

Causes of the recent wave of protests in Colombia: Cuba's role
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Beginning in the summer of 2019 in Puerto Rico, violent riots broke out in many countries of the region including Colombia, where there has been a second and more persistent round. Analyzing this phenomenon exclusively from a socioeconomic perspective is simplistic and underestimates Cuba's influence and longstanding subversion of Colombia and other democracies of the region. There are always multiple endogenous causes for social unrest, as no system can meet all demands, but democracies with a rule of law have an institutional and legal framework to negotiate claims peacefully. Promises of prosperity and social justice confuse many people who ignore the real danger they face by instead resorting to violence and destruction.

The late Fidel Castro declared in early 1959 that his new revolutionary government would turn Cuba into "the most prosperous country" with a standard of living "higher than any country in the world."² His grandiose promises of great prosperity could fill many pages and widened to Venezuela, which he declared would "create jobs not only for Venezuelans but also for their Colombian brothers and sisters" and become "a revolutionary model for the world."³ The opposite has happened, as revolutionary Cuba is a parasite economy technically bankrupt since 1986 and oil-rich Venezuela stands in ruin. General Guacaipuro Lameda, former president of the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA,⁴ described Fidel Castro's secret formula to dominate Venezuelans with a long-term strategy of collective impoverishment, dependence, and repression by keeping the poor hopeful and galvanizing hope through elections.⁵

Venezuela's huge wealth was used to feed populist expectations and solidify Chavez's control through a clientelist model. To foster dependence on the state, employment in the public sector rose enormously and houses, food, and innumerable social programs were delivered at a frantic pace.⁶ Having spent an estimated \$500 billion on social services during Chavez's 14-year

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² "Discurso pronunciado por el Comandante Fidel Castro Ruz, Primer Ministro del gobierno revolucionario, en el aniversario del ataque al palacio presidencial el 13 de marzo de 1959," <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1959/esp/c130359e.html>. (Translated from Spanish.)

³ Statements by Fidel Castro quoted in the media during one of Chávez's many visits to Cuba. "Fidel Castro llama a Venezuela 'el modelo revolucionario'," Havana, www.informador.com.mx, Oct. 19, 2011. (Translated from Spanish.)

⁴ Lameda was president of PDVSA Oct. 2000 to Feb. 2002.

⁵ "Una grave alerta de Guacaipuro Lameda," Mar. 11, 2016, goo.gl/E9ZwTd; Carla Angola, "Los pobres tendrán que seguir siendo pobres, los necesitamos así," Feb. 13, 2013, goo.gl/5kaA2p.

⁶ "NTN24: Venezuela, el país con mayor cantidad de ministerios en el mundo," NTN24, Jul. 2, 2014; and "El chavismo duplicó el número de empleados públicos," *Infobae*, Jun. 17, 2015.

presidency, poverty declined from 49.4% in 1999 to 29.5% in 2012,⁷ but the gains quickly evaporated. Long-term sustainability was not possible and clearly not the real goal.

Legitimate complaints, demands, and hopes for a better life are the breeding ground for those who, willingly or unknowingly, work with and for Cuba to destabilize democratic governments, export revolution, defeat the United States, and seek regional integration under Cuba's tutelage. The new mode of insurrection is a radical mutation disguised as a "revolution of the masses" whose managers and objectives remain hidden. Marxist orthodoxy, communism and organized violence are not mentioned, it instead embraces the vindication of social demands surrounding gender identity, climate change, indigenous and union rights, anti-capitalism, inequality, poverty, racial justice etc. It is populist in nature (promises whatever is necessary) and uses tactics learned from the KGB as well as historical mechanisms from Cuba's "silent war" to overthrow liberal democracy. Its ideological framework comes from an updated Sao Paulo Forum and is as an amalgamation of the traditional class war to undermine the cultural hegemony of the ruling class, inspired by Gramsci,⁸ and the "war of all the people" (a militarized population) favored by Fidel Castro and exported to Venezuela. It is a formula of great asymmetric power, as the violence puts democratic societies at a difficult crossroads in responding effectively.

Fidel Castro's pervasive goal was to conquer the region and take the revolution straight to the border of the United States. In July 1958, during the fight against the Batista dictatorship, he had written about the United States: "When this war is over, a much longer and greater war will begin for me: the war I will wage against them. I realize that this will be my true destiny." Despite his death in November 2016, his godless war continues to drive the Cuban leadership and its many allies, partners, sympathizers, and useful idiots in the region and worldwide.

