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Anti-imperialism

Bolívar, Cuba, and the Continued Relevance of Anti-Imperialism

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The attacks carried out by the United States in Latin America, which are intrinsically linked to the crisis of this imperialism, call for a return to the foundations of anti-imperialism as theorised and put into practice by Bolívar and the Cuban Revolution, a source of inspiration for the whole world.

The current crisis of hegemony of U.S. imperialism manifests across five major dimensions.

The first is its structural economic crisis—marking the end of the neoliberal cycle and the onset of an illiberal phase—which is evidenced by IMF projections for 2026: federal debt held by the public is expected to reach approximately 100.6% of GDP, while gross general government debt is projected at 126.8% of GDP. Other indicators include a chronic trade deficit with China (which, it should be noted, stood at $202.7 billion in 2025—a 31.8% decrease from the figure recorded in 2024) and the deindustrialisation of the Rust Belt. [1] Furthermore, while the U.S. dollar still accounted for 57.8% of global reserves in 2024, its decline is undeniable, given that it represented 71.1% of such reserves in 2000. Dedollarisation is real—driven in part by the volume of transactions among BRICS [2] nations, which trade bilaterally using yuan, rubles, rupees, and other currencies—though they remain very far from reaching the significance of the dollar. Furthermore, there is a clear decline in the U.S. share of global manufacturing value added—as documented by the U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS). In 1980, the U.S. accounted for approximately 29% of global output, a figure that fell to 16.5% by 2011, while China's volume surpassed that of the U.S. starting in 2010. The world's leading capitalist power remains dependent on production chains and supply networks linked to its primary economic and geopolitical competitor.

Second, there is a crisis of military hegemony caused—among other factors—by imperial overstretch, with 750 military bases deployed across 80 countries (according to estimates by David Vine, Patterson Deppen, and Leah Bolger, published in 2021 by the Quincy Institute). This includes the costs of post-9/11 aggressions, such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq—which, according to Brown University, have totalled $8 trillion since 2001—a situation that forced a hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. Furthermore, it is evidenced by the quagmire in Ukraine, as well as a limited capacity for deterrence in the Middle East and the Taiwan Strait simultaneously. The growing loss of control over the Strait of Hormuz and the strategic ineffectiveness of attacks on Iran have raised doubts regarding the actual capacity to resolve disputes through military means. The U.S. defense industry is showing productivity limitations—struggling to scale up the production of 155mm shells (with a monthly output of approximately 36,000 units as of March 2026, well short of the 100,000-unit target)—while the precarious flow of ammunition to Ukraine has created stock shortages within NATO. The deployment in Venezuela—and the abduction of Maduro and his wife—would seem to be more the result of internal fractures in loyalty than of genuine military effectiveness, even though the operation was presented as a successful coordination between intelligence, counterintelligence, and troops on the ground.

Third, there is a crisis of internal political coherence and legitimacy. Extreme domestic polarisation, the resulting paralysis in Congress, the Trump administration's loss of its majority in both chambers, and growing distrust among the American public—all of which appear to stem from a clash between two competing models of imperialist capitalism (the coastal, financial-technological, globalist model versus the interior, industrial-nationalist model; while neither is hegemonic, they highlight contradictions within capitalism)—have weakened the image of the United States as a unified power. This prevents the United States from maintaining a coherent, long-term foreign policy—as evidenced by the flip-flopping regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Agreement, and the Iran deal. The rise of candidates promoted by the Democratic Socialist of America (DSA) —and the electoral support they garnered in the recent midterm elections—along with the momentum that began with Zohran Mamdani's victory in New York (2025), the efforts of Bernie Sanders, and the growing influence of the radical left, further complicate the domestic

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political landscape. This has led extremist factions to push for a "neo-McCarthyism," which places additional strain on an already fragile American plutocracy.

Fourth, a crisis of the model of ideological domination. The “soft power” of the 1990s—liberal democracy, the market, Hollywood and Big Tech, all presented as symbols of freedom—has run its course. This is evidenced by the situation at Guantánamo, the Snowden and Cambridge Analytica scandals, platform censorship, and the renewed support for authoritarian or neo-coup-oriented approaches. Currently, the United States finds itself compelled to compete with other, more efficient models for delivering infrastructure—such as the Chinese "Belt and Road" [3] initiative—that come without political conditions related to democracy. Both within the U.S. and globally, "Big Tech" is no longer viewed as a potential vehicle for expanding democracy; instead, it is seen as an oligopolistic power that intervenes in elections—such as the 2026 elections in Brazil—and promotes models of mass data capture, which in turn give rise to previously unimaginable forms of unpaid labour.

Fifth, there is a crisis in the world order that emerged from the two world wars of the 20th century. The contradictions within the mechanisms established by the United States to promote capitalism—such as the Bretton Woods system, the World Trade Organisation, the IMF, and the World Bank—are intensifying. This is particularly evident in policies involving unilateral tariffs, secondary sanctions, the blocking of the WTO’s Appellate Body [4], the imposition of tariffs on allied economies and the persistent assault on multilateral mechanisms.

