

The Advance of Radical Populist Doctrine in Latin America

How the Bolivarian Alliance is Remaking Militaries, Dismantling Democracy and Combatting the Empire

BY DOUGLAS FARAH

In July 2014 Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Cuba, Nicaragua, Argentina and Brazil. He forgave more than \$30 billion in Cuban debt from the Cold War; signed a nuclear energy and gas deals with Argentina and declared the beleaguered administration of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner a “top strategic ally;” promised his old friend Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua agricultural assistance and other aid; and signed on as a founding member of the BRICS’ new development bank to challenge the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.¹

Ten days after Putin’s visit, Chinese President Xi Jinping swept through the region, visiting Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela and Cuba and dispensing some \$70 billion in loans, lines of credit and direct aid.² It was his second visit to the region in less than two years and the third by a Chinese president in the past three years.

In contrast, in eight years President Obama has visited only six Latin American countries – and only one more than once.³ U.S. aid to the region has been shrinking and most of what is available is used to fund increasingly unpopular counter-narcotics efforts. Even the crisis of unaccompanied minors from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador resulted in an acrimonious domestic debate over immigration policy that yielded little additional aid to the region.

Many U.S. policy leaders express dismay at the inability of U.S. leaders to produce desired results around the world, from brokering a ceasefire in the Middle East to stemming the advance of radical Islamists in Iraq and Syria, and warn of a decline of U.S. influence.

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But the visits of the gift-laden presidents of Russia and China to Latin America, traditionally a region of unchallenged U.S. influence, underscores the significant loss of Washington's ability to shape events in a region much closer to home and of significant strategic interest. The decline, due to waning policy attention amidst multiple global crises and severe budget constraints, is leaving a diminishing group of friends in the hemisphere. While the U.S. position remains pre-eminent – due to geographic proximity, cultural ties, and trade ties – it is rapidly eroding.

In a multi-polar world of competing powers some shifts are inevitable, and not all present a strategic challenge. But in the case of Latin America, the long-standing U.S. goal of establishing functioning democracies under the rule of law, with stable economic growth, is being dismantled after decades of progress.

U.S. engagement efforts, both military and diplomatic, are being scaled back dramatically, leaving a vacuum being filled by extra-regional actors and a growing group of political leaders who hope for the collapse of the United States. Beginning in 2010 overall U.S. aid, both civilian and security assistance, began to drop dramatically and the regional initiatives are among the hardest hit by the ongoing budget austerity and sequestration.⁴

As the U.S. pulls back it is simultaneously facing concerted effort by radical self-proclaimed socialist and populist governments to erase any trace of U.S. military and security doctrine, weaken economic and cultural ties, and portray any and all U.S. policy decisions as seeking to recolonize Latin America.

The visits of Putin and Xi Jinping to the main Bolivarian nations were designed to strengthen those governments and give them fresh resources. Iran also weighed in,

announcing that its official Book News Agency would be releasing a special edition book of the writing and thinking of Fidel Castro and, in addition, a book compiling the revolutionary successes of Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and Venezuela.⁵

U.S. influence is being replaced by a lethal doctrine of asymmetrical warfare, inspired by authoritarian governments seeking perpetual power and nurtured by Iran. Through an interlocking and rapidly expanding network of official websites, publishing houses, think tanks and military academies, the governments of Argentina, Cuba and Venezuela have created a dominant narrative that identifies the United States as the primary threat to Latin America.

The 8-member Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), espousing "Socialism for the 21st Century", is replacing U.S. influence with a toxic mix of anti-democratic values, massive corruption, and a doctrine that draws on terrorism and totalitarian models, including the justification of the use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States. In an indication of the organization's inclination, Iran and Syria are the only two countries that have been granted observer status in ALBA.⁶ In addition to the eight nations formally in ALBA, Argentina has become a de facto member of the alliance under Fernández de Kirchner and her government has become one of the leading state sponsors of the new ideology.

Under the banner of the "Bolivarian Revolution," named for South American liberator Simón Bolívar, the group has tried to forge a new economic, political, and military model that is completely untethered from Western democratic values and models. Rather, the bloc looks to Cuba, Iran, Hezbollah, China and Russia as anti-imperialist bulwarks to be

emulated. Alliances with Zimbabwe, Angola, Syria and other repressive regimes are viewed as beneficial to the revolution.

The Bolivarian nations, occasionally joined by Brazil, consistently side with any nation against U.S. interests. This includes supporting the government of Syria, the Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine, and helping Iran evade international sanctions. Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina, once considered an ally of the United States, has been particularly vocal in her support of every statement of Putin and move by Russia, closely followed by Maduro of Venezuela.

The Bolivarian revolution is not a significant military threat to the United States. Rather, the primary threat lies in the willingness of the alliance to offer sanctuary, support,

and infrastructure to those with an overtly hostile, multifaceted agenda toward the United States (Iran, Russia), or countries like China who have both strategic, intelligence and economic designs in the region. The ALBA axis acts as a gateway and secure entry point for these nations, and for hostile non-state actors and proxies such as Hezbollah, the Basque ETA, transnational organized crime groups linked to Russian and Chinese state presence, and other actors.

