

The “Alternative” Domination

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“The sin of nearly all left-wingers from 1933 onward is that they have wanted to be anti-Fascist without being anti-totalitarian.” –George Orwell



Elderly opposition supporters rally against President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas, Venezuela, May 12, 2017. Photo: Carlos Garcia Rawlins

HAVANA TIMES – One of the problems [we have] in Mexico—given that the archetype of what some call the “long neoliberal night” still holds weight, as well as the effect of our own cultural, geopolitical or ideological parochialisms—is to label as “neoliberal” any policy that either excludes, alienates or dominates American territory (as in the continent, not the US).

But before we even start enlisting our own catalog of American strawmen beyond the self-proclaimed “outliers” like Trump or Bolsonaro—let’s allow ourselves to read a bit of political theory and contemporary history, and take a look at our own countries, leaders and policies with through another lens.

Let’s use Venezuela’s current terrible case as the subject of our second-lens analysis. Erroneously assuming that even electoral democracy falls into the “bourgeois affairs” box, the balance of a *chavismo*-like government is a disaster even on issues cherished by the left.

For example, the principles of social justice, a keystone issue for the left, are clearly violated as poverty continues to expand—today reaching 85 percent of the population—amid an inefficiently nationalized economy; burdened even more by unprecedented levels of scarcity and inflation. The environment—previously damaged by the oil economy under a rentier state—is now a victim of extractivism,

illegal mining and the exploitation of vulnerable areas such as the Orinoco Belt and the so-called *Arco Minero*.

The survival of indigenous peoples is also in jeopardy. Given the official persecution of aboriginal communities such as the *waraos* and *pemones*, assassinated by military and armed groups under government orders. Popular participation has also been systematically deprived of its most basic right: autonomy. The promise of holding community councils (*Consejos Comunales*) languished under Nicolás Maduro's political ideology imposition and government mismanagement.

Disguised as a—very perverse—progressive strategy, in post-neoliberal Latin America we witness the consolidation of alternate forms of control by authoritarian governments that denaturalize, subordinate and distort the mission and demands of groups or movements that under “normal” circumstances would demand the State to properly comply with its role in distributing justice and safeguarding democracy, engage in fighting for [social] justice or would peacefully demand the expansion or installation of new and innovative manifestations of democracy.

Venezuela's Maduro and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega—like Cuba's Castros before them—have built political models characterized, increasingly, by their state centered, authoritarian and personalist traits. Although they claim to promote “liberal” and progressive agendas, their governing models end up advancing and strengthening anti-liberal, pseudo-republican regimes. In short, creating undemocratic governments. And while opposing social inclusion and the exercise of political rights by both majorities and minorities will be a never-ending battle, it seems that the chaos resulting from this “alternate” form of domination is exactly what these states aim to create with their authoritarian moves. Alienating any idea of constructing a progressive state as pictured by Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe and other authors of sorts.

Such a rift is nothing but a breeding ground for the outbreak of conflict, setting a very hostile scenario for those who advocate for a peaceful, plural and democratic political life that perfectly balances with society, so that governing becomes a task for all and is not just exclusive to hegemonic elites. The latter claiming to govern the former in the name of the people, with the active or naive complicity of a self-proclaimed “left.”

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