Cuba's interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean started as soon as the Castro brothers took power on January 1, 1959; among their earliest priorities were Venezuela and Colombia. An extensive bibliography on this issue includes testimony from numerous participants, including defectors from Cuba's intelligence services, and a treasure trove of information and documents extricated from the Soviet Union by the KGB's former senior archivist Vasili Mitrokhin. It confirms that the Soviets and Cuba worked in sync in the third world promoting subversion, "wars of liberation," and other actions to spread Communism and counter U.S. interests.⁹ By 1963, the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate released a report detailing Cuba's subversive activities in the hemisphere that concluded: "The design of Communist expansion finds in subversion the least costly way of acquiring peoples and territory without exaggerated risk. ... Its aim is to replace the political, economic, and social order existing in a country by a new order, which presupposes the complete physical and moral control of the people. ... That control is achieved by progressively gaining possession of bodies and minds, using appropriate techniques

⁷ "Las misiones sociales, el vínculo de Chávez con los pobres de Venezuela," *Univisión*, Mar. 6, 2013.

⁸ The Italian politician and philosopher-theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was an advocate of a radical social and cultural transformation to establish Communist order. Of particular importance are his reflections and writings on the cultural and political concept of hegemony. See www.britannica.com/biography/Antonio-Gramsci.

⁹ This is extensively documented in Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The world was going our way: the KGB and the battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

of subversion that combine psychological, political, social, and economic actions, and even military operations, if it is necessary.”¹⁰

By 1960, less than two years after the Cuban revolutionary government rose to power, the Colombian Communist Party, financed and instrumented by Cuba, had express orders from Fidel Castro for the Colombian Guerrilla General Staff "to be made up of urban shock groups and rural guerrillas in different parts of the country."¹¹ In Peru, Cuba's Ambassador made clandestine payments in October 1960 for \$347,500 to an extensive network in media, academia, and political parties and wrote to Havana: "I can responsibly affirm that when a response is needed ... there will be protests, acts of solidarity, strikes, and insurrectionary movements ... *according to the instructions received from Havana.*"

During three decades and with Soviet backing, Cuba organized, financed, and provided logistical support as well as military and ideological training to numerous radical groups in several continents, including union leaders, indigenous people, leaders of political parties, etc.¹² In Latin America, it armed, financed, trained, and even participated directly in guerrilla attacks against all regional democracies, while putting in place complementary subversive strategies to coordinate urban shock forces as well as undermining, providing intelligence, and spreading influence through covert penetration and recruitment of agents and collaborators in all countries of the region.¹³ After the end of Soviet aid, Chavez and Maduro provided the resources to continue; it has given Cuba significant control and influence for decades.

Since 1960, Cuba had a leading role inspiring, sponsoring, training, and assisting Colombia's guerrillas. In 1960, Colombia's communist and radical leaders began traveling to Havana for military and political instruction, meeting directly with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara to plot armed uprisings in Colombia and all over Latin America.¹⁴ By March 1961, Colombian police had uncovered a massive plot by Cuba to establish a guerrilla front in Colombia.¹⁵

The Castros, who had a history of drug-dealing,¹⁶ facilitated the entry of Colombian guerrilla groups into the drug trafficking business. Fidel Castro had resorted to drug trafficking to weaken

¹⁰ Jon B. Perdue, *The war of all the people: the nexus of Latin American radicalism and Middle Eastern terrorism*. Virginia, Potomac Books, 2012, p. 164.

¹¹ Fernando Vargas Quemby Elkin Gallego, *Memoria Histórica de las FARC: su verdadero origen*, 2da. ed., Bogotá, Unetex por Colombia/Editorial Litotecnica, 2019, p. 248.

¹² There is an extensive bibliography on Cuba's international interventions. See a concise article in Ignacio Montes De Oca, "Fidel Castro, el antiimperialista que quiso imponer su revolución al mundo," *El País*, Jan. 2, 2017; and see a list of Latin American subversive groups sponsored by Cuba in Pablo Alfonso, "El legado subversivo de Fidel Castro," *Martinoticias.com*, Nov. 26, 2016. Among books in Spanish worth mentioning are: Juan Benemelis, *Las guerras secretas de Fidel Castro*, Miami: Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia, 2003; E. Ros, *Castro y las guerrillas*, op. cit.; Enrique Ros, *La aventura africana de Fidel Castro* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1999).

¹³ María C. Werlau, interview with Enrique García, Miami, Nov. 5, 2019.

¹⁴ Darío Villamizar, *Las guerrillas de Colombia: una historia desde los orígenes hasta los confines* (Bogotá: Penguin Random House Group, 2017), p. 194-95, 201-204, 230-231.

¹⁵ The recovered documents proved that two Cubans were directly participating in the guerrilla front and another one was delivering training to guerrillas in Sumapaz, Colombia. Cuba was also delivering arms to the guerrilla by using solitary and remote coastal locations and semi-abandoned airports. (Juan Benemelis, *Las guerras secretas de Fidel Castro*. Miami, Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia, 2003, p. 334.)