There are some Orwellian twists to the new radical populism that underscore the efforts to create an entire new worldview in the region. Fernández de Kirchner recently announced the establishment of a new “Secretariat of National Thought.” She said the office, to be led by Ricardo Forster, one of her



Fabio Rodrigues Pozzebom / Agência Brasil

The presidents of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo, of Bolivia, Evo Morales, of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, and Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, participating with members of the World Social Forum

most loyal intellectual allies, would “design, coordinate and create a factory of national thought, in line with what the secretary decides.”⁷ The announcement was met with widespread ridicule and comparison to Joseph Goebbels and the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda, yet is now operational.

Despite such twists that could provide openings, there is no countervailing U.S.-led counter-narrative in support of democratic values or U.S interests. Given the multiple failures of the Bolivarian system, creating such a narrative is not an insurmountable obstacle. There are significant and exploitable vulnerabilities, both political – such as the Secretariat of National Thought – and economic. However, as resources diminish and Latin America remains a low priority region for policy makers, these opportunities are seldom recognized and even less often acted on.

The failures are very public. Venezuela under Hugo Chávez initially, and currently under Nicolás Maduro, has become the second most violent country in the world, after Honduras.⁸ The Venezuelan economy is in a free fall, with shortages of everything from basic foodstuffs to toilet paper. Cuba’s economy remains almost entirely dependent on virtually free Venezuelan oil.

Argentina is facing a deep recession, steep inflation, and just on July 31 defaulted on its international debt payments. Nicaragua and Bolivia remain among the poorest nations in the world. All the main Bolivarian countries have greatly restricted freedom of expression, shut down independent media, ravaged the fragile and weak judicial systems, and tampered with the electoral process. In every Bolivarian nation senior officials have been credibly linked to transnational organized criminal activity, particularly cocaine

trafficking and weapons sales. The levels of corruption, by every measure, are greater under the Bolivarian governments in South America than in previous times.⁹

While the revolutionary model, financed by Venezuela’s extensive oil revenues, began as “bread and circus,” with promises to do everything for everyone, noted one economist, as the model collapsed, it “became only circus, and in its last phase, the clowns abandon the circus and all that is left is a razed field.”

Gen. John Kelly, commander of the U.S. Southern Command responsible for Latin America, is acutely aware of his waning ability to shape and influence events. As an ‘economy of force’ combatant command designed to have a light footprint, ongoing budget cuts have had an enormous impact on SOUTHCOM’s ability to operate in the region and defend the southern approaches to the United States.

In an unusually blunt posture statement to Congress in February 2014, Kelly said his shrinking budget had forced a significant retreat from Latin America and the Caribbean:

Ultimately, the cumulative impact of our reduced engagement will be measured in terms of U.S. influence, leadership, and relationships in the Western Hemisphere. Severe budget constraints have serious implications for all three, at a time in which regional security issues warrant greater attention.

Budget cuts are having a direct and detrimental effect on our security cooperation activities, the principal way we engage and promote defense cooperation in the region. The cumulative effect of our reduced

engagement is a relative but accelerated decline of trust in our reliability and commitment to the region. Our relationships, our leadership, and our influence in the Western Hemisphere are paying the price.

Severe budget constraints are significantly degrading our ability to defend the southern approaches to the United States.¹⁰

One constant in the new narrative, and a particular favorite of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, is that a U.S. invasion is imminent and inevitable. This is because the alleged United States policy is based on pillaging the region's natural resources, toppling the revolutionary regimes leading the march to Latin American independence, and subjugating its citizens. Flush with oil revenues at a time when U.S. attention was focused on two hot wars, Venezuela and its allies have rapidly reshaped the battle of ideas against the United States in Latin America.

As one prominent Bolivarian website stated, "Every U.S. military base in Our America is not only a terrible threat, but an attack on the dignity of the people and an intolerable humiliation."¹¹

A constant but small anti-U.S. narrative has long been a part of the Latin American landscape, shaped by mass movements, armed insurgencies and Marxist ideologies, and based on the turbulent history of relations between the United States and the region. The difference now is the overt multi-government sponsorship of the effort and the official adoption of these positions as policy and doctrine. This gives the current campaign deeper roots and access to levers of state power.

The initial narrative was shaped before and during the Cold War when the United

States, in its effort to counter Soviet sponsorship of leftist parties, guerilla movements and terrorist groups, often supported governments in the region whose leaders were human rights abusers, including brutal military dictatorships. During this period the standing of many Latin militaries was compromised and the Left was able to cast the United States as a supporter of dictators. Increasingly over the past four decades U.S. diplomatic and military doctrine and training have focused on human rights training, respect for civilian governments and the rule of law. This process helped transform Latin American countries and militaries away from their coup-prone and authoritarian past into national defense institutions under civilian control. Colombia and Chile, the two most visible U.S. allies in the region, are vibrant examples of the success the changes have brought.

