see the OAS as a “punitive agency” that the United States has used all along to neutralize any “potentially dangerous” opponents in the region. The OAS has more than once covered up the US aggressive action. Suffice it to recall Guatemala (1954), Panama (1964, 1991), the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1985), Haiti (1994) etc.

It is under the flag of the OAS that the United States has been waging a struggle against socialist Cuba for over half a century now. Back in 1964 the Organization of American States bowed to the US pressure and took the decision that the OAS member-states should sever relations with Cuba. Although an overwhelming majority of these countries have since brought their relations with Havana back to normal, Washington’s dominant attitude whereby a return of “Castro’s dictatorial regime” to the OAS is inadmissible, is still there. This has largely prompted the idea of creating an “alternative OAS without the US” in Latin America, with the Rio Group already playing the role to a degree.

Washington used the OAS to pursue an isolation policy not only against Cuba, but also against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, the Omar Torrijos government in Panama, while recently, against the “populist” regimes of Ecuador, Bolivia and, above all, Venezuela. The more obsessed the Empire is in fighting “enemies” all over the world, the more frequently that obsession backfires. Prospects for setting up CELAC, – an “alternative Organization of American States without the USA”, may result in the isolation of the United States proper on the American continent. Even the OAS voting machine, well-adjusted over the Cold War years, would occasionally glitch. But now that the Empire is in its twilight years, the policy of brazen diktat proves increasingly ineffective, causing Washington time and again to cede “the field” for tactical considerations.

The OAS General Assembly meeting in Honduras in June 2009 adopted a resolution to annul the 1962 decision, whereby Cuba was debarred from involvement in the OAS affairs for “adherence to Marxism-Leninism”. The attending US officials first opposed the resolution, but were eventually compelled to bow to pressure from other Assembly delegates. To gild the pill of the US predicament, the OAS Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza specified that the resolution did not imply Cuba’s automatic return to the organization. Secretary-General

Insulza said (in back translation) that “this will happen neither tomorrow, nor the day after, – it will take a lot of time to come about. Cuba’s restoration to its membership rights will be the climax of a long process that’s been initiated on Havana’s request in keeping with the OAS practice, objectives and principles”.

Fidel Castro said once that the OAS was, like the Trojan Horse, involved in all the crimes that Washington had committed against Cuba and other Latin American countries. Therefore Havana was not about to submit any requests to the OAS, what’s more, Cuba thought that the OAS should be dissolved. President Raul Castro of Cuba made the statement look official by saying that Cuba was not going to return to the OAS because the organization had, since its creation, never risen in defence of a single Latin American country that was subjected to US aggression.

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has also repeatedly complained about the OAS performance. The George Bush Administration in the past and that of Barack Obama today tried to curb the Venezuelan leader via the OAS well-adjusted procedures, aiming to crush political and ideological dissent in individual member-states. “They want to monitor the Government of Venezuela through the agency of the OAS? They must be kidding!”, Chavez said in a comment on the Empire’s manoeuvres to that end (in back translation). “If there is a government that the OAS should monitor, then it is the US Administration”. The OAS commissions, bossed around by CIA agents, keep publishing various reports to level “well-grounded” criticism at Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua and other countries failing to meet the Empire’s top interests, for human rights “violations”, connivance at terrorism, involvement with drug cartels, the arms race and laundering criminal money.

Following the Rio Group’s 23rd summit, Washington has redoubled its propaganda attacks on Chavez. The Bolivarian leader says the fierce campaign has been sparked by the Cancun-made decision to set up CELAC and hold a constituent ceremony in Caracas. Chavez was above all outraged at an OAS report on the “human rights” situation in Venezuela. The report was mostly based on the information that the western special services spread as part of their subversive “active operations” against the Bolivarian regime.

Chavez said that Venezuela could pull out of the OAS even before CELAC was set up. The statement has drawn criticism, including from the politicians that see the preservation of the old organization as indispensable. The OAS Secretary-General Insulza said that the organization did need major reforming, citing as a reason the OAS’s ineffective moves in the wake of the Honduras coup, which toppled the lawfully elected president Manuel Zelaya. Insulza pledged to reform the OAS, if re-elected for a second term in office. But part of OAS members, especially those branded as “populist”, have almost no trust in the official. The OAS’s lack of activity, which is seen as nothing short of connivance at Washington, has helped to set up more US military bases in the region, to turn Colombia into a drug nation, to stage a coup in Honduras in keeping with the new “sluggish” technology of the State Department, the Pentagon and US special services. This may be the reason why the so-called “populists” have decided to nominate Manuel Zelaya for Secretary-General of the OAS, since he will certainly prevent the organization from being used for the US interests. But then, the Obama Administration has not “written off” Zelaya as a Honduran leader to let him assume control over a key political position in the Western Hemisphere.

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The Empire is getting ready to “act energetically” to foil a constituent summit of the future

Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. Hugo Chavez has warned that Washington will sabotage the epoch-making initiative. The conspiracy provides for launching decisive attacks in Venezuela. Anything from the 2009 scenario for Honduras to acts of terror is likely to be resorted to, to prevent a new Community from “becoming a problem”.

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