¹⁶ The Castro brothers had cultivated marijuana in the Sierra Maestra to purchase arms for the fight against the Batista regime, developed ties with the U.S. mafia upon rising to power. (J. Benemelis, op. cit., p. 331-332.) In

the United States and to bring in hard currency to fund international subversive activities and liberation movements.¹⁷ An *Executive Intelligence Review* report of 1995 warned that intelligence officials in the region knew that Cuban officials had advised other groups in the Sao Paulo Forum to adopt “the M-19 model” to assure self-reliance through the drug trade.”¹⁸

Colombia’s 2,200-kilometer border with Venezuela has allowed for the “Bolivarian” state, heavily influenced —if not controlled— by Cuba, to provide safe haven, operational bases, routes, armaments, training weapons resupply and medical services for Colombian terrorist groups ELN and FARC (now FARC dissidents and “demobilized” militias) involved in drug trafficking, illegal mining, and other criminal activities. The evidence of the cooperation is very extensive. In 2008 documents and laptops seized by Colombia¹⁹ had evidence of Venezuelan and Ecuadorian (Correa) support and that the encryption system used for the FARC communications came from Cuba.

Cuba used the Colombia peace agreement (with FARC) to advance its objectives by inserting the FARC into a Foro de Sao Paulo track of becoming an elected dictatorship. Cuba was chosen as the location for four years of Colombian peace talks that brought numerous peace negotiators and their staffers from Colombia (as well as from co-facilitator, Norway) and provided a large pool of potential recruits for Cuba’s large and aggressive intelligence services. Cuba also used the peace agreement to establish a presence in critical areas of Colombia. In 2016, Cuban soldiers arrived in FARC concentration areas for around 7,000 FARC members and their associates who agreed to lay down their arms, 26 points around the country with no presence of state forces. A growing number of Cuban civilians were also reportedly indoctrinating the population in those areas as well as in peasant reserves.²⁰ In 2017, it was reported that the Cubans were imparting “a pedagogical and political practice to advocate for emancipation, social justice, and equity” and instructing Colombians in “awareness that agroecology is a weapon of struggle against hegemony and against capitalism.”²¹ Cuba further guaranteed its long-term influence in Colombia by providing 1,000 scholarships for Colombians, mostly from the demobilized FARC, to study medicine (200 annually in five years) at Cuba’s Latin American School of Medicine ELAM.²² The Cuban regime has long used this “health collaboration” scheme to gain loyal adepts to the revolution and allow its intelligence services to recruit select candidates who return home to attain positions in their governments or their state’s administrative structure and help further Cuban objectives.

1960, Cuba signed a mutual assistance agreement with Czechoslovakia’s intelligence service to produce drugs and, with KGB participation, launched the “Pink Epidemic” operation to introduce illegal drugs into the U.S. to finance arms purchases for armed struggle in Latin America. (Ibid. p. 331-340.)

¹⁷ Georgie Anne Geyer, *Guerrilla prince: the untold story of Fidel Castro*, 3rd ed. (Kansas City: Andrews McMill Publishing, 2001), p. 371.

¹⁸ “The Sao Paulo Forum, Castro’s shocktroops.” *Executive Intelligence Review*, Nov. 10, 1995, p. 10.

¹⁹ Farah, Douglas. “Cuba’s role in the Bolivarian radical populist movement’s dismantling of democracy,” Dec. 11, 2017, IBIConsultants LLC, p.34.

²⁰ Isabel Cuervo, “Cubanos están a doctrinando en Colombia,” *Martinoticas.com*, Nov. 24, 2017.

²¹ Ibid. (Translated from Spanish.)

²² Edilma Prada Céspedes, “Gobierno colombiano 1.000 becas para estudiar Medicina,” Bogotá, *Diario de Cuba*, Mar. 16, 2017; “La Habana recibe a los 100 primeros miembros de las FARC que estudiarán medicina en la Isla,” Havana, *Diario de Cuba*, Aug. 28, 2017.

The plan to weaken the Colombian government of Ivan Duque is well designed and comes from traditional military as well as non-military sources. Venezuela's armed forces have systematically violated Colombia's sovereignty with numerous air and land incidents by to provoke a confrontation.²³ A document of the Venezuela's Council of Defense of the Nation recommends destabilizing Colombia by exploiting for political capital a strike by the indigenous community in Cauca, Colombia, and highlighted the importance of exacerbating internal problems for Duque in order to draw his attention away from Venezuela. The document recommended supporting and financing the social movements and indigenous protests in Colombia and promoting a national and international media campaign.²⁴

Key assets have been placed in the Cuban embassy in Bogotá to develop Cuba's objectives. The intelligence center, operating within the embassy, greatly increased the number of 'diplomats' (most are spies) during the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2018). The head of the intelligence center, Juan Loforte Osorio, was officially accredited as Minister Counselor but is a seasoned Colonel with a distinguished career of nearly 40 years in the intelligence service.²⁵ (After he was outed in the press in 2014, he was transferred and appears to be in Cuba.) In May 2021, the Colombian government declared Omar García Lazo, the second in command of the Cuban embassy in Bogotá and a First Secretary, *persona non grata* for carrying out activities incompatible with the Vienna Convention.²⁶