Yet in most of the region, this trend toward institutionalism is being reversed. Bolivarian leaders are building militaries in the Cuban and Iranian molds – as instruments of increasingly authoritarian revolutions, to be used against any "counter-revolutionary" dissent. The military hierarchy has been repeatedly breached to purge senior officers trained in the United States or Europe. Elite units of the military and police have been disbanded and those loyal to the revolution have been placed in leadership positions, regardless of their qualifications.¹²

Like Cuba and Iran, most ALBA nations are creating well-armed militias that respond directly to the president, not the military hierarchy. These groups are used primarily as shock troops to suppress street protests.

As the paramilitary *Basij* in Iran showed in 2009, and the *Colectivos* in Venezuela show today, the model is highly successful in stifling

internal dissent and its members can carry out their brutality with impunity. The loyalty of these groups lies with the revolution and its leader – not the rule of law, democracy with alternating parties in power, or civilian leaders viewed as disloyal to the revolution.

Within the Bolivarian construct a strong president is the representative of the revolution, which in turn represents the will of the people. Therefore, anything against the president is counter-revolutionary, against the people, and deserving of censure and punishment. If the judiciary, the media or civil society organizations do not align with the revolution, they must be eradicated as a cancer spreading counter-revolutionary values at the bidding of the “Empire,” as the United States is routinely



Presidency of the Nation of Brazil

President of Argentina, Cristina Kirchner, holding a poster of Guevara. She has remarked that “Che is a man who fought unconditionally for his ideas and died for them.”

called. Because the revolution holds itself up as a paragon of virtue in contrast to the corrupt traditional order, any reporting of the massive corruption and incompetence that inevitably ensues has to be silenced and its authors discredited as agents of the Empire’s interests.

The emerging military doctrine is only one part of multi-pronged “war of ideas” waged by the ALBA nations and their allies. This multi-faceted campaign is coordinated, consistent in its messaging, and unrelenting in its narrative that the values, doctrine, economic model and political system of the United States and Western democracies have failed.

“The U.S. military expansion and strengthening of the Latin American militaries are the primary threats to the growth of democracy and stability in the region,” said one policy statement. “However, the militaries see the consequences to this domination and exploitation – popular opposition – and see these U.S. actions as the main threat to Latin America.”¹³

This ALBA doctrine is now being taught as military doctrine in the member nations. The government-sponsored interlocking wheels of teaching, narrative and blatant fabrications and misrepresentations have real implications for the future security of the United States and democracy in Latin America.

The new ALBA model posits that Soviet-style socialism and Marxism did not fail conceptually, but in their implementation. Hence the end of the Cold War was simply an historical pause, which is now ending. The new 21st Century Socialism is a mixture of radical populism, the cult of personality, and all-encompassing revolution that puts its members in constant conflict with all those who oppose their vision of the future – most often the “Empire.”

The Cuban revolution, long on the margins of regional thinking, is ironically now viewed as a sustainable model for the Bolivarian revolution. The new mantra is now *progresismo* (progressivism), often shortened to *progres* or *nac y pop* (national and popular) in the revolutionary vernacular, based on the unity of the people with the revolution and, by extension, the revolutionary leader embodying the revolution.

Yet, as Gen. Kelly notes, there is little awareness of the deep reversals the United States has suffered in the battle of ideas in the region. While many volumes have recently been published on the new military, security and social doctrines being spread across the region, few outside are even aware of the sea change and fewer still have studied it and tried to understand it.

The New Military Structure

Since at least 2004, the Bolivarian axis has been working to create a set of regional organizations that explicitly exclude the United States and often Canada. The fundamental premise is that anything in which the United States participates will be subservient to the “Empire.” So, in addition to creating new entities – with an emphasis on military training – it is necessary to withdraw or weaken those institutions where the United States does participate, including the Organization of American States (OAS) and its affiliated groups such as the Inter-American Defense Board and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

As with most Bolivarian structures, there are different levels to the effort, with the most radical being closest to the ALBA core, and showing a less militant face when seeking to expand its influence beyond that core.

The initial foray into Bolivarian military doctrine came from Chávez in 2005, when he officially adopted teachings which explicitly embrace a radical Islamist model of asymmetrical or “fourth-generation warfare,” with its heavy reliance on suicide bombings and different types of terrorism, including the use of nuclear weapons and other WMD.

Chávez adopted as his military doctrine the concepts and strategies articulated in Peripheral Warfare and Revolutionary Islam: Origins, Rules and Ethics of Asymmetrical Warfare (*Guerra Periférica y el Islam Revolucionario: Orígenes, Reglas y Ética de la Guerra Asimétrica*), by the Spanish politician and ideologue Jorge Verstrynge.¹⁴ Verstrynge argues for the destruction of United States through series of asymmetrical attacks, like those of 9-11, in the belief that the United States will simply crumble when its vast military strength cannot be used to combat its enemies.