From the world-systems perspective (Wallerstein, Arrighi), this is part of the three phases that every hegemonic empire undergoes (productive, financial, and military/coercive). The publication and dissemination of the Trump-era National Security Strategy in November 2025 fall within this third phase—a phase in which, from the standpoint of U.S. geopolitics, Latin America is once again viewed as the "Western Hemisphere": an extended frontier of the United States, as well as a reserve of energy and raw materials. This brings anti-imperialist revolutionary politics back onto the agenda.

The anti-imperialist pillars of Bolívar’s thought

Simón Bolívar’s political thought emerged in the context of the 19th-century wars of independence against European colonial powers, yet its significance extends well beyond the dawn of the republican era. In the Jamaica Letter (1815), Bolívar offers an in-depth analysis of the situation in the Americas, the obstacles to emancipation, and the challenges that the new republics would go on to face. His reflection would become a central tenet of anti-imperialist thought: formal independence does not in itself guarantee the effective freedom of the peoples of the new continent; therefore, cooperative relationships must be promoted to allow them to confront the pressures of foreign powers. For Bolívar, this entails continental unity as a prerequisite for sovereignty; independence, understood as the autonomous capacity for decision-making (especially regarding international relations and paths of development free from subordination to foreign interests); and the need to construct a distinct political order—one that strikes a balance between the capabilities and the specific conditions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The amphictyonic Congress of Panama [5] (1826) aimed to coordinate the unity of the new republics in the face of established powers; it represented a strategic assessment of the international system, intended to prevent fragmentation from facilitating a new form of domination. The Congress’s agenda included the formation of a political alliance among the independent republics, military cooperation and collective defense, the concerted resolution of disputes, the development of shared principles for international relations, and the creation of conditions to preserve continental independence. However, the Congress of Panama laid bare the contradictions between the Bolivarian vision of unity and the specific interests of the ruling elites in the new republics â€” territorial fragmentation, disputes among power groups, and divergent foreign policy orientations limited its actual outcomes.

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Between 1822 and 1826, as England began recognising the new republics, the United States made this process conditional upon the newly independent nations agreeing to the US protecting their trade with Spain. In 1828, the U.S. sent William Harrison to Bogotá—where Simón Bolívar resided—to present his credentials (which he did in 1829) and to intensify the demands placed upon Gran Colombia. [6] Bolívar grasped this new role of the United States; in a letter to Colonel Patricio Campbell, dated August 5, 1829, in Guayaquil, he remarked: “The United States seem destined by Providence to plague the Americas with miseries in the name of liberty.”

For this reason, the transformation process that began in Venezuela in 1998—known as the Bolivarian Revolution—brings new momentum to the ideas of Bolívar. This process represents a convergence of several elements: the civil-military alliance that began to take shape in 1954; the anti-establishment, socio-historical current rooted in the unfinished agendas from the birth of the republic, as well as in decades of anti-capitalist struggles; and the integrationist tradition [7] of the Venezuelan left. In fact, in 2004, Chávez revived the anti-imperialist narrative, stating that “there are plenty of people here” to confront U.S. imperialism, [8] and in 2008 he would popularise his famous phrase: “shitty Yankees, go to hell.” [9]

For Latin Americans and Caribbeans, Simón Bolívar represents the origin of a continental and global anti-imperialist ideology, serving as a cornerstone for independence and the revolutions to come.

In short, for Bolívar, independence is a process rather than a mere event; it requires continental unity as a condition for autonomy. He highlights the connection between external domination and internal power structures, framing sovereignty as a tangible capacity for genuine emancipation—a goal for which international alliances are essential.

Cuba: the militant history of anti-imperialist resistance

In 1891 in Nuestra América (Our America), José Martí, the apostle of Cuban independence, raised the need to build our own political and cultural identity, based on the knowledge of our historical and social realities. His criticism is directed both at foreign domination and at the Latin American elites who governed without understanding the characteristics of their own people. His thought can be summarised as a defense of Latin American sovereignty in the face of United States expansion, the construction of a distinct political and cultural identity, a critique of the oligarchies that perpetuate colonial structures, and the need to establish cooperative relations among the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean. Martí serves as the connecting link between the 19th-century ideal of Bolivarian independence and the anti-imperialism of the 20th century.

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution in January 1959 represents a turning point in Latin American anti-imperialist thought—and action. The Cuban experience introduces a conceptual transformation into anti-imperialist thought by clarifying that sovereignty consists not merely of preventing foreign intervention, but also of possessing the political capacity to transform the economic and social structures inherited from a state of dependency. This formulation linked anti-imperialism to the dismantling of inequalities, social justice, development centered on marginalised social classes, and the need to conceive of the centre-periphery relationship within the logic of class struggle.