There are currently nine political parties in Colombia that are members of the *Sao Paulo Forum*,²⁷ among 123 member parties from 27 countries. The *Forum* was Fidel Castro's brainchild, a clever post-Cold War redesign "to discuss progressive strategies after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989"²⁸ and reframe, revive, and coordinate the radical left to find a more practical way to reach power. Castro counted on the help of Lula (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva),²⁹ then head of Brazil's *Partido dos Trabalhadores* and future president of that country (2003-2011), and other subversive comrades.³⁰ The first meeting was held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in July

²³ Sonia Osorio, "Solicitan ofensiva en la ONU contra Maduro por violar la soberanía de Colombia," *El Nuevo Herald*, Sep. 23, 2018.

²⁴ "Documentos secretos develan un plan del régimen de Nicolás Maduro para debilitar al gobierno colombiano de Iván Duque," *Infobae*, Apr. 5, 2019.

²⁵ María C. Werlau, interviews with Enrique García. (See M. Werlau, *Cuba's Intervention in Venezuela*, op. cit.); Antonio María Delgado, "Espías cubanos miran con interés el proceso de paz en Colombia," *El Nuevo Herald*, 14 de diciembre de 2014.

²⁶ "Diplomático de Cuba en Bogotá, Omar Rafael García Lazo, un represor de exportación," Radio Televisión Martí, May 11, 2021.

²⁷ <https://forodesaopaulo.org/partidos/>. (Other member parties include Cuba's Communist Party, the Sandinista Front of Nicaragua, and five parties in Venezuela, member parties in Latin America, thirteen in Uruguay, twelve each in Argentina and Chile, ten each in Peru and Dominican Republic, nine in Paraguay, eight in Ecuador, five in Brazil, four in Puerto Rico, three each in Bolivia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Panama, two each in Costa Rica and Martinique, and one each in Haiti, Honduras, El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, and Curacao.)

²⁸ "São Paulo Forum for 25 years," Instituto Lula, July 30, 2015, <https://www.institutolula.org/foro-de-sao-paulo-faz-25-anos>.

²⁹ Enrique García, a former Cuban intelligence official who headed the Brazil team for Cuba's Directorate of Intelligence in 1985-1986, reports that Lula was always "Cuba's man," as he had been financed and supported by Cuban intelligence since he began his career as a union leader. (Enrique García, undated manuscript, and M. Werlau, interviews with E. García, op. cit.)

³⁰ Backers included the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL) was founded in Havana in Jan. 1966 after the Tri-Continental Congress for similar revolutionary

1990 and was attended by 48 leftist (and communist) parties and movements from Latin America and the Caribbean.³¹ The Forum continues to gather for an annual meeting (with guests from social movements and political organizations from other continents) to seek unity of action in the “anti-imperialist and people’s struggle” against neoliberalism and in defining “a new concept of continental unity and integration.”³² Its Working Group represents 16 countries and meets periodically; it has three regional departments of which the Andean Amazonian department is temporarily based in Colombia.³³

Cuba systematically directed the Forum’s transformation “to rebuild the old Communist International in the Western Hemisphere under Cuban control.”³⁴ The template came from Fidel’s playbook on how to make revolution “silently” —furtively and opportunistically—³⁵ to which he added Gramscian tactics.³⁶ Members build constituencies around populist social causes and, once elected and under the cover of democratic legitimacy, progressively undermine civil and individual freedoms, free markets, and bourgeois institutions and values, using mechanisms of the constitutional order to lay the ground for a takeover of a state through its own institutions. The new approach mostly rejects traditional armed struggle, pretends it is not communist, and tailors actions to circumstances, using convenient aspects of capitalism.³⁷

A “Bolivarian” Venezuela was a perfect candidate for a gradualist model favored by Fidel,³⁸ which was also fully applied in other ALBA partners with Forum presidents such as Bolivia,³⁹ Nicaragua, and, Rafael Correa’s Ecuador. The Forum’s successes have been impressive. By 2008, Fidel Castro was celebrating that the Forum was “attaining power in almost all countries” of the region.⁴⁰ In 2015, presidents of eleven of the most important countries of the region (Cuba, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Uruguay, Bolivia, and El Salvador) were members and all Western Hemisphere-OAS member countries including the U.S. tolerated and legitimized —many also celebrated— the Cuban dictatorship. It had been

purposes, one of its primary goals was to unify the revolutionary struggle in Latin America. (Maria C. Werlau, telephone interview with Dr. Hilda Molina, July 22, 2019.)