Although he is not a Muslim, and the book was not written directly in relation to the Venezuelan experience, Verstrynge moves beyond previous strategies articulated by Carlos Ilich Sánchez Ramírez to embrace all strands of radical Islam for helping to expand the parameters of what irregular warfare should encompass, including the use of biological and nuclear weapons, along with the correlated civilian casualties among the enemy.¹⁵

Central to Verstrynge’s idealized view of terrorists is the belief in the sacredness of the willingness of the fighters to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of their goals. Before writing extensively on how to make chemical weapons and listing helpful places to find information on the manufacture of rudimentary nuclear

bombs that “someone with a high school education could make,” Verstrynge writes:

We already know it is incorrect to limit asymmetrical warfare to guerrilla warfare, although it is important. However, it is not a mistake to also use things that are classified as terrorism and use them in asymmetrical warfare. And we have super terrorism, divided into chemical terrorism, bioterrorism (which uses biological and bacteriological methods), and nuclear terrorism, which means “the type of terrorism uses the threat of nuclear attack to achieve its goals.”

In a December 12, 2008 interview with Venezuelan state television, Verstrynge lauded Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda for creating a new type of warfare that is “de-territorialized, de-stateized and de-nationalized,” a war where suicide bombers act as “atomic bombs for the poor.”¹⁷ In his interview with Univisión, Verstrynge said his model was specifically drawn from Hezbollah’s experience.

Chávez liked the Verstrynge book so well that he had a special pocket-sized edition printed and distributed to the armed forces officer corps with express orders that it be read cover to cover. It has since been adopted as official Venezuelan military doctrine.

The Proliferation of Bolivarian Military Academies

The military institution most explicitly designed to eradicate any vestiges of U.S. military doctrine in the region is the ALBA Defense and Sovereignty School, established in 2011 with the support of Iran, near the city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Bolivian President Morales, speaking at the inauguration of the facility, said the School

would prepare the peoples of the region to defend against “imperialist threats, which seek to divide us.” He said that the “Peoples of ALBA are being besieged, sanctioned and punished by imperial arrogance just because we are exerting the right of being decent and sovereign.” He added that, “We must not allow the history of colonization to be repeated or our resources to become the loot of the Empire.”

Speaking before the assembled heads of state from the ALBA countries, Morales articulated the ALBA position by saying,

The Empire seeks to divide us, make us fight with our brother nations, in order to benefit from those conflicts. But we have decided to live in peace. The most profitable business of the empire is armed conflict among brother nations. War has one winner: Capitalism. And war has one loser: less developed nations.¹⁹

Iran’s interest in the project, which it supports financially, was made clear when Iranian defense minister Ahmad Vahidi arrived in Bolivia for the school’s inauguration, despite having an Interpol Red Notice issued for his arrest as a result of his alleged participation in the 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires.

When his public appearance at a military ceremony the day before the school’s inauguration set off an international scandal Vahidi quietly slipped out of Bolivia.²⁰

Since the Vahidi embarrassment, the ALBA nations have softened their tone. As they seek a broader membership in their new wave of regional organizations and military centers they have been careful to make the ties to Iran less visible and publicly mute some of the harshest anti-imperialist rhetoric. Rather, in

the broader arenas, they have adopted a narrative that a new defense doctrine is imperative to build the mythical Latin American unity in order to defend the region's natural resources.

One of the most prominent of the new groups is the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which was specifically founded in 2010 to exclude the United States. As Bolivian President Evo Morales said, "it is important to identify those responsible for the poverty, inequality and injustice, and to debate, analyze and create unity of the American countries, without the United States, in order to liberate our people."²¹

Prior to the formation of CELAC, and not couched in as explicitly anti-U.S. terms, was the Union of South American Countries (*Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas – UNASUR*), founded in 2008. One of the first group's first actions was to form the South American Defense Council (*Consejo de Defensa Sudamericano*), as a counterpart to the IADB. It also set up what has become one of the premiere anti-U.S. think tanks in terms of military policy, the Center for Strategic Defense Studies (*Centro de Estudio Estratégicos de la Defensa – CEED*), based in Buenos Aires and led by Alfredo Forti, a former Argentine defense official. At the inauguration of the Center, Forti repeated the Bolivarian mantra that coming conflicts would be over Latin America's abundant natural resources, which outside forces, meaning the United States, would seek to expropriate.

In a February 2014 meeting in Suriname of the Defense Council, UNASUR agreed to establish the South American Defense School (*Escuela Suramericana de Defensa*), to be located in Quito, Ecuador. The purpose is to promote a regional defense strategy to "protect natural

resources, reduce technological dependency and face possible current threats."²²

All of these structures are closely tied to the Bolivarian Military University of the Republic of Venezuela (*Universidad Militar Bolivariana de Venezuela*) in Caracas, Venezuela. The university describes its mission as inculcating "ethical, moral spiritual and socialist values" in its students.²³

In keeping with the veneration of the heroes of the Bolivarian revolution, the university recently created a Nestor Kirchner-Hugo Chávez chair to study the teaching of both deceased leaders. The announcement of the chair came during a recent visit of the Argentine minister of defense Agustín Rossi with his Venezuelan counterpart Carmen Melendez. The two also signed a series of agreements on joint training and the exchange of scientific and technological knowledge.²⁴

It is worth noting that staunch U.S. allies in the regions, such as Colombia, joined these groups in large part to avoid deep regional isolation. These countries have quietly tried to blunt some of the more radical efforts of the ALBA nations and have used the UNASUR platform to demand more transparency in the region's defense budgets, a move aimed at Venezuela. Overall the countries have been muted in their disagreements.