The Havana Declarations (1960, 1962) developed a conception of anti-imperialism that linked the defense of Cuba to the emancipation of Latin American peoples. The second Declaration (1962) posits the struggle against imperialism as a continental issue, emphasising that imperialism does not manifest solely in U.S. foreign policy; rather, it must be understood as a system of economic, political, and military relations that articulate transnational interests. This conception engages with the theorists and political initiatives associated with so-called Dependency Theory (Ruy Mauro Marini, Theotonio Dos Santos, Vânia Bambirra, André Gunder Frank).

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Cuba contributes internationalist anti-imperialist strategies, based on the premise that a nation's independence is linked to the liberation struggles of other peoples—a perspective rooted, especially in the figure and revolutionary praxis of Che Guevara. The Tricontinental Conference in Havana (1966) advanced the integration of anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles with anti-imperialist efforts. Subsequently, the 1967 emergence of the Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad (Latin American Solidarity Organisation or OLAS) set in motion the coordination of anti-imperialist work on a continental scale.

Cuba treats education and scientific knowledge not merely as a component of national independence, but as a decisive factor in strategies for the internationalisation of struggles based on solidarity—positing, as a central issue, that peoples who do not control the production, circulation, and social appropriation of knowledge face greater difficulties in exercising their sovereignty. This is of particular importance for confronting contemporary capitalism, which is characterised by the transnational concentration of digital platforms, the private appropriation of data, the technological dependence of peripheral countries, the concentration of cutting-edge research and innovation, the subordination of educational systems to the international division of labour, the construction of a hegemonic model of university internationalisation that stifles the scientific capacity of lower-income countries, and the expansion of new forms of cultural and epistemological [10] colonialism.

Anti-imperialism today

The unity of anti-imperialist thought and action—rooted in the legacies of Bolívar and Martí, embodied by Venezuela and Cuba, and championed by Chávez and Fidel—found expression in mechanisms such as CELAC and USAN. [11] Above all, it manifested in the proliferation of humanitarian missions across the continent and in the provision of energy assistance to nations caught in the maelstrom of imperialism. Anti-imperialism is neither a mere slogan nor a stance confined to the political sphere; rather, it gains real strength through economic, cultural, educational, and technological agendas, as well as through the integration of peoples who struggle against the logic of capital.

For more than 60 years, Cuba has been subjected to a criminal blockade by the United States and imperialist nations, which has damaged its infrastructure and economic capacity. Since the beginning of Trump's second term, imperialist aggression against Cuba has intensified accompanied by growing threats of intervention. As always, the Cuban people and the government of Miguel Díaz-Canel have responded with dignity and an openness to dialogue, yet the threat persists. Today, more than at any other point in history, Cuba needs the solidarity of other nations—from a humanitarian and anti-imperialist perspective. The nation that contributed decisively to the development of an anti-imperialist culture across the continent now requires the support of all peoples to end the blockade and enable its own self-determination. The recent vote at the United Nations—from which the representative of the Venezuelan colonial administrative junta was absent—reaffirmed the will of the majority of the world's nations to put an end to the aggression against the nation of Martí; however, we need to redouble citizen pressure through mobilisation and a bold communication campaign.

The U.S. military aggression against Venezuela on January 3, 2026—in which 32 Cubans and around a hundred Venezuelans were killed by United States troops—represents an intensification of an imperialist logic that challenges continental anti-imperialist unity. What took place in Venezuela should not be understood as an isolated event, but rather as the culmination of a process in which the Maduro administration—including Delcy Rodríguez, Jorge Rodríguez, Diosdado Cabello, and the leadership of the PSUV—has, since 2013, systematically dismantled the advances and achievements of the process led by Hugo Chávez (without denying it's positive and negative aspects).

The initiation of negotiations between the Maduro regime and the United States—beginning with a $500,000 contribution from Venezuela (via its subsidiary, CITGO) toward the inauguration of Trump's first presidential term (2016)—marks a turning point. This shift was further deepened by the implementation of a structural adjustment

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package (2018), the ongoing state intervention into all leftist political parties, and the imposition of restrictions on the exercise of trade union freedoms (specifically the right to register unions, file formal labour grievances, and strike). It was also characterised by the negotiation of Venezuelan oil with the Biden administration—under terms detrimental to the national interest, starting in 2022—as well as the reconciliation between the traditional bourgeoisie, represented by the business association FEDECAMARAS, and the new "Bolivarian" bourgeoisie.

The abandonment of anti-imperialism in practice—relegated merely to rhetoric intended to retain a portion of the Bolivarian social base—by the Maduro government created the conditions that made possible the treacherous form of U.S. aggression against Venezuela.

Today, the Latin American and Caribbean left faces the challenge of reclaiming the anti-imperialist tradition of Bolívar and Martí, Fidel and Che, Chávez and the peoples who resist—in order to halt and defeat the Trump-era National Security Strategy, confront the growing U.S. interventionism in the region, and assist the peoples of Cuba and Venezuela in overcoming the respective blockades and colonial-like conditions they currently endure. In this endeavor, we, as revolutionary communists, have an inescapable task.

9 November 2026

*Translated by David Fagan for **International Viewpoint**.*

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