³¹ “São Paulo Forum for 25 years,” op. cit. “The Sao Paulo Forum, Castro’s shocktroops,” op. cit.; and “Cuba: Foreign policy in Latin America,” *Focus Cuba*, Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, University of Miami, Issue 51, Jan. 22, 2004.

³² <https://forodesaopaulo.org/brief-history-and-foundations/>

³³ Ibid. (The Southern Cone department is headquartered in Uruguay and the Mesoamerican and Caribbean department is headquartered in El Salvador.)

³⁴ “The Sao Paulo Forum, Castro’s shocktroops,” op. cit. p. 11.

³⁵ M. Werlau, telephone interview with H. Molina, op. cit.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Antonio Sánchez García, “El foro de Sao Paulo: la izquierda real y la nueva izquierda,” *analítica.com*, Feb, 21, 2014.

³⁸ Chávez acknowledged that Fidel had told him in his first trip to Cuba in December 1994 about the *Foro de Sao Paulo*. (Ignacio Ramonet, *Hugo Chávez, mi primera vida: Conversaciones con Ignacio Ramonet*, Vintage/Random House, 2013, p. 671.) Dr. Hilda Molina affirms that Fidel convinced Chávez on that trip to Cuba to eventually co-lead the Sao Paulo Forum and to create a great Bolivarian homeland, offering him the money and human resources for his campaign for the presidency of Venezuela. (M. Werlau, telephone interview with H. Molina, op. cit.)

³⁹ See Luis Leonel León, “Carlos Sánchez Berzain: how Castrochavismo took over Bolivia,” *Panampost*, Nov. 5, 2018 and Mario J. Pentón, “Ex ministro: ‘Bolivia le sigue a Venezuela. Es la crónica de una muerte anunciada,’” *El Nuevo Herald*, Dec. 13, 2018.

⁴⁰ “‘Lula,’ Reflexiones del Comandante en Jefe, Fidel Castro Ruz,” Jan. 22-31, 2008, *Granma*, in *La Jornada*, Jan. 25, 2008, www.jornada.unam.mx.

welcomed back into the OAS without conditions but remained silent on the advancing authoritarianism in Venezuela. Although the Forum has suffered important setbacks, it is a long term proposition.

Events since the fall of 2019 point to a change in tactics of the Sao Paulo Forum likely from an awareness that the gradualist model toward radicalization⁴¹ takes too long to consolidate and the crisis in Venezuela and Cuba together with growing international pressure required distracting, intimidating, and destabilizing governments to neutralize them and avoid an intervention in Venezuela or measures contemplated in the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, TIAR.⁴² Accelerating the regional conquest would also provides access to more economic resources and new vassals. The new "Puebla Group" brings together progressive Latin American forces with updated elements from the Sao Paulo Forum and the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) to combat neoliberalism, growing inequality, and the failure to meet the demands of "the most popular and neglected classes."⁴³ Its first meeting was in July 12, 2019 in Puebla, Mexico, with thirty political leaders from twelve countries seeking "to join forces and proposals to consolidate a new axis with the objective of producing regional consensus and politically articulating progressivism."

The insurrectionary modality since 2019 had a trial run at many Latin American cities in the 1980s with "spontaneous riots" by radical movements and groups organized from Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua.⁴⁴ Fidel Castro led the onslaught with his public harangues against the external debt and the adjustment and stabilization agreements with the International Monetary Fund, with the sure hand of his intelligence apparatus. In a 2015 book titled *The conspiracy of the 12 coups*, Venezuelan professor Thays Peñalver includes testimony of intelligence officials from several Latin American countries as well as radical leaders who participated in the events who report that the riots were designed to make people believe they had been spontaneous.⁴⁵ They led to a state of siege in Peru in 1982, in the Dominican Republic, Chile, and Jamaica in 1984 and to violent riots and looting in many cities including in Ecuador, Honduras and Guatemala.⁴⁶ Peñalver writes that the "authorship of revolutionaries was always denied or omitted no matter how much evidence there was of their militias, bombs, and snipers."⁴⁷ According to Professor Luis Lauriño, from Venezuela's Andrés Bello Catholic University, the "austerity" protests began in Mexico in 1981 and spread to Argentina in March 1982, October 1983, June 1984, September 1984, May 1985 and August 1985, as well as to Brazil from April to October 1983 in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Santos, Campinas, Fortaleza, Ribeirão Preto, Brasília and to other cities in November-December 1986 and July 1987.⁴⁸ An important underlying theme, Lauriño notes, was eroding the image and hegemony of traditional political parties and processes and questioning the established order.

⁴¹ E. García, manuscript, and M. Werlau, interviews with E. García, op. cit.

⁴² "The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance," Media Note, Office of the Spokesman, Washington, D.C., US Department of State, 20 de septiembre de 2001, bit.ly/2Hks64P and bit.ly/2YrIirZ.