The Support Structures

These interlocking institutions of higher military learning are supported by an extensive network of intellectuals who have written dozens of books now being taught as the new military theory, as well as dozens of websites which provide content, updates, and forums for discussion. The vast majority of the content is sharply anti-U.S. and offers an interpretation of history that, at best, is riddled with

half-truths, lies and leaps of the imagination and intellect.

While few in the U.S. military or policy community have read these authors and websites, they are among the most influential in the Bolivarian bloc, particularly in the armed forces, and are the heralds of the next generation of radical doctrine.

Here is a small sampling of some of the most influential ideologues and the overlapping support structures.

Atilio Boron, an Argentine political scientist and sociologist with a Ph.D. from Harvard who currently teaches at the University of Buenos Aires and the Floreal Gorini Cultural Center in Buenos Aires.

His work often appears on websites like www.rebellion.org, with links in Argentina, Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela, Spain and Colombia; www.en.cubadebate.cu, www.alainet.org, which stands for Latin America in Movement (*"America Latina en Movimiento"*), www.contrainjerencia.com; and the Floreal Gorini Cultural Center, (*Centro Cultural de la Cooperación Floreal Gorini*) www.centrocultural.coop, which is his main headquarters. These links will be discussed in more detail below.

The Argentine government's support for Boron's work can be seen by his appointment to the National Council of Scientific and Technical Investigations (*Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas – CONICET*), which is directly dependent on the presidency.

Boron's three most influential works are *Latin America in the Geopolitics of Imperialism (America Latina en la Geopolítica del Imperialismo)*; *The Military Strategy of the United States in Latin America (Estrategia Militar de Estados Unidos en America Latina)*; and *Socialism of the XXIst Century: Is There*

Life After Neoliberalism? (Socialism Siglo XXI: Hay vida después del neoliberalismo?).

In his works he argues that establishing military control over Latin America is a key policy of the "Empire." The evidence for this is what he describes as the enormous U.S. deployment of troops, the construction of dozens of bases and "support" programs for the U.S. military in almost every country in the region. Among those he cites are a proposed disaster relief coordination center in Paraguay and other humanitarian programs.

Boron portrays each of these as a facet of a new U.S. military doctrine in which the "war on terrorism" morphed into a "war on drug trafficking" into what has now become a doctrine of "eternal warfare."

Telma Luzzani, an Argentine journalist who works for the government-financed *Vision 7 Internacional* and *Radio Nacional*. Her most recent book, *Territories Under Surveillance: How the Network of U.S. Military Bases Operates in South America (Territorios Vigilados: Como opera la red de bases militares norteamericanas en sudamérica)* with a U.S. soldier wearing a Nazi helmet on the cover, is a Bolivarian best seller. It is being touted on multiple Bolivarian websites as a visionary work that explains the "massive surveillance" of the U.S. Southern Command over Latin America.

As most Argentine authors, she describes the British Falkland Islands (*Islas Malvinas* to Argentina, who claims ownership of the southern isles near Antarctica) as a strategically important outpost that is key to U.S. regional hegemony.

While the justification for the bases may change over time, Luzzani said, "what won't change is the physical presence and strategic objectives" of the bases.

In an interview touting her book Luzzani states as fact that,

After studying Pentagon documents and interviewing several specialists I have been able to draw a clearer map of the U.S. military bases in the Southern Cone. I was able to draw two maps: one of the presence of the Marines in Central America and one that shows, in more detail the Southern Command's bases in South America. . . The bases have always been a vital link in the existence of any empire, and they are more efficient if one can keep them, like spies, wrapped in secrecy. . . They may be smaller, have few personnel assigned to them, be more well hidden, but they provide the necessary logistics to deploy troops on a vast scale.

Stella Calloni, widely regarded as one of the journalists closest to Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez and a model journalist within the Bolivarian structure. An Argentine, she lived abroad during Argentina's military dictatorship. Fidel Castro wrote the prologue to a recent very flattering biography of Calloni titled, *Stella Calloni: Intimate (Stella Calloni: íntima)*.

Calloni's recent emphasis, publicized on the Bolivarian website, is on what she calls "soft coups" (*golpes de estado suaves*) in which the Empire uses proxies such as police strikes and unrest in the military to try to topple the revolutionary governments. The strategy consists of illegal ways of creating a situation of chaos, organized by the Empire. It occurs whenever governments take popular measures and provoke the CIA to attack them.

