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BY W. T. WHITNEY

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Mexico Leads in Opposing the Cuba Blockade and US Imperialism



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Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) visited Cuba on May 8-9. He began by highlighting regional unity as good for equal promotion of economic development for all states. AMLO addressed themes he had discussed previously when Cuban president Miguel Diaz-Canel visited Mexico City in 1921.

At that time AMLO, by virtue of Mexico serving as president pro tempore, presided over a summit meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean states (CELAC). He proposed building “in the Western Hemisphere something similar to what was the economic community that gave rise to the current European Union.”

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Two days later, AMLO included Diaz-Canel in a celebration of the 200th anniversary of Mexican independence. Praising Cuba's dignity in resisting U.S. aggression, he called for an end to the blockade.

Months later in Havana, on May 8, 2022, AMLO, speaking before Cuban leaders and others, recalled "times when the United States wanted to own the continent They were at their peak in annexations, deciding on independence wherever, creating new countries, freely associated states, protectorates, military bases, and ... invasions."

U.S. leaders, he declared, need to be convinced "that a new relationship among the peoples of America ... is possible." He called for "replacing the OAS with a truly autonomous organism." CELAC presumably would be that alternative alliance. Formed in 2011, CELAC includes all Western Hemisphere nations except for the United States and Canada.

The United States in 1948 established the Organization of American States (OAS) for Cold War purposes. When the OAS expelled Cuba in 1962, only Mexico's government opposed that action and later Mexico was one of two nations rejecting an OAS demand to break off diplomatic relations with Cuba.

AMLO predicted that "by 2051, China will exert domination over 64.8% of the world market and the United States only 25%, or even 10%." He suggested that, "Washington, finding this unacceptable," would be tempted "to resolve that disparity through force."

AMLO rejected "growing competition and disunity that will inevitably lead to decline in all the Americas." He called for "Integration with respect to sovereignties and forms of government and effective application of a treaty of economic-commercial development suiting everybody." The "first step" would be for the United States "to lift its blockade of this sister nation."

AMLO's visit prompted agreements on practicalities. The two presidents determined that Cuba would supply Mexico with medications and vaccines – particularly Cuba's anti-Covid-19 Abdala vaccine for children. Mexico's government will send almost 200 Mexican youths to Cuba to study medicine; 500 Cuban physicians will go to Mexico to work in underserved areas. The two presidents signed a general agreement providing for expanded cooperation in other areas.

Before arriving in Cuba, AMLO had visited Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Belize. Along the way he reportedly complained that, "The United States may have awarded \$40 billion in aid to Ukraine but doesn't fulfill its promise of years ago of helping out Central America."

The two presidents' encounter in Havana raises the question of a long-term Mexican role in mobilizing collective resistance to U.S. domination and the U.S. blockade of Cuba. Mexico is well-positioned to lead that effort, what with strong economic and commercial connections with the United States. The United States, leaning on Mexico as an economic partner, may well be receptive to certain demands.

According to the White House-based Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, "Mexico is currently our largest goods trading partner with \$614.5 billion in total (two way) goods trade during 2019."

Beyond that, and in relation to Cuba, Mexico has its own revolutionary tradition and longstanding ties with Cuba. She is well-placed to lead a strong international campaign to undo the U.S. blockade.

In his major speech, AMLO cited support from Mexico in Cuba's first War for Independence. He mentioned Cubans' collaboration with Mexico's much-admired president Benito Juárez and pointed out that Mexico in 1956 hosted Cuban revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro as they prepared for their uprising against Batista. AMLO cited former Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas's solidarity visit to Cuba in 1961 after the CIA - organized Bay of Pigs invasion. In token of cultural ties between the two peoples, Mexico was the guest of honor at Havana's recently concluded International Book Fair.

José Martí warrants special attention. In exile, Martí lived, taught and wrote in Mexico City from 1875 to 1875. Afterwards he stayed connected with Mexican friends. Martí would later write admiringly about the liberal reforms of Indian-descended president Juárez, whom he regarded as the "impenetrable guardian of America."

That "America" would be "Our America," which became the title of a Martí essay with deep meaning for unity and for separation from the United States. "Our America" proclaimed that the culture and history of lands south of the Rio Bravo (Rio Grande) originated *autonomously*, quite apart from European and U.S. influences. The essay appeared first in January 1891, in two journals simultaneously. One was *El Partido Liberal*, published in Mexico, the other being a New York periodical.

Unity among Latin American and Caribbean nations appears to be precarious as the U.S. government prepares to host the 9th Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, on June 6-10. The Summit is an offshoot of the OAS which, according to its website, "serves as the technical secretariat of the Summits process."

The United States has indicated that the leftist governments of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua won't be receiving invitations. AMLO, speaking in Havana, reiterated his

objection and once more stated that if nations are left out, he will not attend. Nor will the *presidents of Bolivia and Honduras*, Luis Arce and Xiomara Castro, *respectively*.

The presidents of several Caribbean nations **will also be staying away**. They point to the hypocrisy of U.S.-appointed Venezuelan president Juan Guaidó being invited, but not Cuban president **Miguel Díaz-Canel**. Unhappy with U.S. advice on transparency of elections and Russia-Brazil relations, Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro will not attend.

The conclusion here is that the old system of regional alliances is unstable and that the timing may be right for renewed resistance to U.S domination and the blockade. Now would be the occasion for U.S. anti-imperialists and blockade opponents to align their strategizing and efforts with actions, trends, and flux in Latin America and the Caribbean. And, most certainly, they would be paying attention to actions and policies of Mexico's government.

Martí had often corresponded with his Mexican friend Manuel Mercado. His letter of May 18, 1895, the day before he died in battle, stated that, "The Cuban war ... has come to America in time to prevent Cuba's annexation to the United States. ... And Mexico, will it not find a wise, effective and immediate way of helping, in due time, its own defender?"

W.T. Whitney Jr. is a retired pediatrician and political journalist living in Maine.

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