⁴³ Daniel Pardo, "Qué es el Grupo de Puebla, el "contrapoder" a la derecha que reúne en Buenos Aires a la izquierda latinoamericana (sin AMLO ni Maduro)," *BBC News Mundo*, Nov. 9, 2019.

⁴⁴ Thays Peñalver, *La conspiración de los 12 golpes*, 2015, p. 138.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141 and 146-154

⁴⁸ Maria C. Werlau, interview with Luis Lauriño and text messages of Nov. 4, 2019.

In August 1985, Fidel Castro declared at an international meeting on the debt that oil-producing countries such as Nigeria, Venezuela, and Mexico could not be excluded from the anti-debt movement, that would now be valid for all Third World countries.⁴⁹ This laid the foundation to bring the anti-capitalist insurrection to Venezuela, where the radical left took control of the student movement at the universities after the fuse was lit with the death of a student at the University of the Andes in March 1987. Students looted and distributed food to the city's poor in coordination with neighborhood organizations in many cities where riots and violence broke out in perfectly coordinated fashion and a preconceived plan.⁵⁰ The government reported hundreds of detained foreigners, many of them armed, for immediate deportation. A former guerrilla, Fernando Soto Rojas, said that they, with a Venezuelan communist professor, had trained a group of almost eighty youngsters and that the current president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, had participated in the riots, having just returned from a one-year Marxist training course in Cuba.⁵¹ Years later, the head of Venezuelan Intelligence, General Carlos Julio Peñaloza, reported that there was a plan by Fidel Castro to stage a coup that, having failed, led Fidel to opt for Plan B, which was to have the sniper massacre blamed on President Carlos Andrés Pérez.

Citing another example, in Argentina a similar wave of violence started in May 1988 with an assault on a supermarket in Córdoba; three days later, the country's urban centers were in a state of upheaval. According to Peñalver "everything appeared with manifest synchronization" and organized groups were observed in different cities. In January 1989, an assault on the Mechanized Infantry Regiment No. 3 of La Tablada, province of Buenos Aires, meant to start a popular insurrection, but failed. In 2000, the Cuban regime was accused in an Argentine court for the assault; the complaint file had thirty pages of testimonies and other evidence but was dismissed.⁵²

In sum, Cuba has systematically created, indoctrinated, trained, financed, and coordinated groups and individuals in the region —many trained on the island militarily and politically— who are ready to mobilize upon receiving the order. They have the support of many secret agents, including “illegals” (Cubans with false identities of other nationalities) long-term plants, as well as countless native agents and collaborators embedded in governments, parties, media, academia, unions, etc. in all countries in the region (and around the world). Over time, this plan of regional destabilization with violence has only expanded and been perfected with Venezuelan funding and ALBA support. Likewise, the Venezuelan and Cuban mass exodus has allowed the introduction of many agents throughout the region, from Cuba, Venezuela, and other radical elements trained by Cuba, some with false identities.

⁴⁹ Fidel Castro Ruz, “Discurso de clausura del encuentro sobre la deuda externa de América Latina y el Caribe,” La Habana, 3 de agosto de 1985 (en Eric Toussaint, “Fidel Castro: La deuda es impagable,” Comité para la abolición de las deudas ilegítimas, 28 de noviembre de 2016, www.cadtm.org).

⁵⁰ George Ciccariello-Maher, *We created Chávez: a people's history of the Venezuelan revolution*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2013; T. Peñalver, op. cit., p. 146- 147.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² The case was filed by an Argentine businessman, Omar Adra, president of the Argentine American Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy in Cuba but appears to have been dismissed. (Pablo Alfonso, “Acusan a Cuba por a salto guerrillero en Argentina,” *El Nuevo Herald*, Dic. 6, 2000; “La Tablada: procurador dice no a la Corte,” ambito.com, Dic. 18, 2000).

On October 20, 2019 Venezuelan leader Diosdado Cabello declared: “What is happening in Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Honduras, is just a breeze; a Bolivarian hurricane is coming.”⁵³ That same day, President Nicolás Maduro said: “We are fulfilling the plan... the Sao Paulo Forum plan is in full swing, victorious. We are fulfilling all the goals that we have proposed in the Sao Paulo Forum, one by one. ... The Sao Paulo Forum is revitalized, re-boostered, and that’s how we must continue, articulating the progressive, revolutionary, left-wing, advanced parties from all of Latin America and the Caribbean and the world with social movements. That was the strategy we designed and we are doing well, we are doing better than we thought, much better than we had thought.”⁵⁴