Calloni describes a police strike for higher wages, and the subsequent unrest in Argentina in December 2013, which led to numerous incidents of lootings as part of the U.S. counter-insurgency strategy to topple unfriendly governments. Argentina's Fernández de

Kirchner echoed Calloni's analysis in statements on the strike.

Rather than acknowledge that inflation of more than 30 percent had eroded the low salaries for police, then averaging about \$600 a month, the government attacked the strike as an act of treason.²⁶ From Calloni's perspective the police and criminal groups controlled by the police were implementing a counterinsurgency strategy through "coup vandalism" and "undemocratic chaos."²⁷

Calloni supports her hypothesis in similar events in Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras and Paraguay, where, she says, one can lay the responsibility for seditious actions at the feet of U.S. agencies and foundations often use as fronts for U.S. agencies. Nothing in any of these cases, as in the case of Argentina, could be the result of legitimate grievances against revolutionary governments, which are one with the people.²⁸



Presidency of the Nation of Brazil

Cristina Fernández with Fidel Castro, January 2009

None of these writers or policymakers operates in a vacuum. They and their work are linked through an extensive web of cyber hubs that aggregate material, link to and promote each other, and are featured on the official websites of the governments of Cuba, Venezuela, Argentina and elsewhere. Those outlined below represent only a small fraction of the network, selected to show how they operate, rather than to exhaustively diagram the network itself.

In Argentina, one of the most sophisticated centers for bringing the various streams of thought together is the Floreal Gorini Cultural Center, with an impressive new building in down town Buenos Aires. The first floor is largely a library and bookstore devoted almost entirely to the works of Fidel Castro, Ché Guevara, Karl Marx, and many of the authors mentioned above.

The center also runs Latin American Long Distance Learning Program, (*Programa Latinoamericano de Educacion a Distancia – PLED*) that offers training programs online or in person.²⁹

One example of the overlap in the courses offered is one called “Latin America, the Caribbean and Imperial Geopolitics” (*America Latina y el Caribe en la geopolítica imperial*), taught by Atilio Boron. The center, in turn, is connected to numerous publishing houses, bookstores, universities and websites.

Another important hub is called **Mopassol**, which regularly features Stella Calloni and targets SOUTHCOM for criticism. It is also linked to a series of books, speakers and conferences that promote her work and those of likeminded individuals.

Another very active hub is called *Contrainjerencia* or Against Interference, referring to the imperialist interference in the

hemisphere. Note the connection with multiple Cuban directed sites, as with the Bolivarians, and the Argentine government news agency Telam.

Contrainjerencia in turn jointly promotes different Bolivarian training courses with another web hub, www.manuelugarte.org.

Another hub that ties into the networks above is the Cuba-based Alternative Visions (*Visiones Alternativas*) website, established following a 2001 journalism conference in Havana. The site focuses heavily on *Militarización Made in USA*, (<http://pl-va.prensa-latina.cu/militarizacion/>) which in turn extols the need to attack and defeat U.S. geostrategic plans to extend its hegemonic reach over the entire hemisphere (<http://pl-va.prensa-latina.cu/militarizacion/geoestrategia/geoestrat.htm> .)

Another important piece of the network is the Argentina-based *La Poderosa*, (www.lapoderosa.org.ar) meaning the powerful revolutionary movement sweeping Latin America. The site, featuring Ché Guevara in his trademark beret and his famous motorcycle on its homepage, declares itself part of “a Latin American revolutionary movement, a part of the battle of ideas, with Ché’s motorcycle and the light of the Cuban lighthouse.”

The website goes out of its way to say its contributors and hosts are anonymous, arguing that it is truly a collective work of different members who are working toward “recuperating the concept of ‘power’ and ‘politics’ because that is how a new history will be written. So we fight their ‘power,’ their ‘politics,’ their ‘democracy’ with poverty, illiteracy and infant mortality.”

But as with the other sites, it is not a stand-alone enterprise. It owns a magazine and

links to a host of other Bolivarian websites, primarily Cuban in this case.

Conclusions

U.S. influence in Latin America, particularly as it relates to military and security doctrine with the region's armed forces is waning quickly and dangerously. What is filling the vacuum is a particularly dangerous new doctrine of asymmetrical warfare and permanent confrontation with the United States that has serious, but little understood consequences for U.S. national security.

While U.S. historic influence has not always been beneficial, since the final decade of the Cold War a consistent policy of support for democracy, the rule of law, civilian control of the military and human rights has reshaped the political landscape in Latin America. Militaries became increasingly institutionalized under civilian control; the entire region except for Cuba returned to democratic government; freedom of expression and the media were almost unfettered; judicial structures were strengthened; and, statist, populist policies largely fell into disrepute.

But that dynamic was relatively short-lived. Since the 2004 birth of ALBA – financed by Venezuelan oil, Chinese loans, and Cuban intellectual capital, and supported by Iran – authoritarianism, radical populism, and a disdain for the rule of law and human rights are again on the rise.

The new radical populism encompasses multiple nations working in concert, each providing significant contributions to the project. This includes Iran, Russia, China and other extra-regional actors whose commitment to strong authoritarian structures, disdain for independent media, and a belief that the armed forces primarily serve the revolution,

and strong antipathy toward the U.S. make them natural allies of the Bolivarian Revolution.

What has gone largely undetected and unstudied are the significant moves this bloc and its allies have made to eradicate U.S. military doctrine, economic influence, and political thought. The military doctrine in particular has been replaced by a dangerous new set of tenets advocating and justifying the use of WMD against the United States, and citing as models Hezbollah and al Qaeda. U.S.-trained officials have been forcibly retired, U.S.-trained units disbanded, and ongoing contact with the U.S. military and security structure has been sharply curtailed.

Undergirding the overall ideological and methodological thrust is an extensive network of intellectuals, journalists, and academics whose work is promoted, praised, and amplified through an interlocking grid of websites, bookstores, online university courses, printed media and academic journals. All have strong ties to the governments of Argentina, Venezuela, and Cuba; and, extensive links to Iran, China, and Russia.

This network uses state resources to advance its ideology and doctrine. The narrative being created, while not yet dominant, is far more advanced in the military and intellectual centers of learning that is generally acknowledged by U.S. policy makers.

The absence of a strong U.S. counter narrative and more active presence has made its remaining allies far more reticent to publicly engage the Bolivarians. In discussions with leaders across the region, there is a growing feeling that the United States has abandoned the battlefield and will not stand with them in a crisis. Therefore, it may be considered better to acquiesce to Bolivarian demands, fight from

within UNASUR and other structures, and hope for the best.

Gen. Kelly is correct in warning that the U.S. loss of influence is real and dangerous. There is still time to engage in the battle of ideas, doctrine and ideology. Until the United States chooses to do so, the field is open to those who wish it harm. **PRISM**

NOTES

¹ The BRIC countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. For details of the deal signed with Argentina and the new strategic partnership see: "Putin signs nuclear energy deal with Argentina," DW, July 12, 2014, accessed at: <http://www.dw.de/putin-signs-nuclear-energy-deal-with-argentina/a-17782006>.

² Briana Lee, "Chinese President Xi Jinping Brings Billions on Visit to Latin America," *International Business Times*, July 22, 2014, accessed at: <http://www.ibtimes.com/chinese-president-xi-jinping-brings-billions-visit-latin-america-1635626>.

³ The countries Obama has visited once are: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and El Salvador. He has visited Mexico five times.

⁴ From FY 2008 to FY 2012, U.S. aid to Latin America dropped from \$2.1 billion to \$1.8 billion, a 13 percent drop. See: Peter J. Meyer and Mark P. Sullivan, "U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: Recent Trends and FY2013 Appropriations," Congressional Research Service, June 26, 2012. In 2013 and 2014, U.S. aid dropped by another 9 percent and 13 percent respectively. See: Adam Isacson et al, "Time to Listen: Trends in U.S. Security Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013," accessed at: http://lawg.org/storage/documents/Time_to_Listen-Trends_in_U.S._Security_Assistance_to_Latin_America_and_the_Caribbean.pdf. Within this context, funding for USSOUTHCOM has dropped 26 percent in fiscal 2013, after already suffering substantial cuts in previous years. See: "SOUTHCOM's Counter-Drug Efforts Hit by Budget Cuts," Institute for Defense and Government Advancement, April 26, 2014, accessed at: <http://www.idga.org/homeland-security/articles/southcom-s-counter-drug-efforts-hit-by-budget-cuts/>.

⁵ "La Casa de América Latina presentará dos nuevas publicaciones," *Agencia Noticias del Libro de*

Irán, July 5, 2014, accessed at: <http://www.ibna.ir/vdcfx0d0yw6dxva.,7iw.html>.

⁶ The *Alianza Bolivariana Para los Pueblos de Nuestra America* was founded in 2004 by the Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and then Cuban President Fidel Castro. Since then it has grown to include Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Saint Vincent and Grenadines. Iran and Syria were granted observer status in 2007. Suriname, whose president, Desi Bouterse, is a convicted cocaine trafficker, and Salvador Sánchez Cerén, the recently elected president of El Salvador and former Marxist guerrilla leader have announced their intention to join in 2014.

⁷ Veronica Smink, "Qué hará la polemica secretaria 'para el pensamiento' en Argentina?" *BBC Mundo*, June 4, 2014, accessed at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2014/06/140604_argentina_secretaria_pensamiento_nacional_en.shtml. This followed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's decision to create a vice ministry of the supreme happiness of the people," designed to help the least fortunate members of society. See: "Maduro crea un Viceministerio para la Suprema Felicidad del Pueblo," *BBC Mundo*, June 24, 2013, accessed at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/ultimas_noticias/2013/10/131024_ultnot_venezuela_viceministerio_suprema_felicidad_az.shtml.

⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Context, Data," April 2014, accessed at: http://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf.