These recent insurrections have multiple signs of a strategy as well as evidence of the presence of Cuban, Venezuelan, and Colombian guerrilla elements. Among other similarities,⁵⁵ they denigrate the institutional order and democratic institutions, especially the security forces, and emphasize systemic imperfections or failures, such as corruption and inequality. Radical elements prepared and coordinated in advance selectively deploy extreme violence in a synchronized, organized, manner supported by the broad popular-street movement, which is mostly peaceful. The material damages they cause confuse and occupy law enforcement agencies, blackmail and distract politicians, cause discomfort, inconvenience and harm to most citizens, increase costs for the State, and hurt the economy. Emblematic examples of irreverence, disobedience and even violence against the forces of order quickly emerge, which are imitated and feed back the violence. Law enforcement agencies are overloaded so that they can accumulate victims, real or fabricated, in order to further polarize the situation, direct new claims against State authorities and further discredit the established order. The prevailing social contract to make claims is ignored and, if these are satisfied, the bar is raised and followed by calls for the resignation of rulers, new constitutions, and a new political-social-economic order. Many of the participants are not aware they are being used as accessories to carry out a clandestine and preconceived plan.

The updated Sao Paulo Forum was conceived with a good understanding of human psychology and of how to manipulate the masses and based on the exploitation of new technologies and social media. Falsely presented as another leaderless movement of our new interconnected world,⁵⁶ it transmits a powerful and simplistic leit motif to young people, who are easiest to impress, have no historical memory of subversion, communism and the Cold War, and tend to support utopian social views. Another of its key constituencies is those who feel deprived, that is, the least privileged, the "victims" of the capitalist system —empowering themselves as a mass to make their demands infers a group identity that gives new and energized meaning to their

⁵³ “Diosdado Cabello amenaza: «La brisa bolivariana que recorre la región se convertirá en huracán»,” *ABC*, 20 de octubre de 2019.

⁵⁴ “Maduro: Estamos cumpliendo el plan del Foro de Sao Paulo a la perfección,” *El Nacional*, Oct. 20, 2019; “Maduro: “Estamos cumpliendo con el plan, no puedo decir más”,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMORpx9CwxY>.

⁵⁵ The Spanish version of the author’s 2019 book on Venezuela enumerates eleven similarities among the violent protests in different countries. (See Maria C. Werlau, *La intervención de Cuba en Venezuela: una ocupación estratégica con implicaciones globales*, Free Society Project/ Neo Club Press, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1652248765>.)

⁵⁶ See Ori Brafman y Rod Beckstrom, *The starfish and the spider: the unstoppable power of leaderless Organizations* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006).

lives. Massive “spontaneous” movements, once unleashed, have found instant support in the press, academia, the judicial system, and progressive civil networks largely thanks to the advance of the “silent revolution” that Fidel Castro spoke of. Their focus is on social demands, not on condemning organized violence, and they usurp the narrative to so explain the problem.

The Cuban regime’s undue influence in the region and the world stems from a perverse form of “soft power,”⁵⁷ a “core competency”⁵⁸ developed over six decades to effectively achieve strategic goals through asymmetric, non-military, capabilities. It is rooted in the centralized command-and-control nature of its totalitarian system, which allows the leadership absolute power and ample flexibility to operate unconstrained, use even the most unsavory tactics, and allows it to act very quickly and plan for the long term. This leadership faces no term limits, electoral challenges, judicial or bureaucratic-institutional rules, or a need for consultation, transparency and accountability. Its directives are passed from the top down to be implemented by a huge number of orderlies in a large and diversified infrastructure that works in sync designed to carry them out. Its priorities have always been two-fold: 1. maintaining internal totalitarian control;⁵⁹ and 2. spreading its influence across the globe. On both accounts, it has devoted enormous resources —material and human— and worked with determination, patience, sophistication, and cohesiveness.

Cuba’s “formidable intelligence and counterintelligence force ... is among the best in the world.”⁶⁰ It was formed with considerable support and training from the KGB and recruits its officers very selectively. It worked collaboratively with the security services of all the former Soviet bloc countries⁶¹ and, after the demise of the Soviet Union, has helped form Venezuelan

⁵⁷ Joseph Nye, who coined the post-Cold War concept of “soft power, proposed that beyond using military power “to get others to do what they otherwise would not,” the U.S. could draw on its soft power —noncoercive power— to cement its leadership position in the world through cultural, ideological, and institutional mechanisms.” (Nye Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Think again: soft power,” *Foreign Policy*, February 23, 2006. (Joseph Nye is a political scientist and former Clinton administration official.); Eric X. Li, “The rise and fall of soft power,” *Foreign Policy*, August 20, 2018.)

⁵⁸ Cuba’s “core competency” is described in Chapter IX of the author’s book: M. Werlau, *Cuba’s intervention in Venezuela*, op.cit. as akin to applying to geopolitics the business management theory of core competency strategy. The term “core competency” was coined in 1990 by the leading management experts CK Prahalad and Gary Hamel. (C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel, “The Core Competence of the Corporation,” *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 1990.) It states that firms must seek to grow and play to their strengths (areas or functions in which they have competencies.)