⁹ For a more detailed look at the criminalization of the Bolivarian states see: Douglas Farah, "Transnational Organized Crime, Terrorism, and Criminalized States in Latin America: An Emerging Tier-One National Security Priority," *Strategic Studies Institute*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, August 16, 2012, accessed at: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1117>.

¹⁰ Posture Statement of General John F. Kelly, United States Marine Corps, Commander, United States Southern Command, Before the 113th Congress, House Armed Services Committee, February 26, 2014.

¹¹ *Visiones Alternativas*, accessed at: <http://pl-va.prensa-latina.cu/militarizacion/mapas/mapabases.htm>.

¹² The most recent example was in Argentina, where in June 2013 the president purged more than 30 senior officers and named Gen. César Milani, a loyal former head of army intelligence.

¹³ *Visiones Alternativas*, accessed at: <http://pl-va.prensa-latina.cu/militarizacion/articulos/geoestrat/1.htm>.

¹⁴ Verstrynge, born in Morocco to Belgian and Spanish parents, began his political career on the far right of the Spanish political spectrum as a disciple of Manuel Fraga, and served as a national and several senior party posts with the Alianza Popular. By his own admission he then migrated to the Socialist Party, but never rose through the ranks. He is widely associated with radical anti-globalization views and anti-U.S. rhetoric, repeatedly stating that the United States is creating a new global empire and must be defeated. Although he has no military training or experience, he has written extensively on asymmetrical warfare.

¹⁵ For a more comprehensive look at the role and seminal writings of Sánchez Ramírez, the convicted terrorist known as “The Jackal,” see: Farah, *op cit*.

¹⁶ Verstrynge, *op cit.*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁷ Bartolomé, *op cit*. See also: John Sweeny, “Jorge Verstrynge: The Guru of Bolivarian Asymmetric Warfare,” *www.vcrisis.com*, Sept. 9, 2005; and “Troops Get Provocative Book,” *Miami Herald*, Nov. 11, 2005.

¹⁸ “ALBA School of Defense and Sovereignty Opens,” *Anti-Imperialist News Service*, June 14, 2011, accessed at: http://www.anti-imperialist.org/alba-school-of-defense-opens_6-14-11.htm.

¹⁹ ALBA School of Defense and Sovereignty Opens,” *op cit*.

²⁰ Robin Yapp, “Iran defense minister forced to leave Bolivia over 1994 Argentina bombing,” *The Telegraph* (London), June 1, 2011.

²¹ Eloy Pacheco, “Evo Morales apela a la unidad de nuestros pueblos sin EEUU,” *December 3, 2011*, accessed at: http://www.celac.gob.ve/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=271%3A-evo-morales-apela-a-la-unidad-de-nuestros-pueblos-sin-eeuu&catid=1%3Aactualidad&Itemid=5&lang=en.

²² “Unasur aprueba creación de la Primera Escuela Suramericana de Defensa,” *Telesur*, February 20, 2014, accessed at: <http://www.telesurtv.net/articulos/2014/02/20/unasur-aprueba-la-creacion-de-primera-escuela-suramericana-de-defensa-3451.html>.

²³ <http://www.umbv.edu.ve/index.php/mision>.

²⁴ “Venezuela, Argentina sign military cooperation agreements,” *Xinhua*, April 26, 2014, accessed at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2014-04/26/c_126436208.htm.

²⁵ Emiliano Guido, “Sin bases no hay imperio,” *Mirador al Sur*, (no date) accessed at: <http://sur.infonews.com/notas/sin-bases-no-hay-imperio>.

²⁶ “Argentinian looting spreads amid police strikes,” *Associated Press*, December 10, 2013,

accessed at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/argentinian-looting-spreads-police-strikes>.

²⁷ Calloni interview by Roberto Caballero titled “Alerta Stella Calloni sobre golpes suaves en Latinoamérica” January 13th, 2014, accessed at: <http://www.contrainjerencia.com/?p=81282>.

²⁸ Calloni expounds her theory of the “foundations” as fronts for U.S. actions in a piece titled “The Silent Invasion” (*La invasión silenciosa*), *Cuba Debate*, April 7, 2009, accessed at: <http://www.cubadebate.cu/opinion/2009/04/07/la-invasion-silenciosa-iii#.U20wDC8wlnY>.

²⁹ The entire list of courses can be found at <http://www.centrocultural.coop/blogs/pled>. The list of classes dealing with the U.S. military strategy toward the Southern Cone can be found at: <http://www.centrocultural.coop/blogs/pled/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/la-estrategia-norteamericana-en-el-cono-sur.pdf>.

Photos

Page 90, 96, 101 photo by the Presidency of the Nation of Argentina. 2009. *President of the National of Argentina*. From https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cristina_Fernández_de_Kirchner_and_Dmitry_Medvedev_-_Casa_Rosada_2010.jpg, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cristina_Fernandez_con_poster_Che_Guevara.jpg, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cristina_fidel.jpg respectively, licensed under the Creative Commons **Attribution 2.0 Generic** license. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en>. Photos reproduced unaltered.

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