⁵⁹ Its density of surveillance of the population is higher than the Stasi in the former GDR (East Germany), which had the highest ratio of the former Soviet bloc. According to former Lieutenant Colonel of Cuba’s Ministry of the Interior Omar Ruíz Matoses, in 1989 Cuba, with a population of around 10.6 million, had 62,000 officers working for the counterintelligence service, or political police. (Maria Werlau, telephone interview with Máximo Omar Ruíz Matoses (from Valencia, Spain), March 27, 2021.) This shows that it had a higher density of surveillance than other former Communist countries of Europe and the URSS. (Maria C. Werlau, Memorandum of meeting at the Commission on Stasi Records of December 9, 2005, Report of trip to Berlin, December 6-11, 2005, Free Society Project, Inc.)

⁶⁰ William Tucker, “Cuban intelligence following reconciliation with the US,” Department of Homeland Security, Jun. 16, 2015, goo.gl/DjFHwE.

⁶¹ Its work in conjunction with the KGB and Stasi appears to have been the most prolific. (The author has been twice to research this aspect, visiting with the *Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic* (<https://www.bstu.de/en/>) in Berlin, and has seen investigations rescued from documents of the former Stasi.)

and Nicaraguan services, as well as others of the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA) bloc.⁶² It has allowed Cuba to place an army of spies, propagandists, and collaborators in wide-ranging sectors of society even in the smallest island nations. According to three former officers (defectors) of Cuban Intelligence, in the early 2000s, the Directorate of Intelligence had approximately 600 operational officers managing an estimated 7,800 worldwide intelligence relationships embedded in governments, international bodies, media outlets, academic and scientific institutions, political parties, unions, post offices, telephone companies, businesses, cemeteries, etc.⁶³ In ensuing years, all indications are that Cuba's intelligence service has grown thanks to enormous financial subsidies from Venezuela, strengthened ties with Russia, Iran, China, and North Korea, and enhanced relations with many governments in the region and around the world. It is assisted by a gigantic propaganda apparatus entirely disproportionate to Cuba's size and GDP. With funds and other resources from Venezuela, Cuba has also developed and exported software developed through its intelligence apparatus, and including for citizen and government control,⁶⁴ to Colombia and many other countries of the region.⁶⁵

The burdens and destabilizing effects of the mass exodus on Colombia, together with Venezuela and Cuba's support for the FARC and ELN, fit the larger strategy to weaken Colombia and advance a continental agenda. Almost two million Venezuelans have migrated to Colombia, of which 90% is reported to live from the informal economy and 56% does not have an official immigration status.⁶⁶ Impoverished, hungry, and sick Venezuelans of all ages constantly arrive needing medical and social services, security, housing, and infrastructure. According to Colombia's ambassador to the U.S., the Venezuelan government clearly benefits from and needs migration to reduce social pressure, have fewer people to control, access goods and services, and obtain remittances that in their exchange enrich the Venezuelan government.⁶⁷ In addition, some Venezuelans entering Colombia carry out espionage, and some are actually Cubans. In March 2019 Colombia expelled a Cuban for spying on a strategic installation of the Colombian Air Force located north of Bogotá who had been part of the Cuban medical brigade in Venezuela, which is used to bring Cuban intelligence agents into Colombia.⁶⁸

Cuba's takeover of Venezuela demonstrates the powerful asymmetrical advantages of exporting its unique imperialist "brand." Colombia and all other countries of the region are vulnerable to Cuban interference but many lack a clear understanding of the nature and pernicious

⁶² www.portaalba.org.

⁶³ See Estimated number of Cuba's intelligence relationships working against the United States, Update of March 2021, Free Society Project / Cuba Archive.

⁶⁴ M. Werlau, *Cuba's intervention in Venezuela, op.cit.* (See chapter V. "Data is power": Cuba's virtual occupation of Venezuela.)

⁶⁵ "La mentira está institucionalizada en Venezuela," Jan. 10, 2013, anthonydaquin.wordpress.com, goo.gl/jWF5G1.

⁶⁶ Daniel Pardo, "Colombia: qué derechos tendrán cuando regularicen su situación," *BBC Mundo*, Colombia, Feb. 11, 2021.

⁶⁷ Frank López Ballesteros, "Embajador de Colombia en EEUU: 'En Venezuela el ELN se conectó con las mafias del oro'," *Diario Las Américas*, Nov. 2, 2018.

⁶⁸ "Expulsan a espía cubano que rondaba la base aérea de Palanquero," *El Tiempo*, Mar. 17, 2019; Jaime Moreno, "No hablan español pero les dieron pasaporte venezolano, denuncia Colombia," *Voice of America*, 15 de noviembre de 2019.

methodological toolkit of the Cuban regime; most have inadequate resources or appropriate counter-measures in place, if any, to defend against it.