

Peace Negotiations or War Preparations? Colombia, Iran, China, Cuba, Ukraine, Yemen and Syria

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In Remembrance of Jairo Martinez and Roman Ruiz Fighters and Victims of 'War through Peace Negotiations'

Introduction

On May 21, 2015, the Colombian Air Force (FAC) bombed the base camp of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) killing 26 guerrillas. Three days later the FAC bombed other FARC bases killing 14 more guerrillas. This was part of an official offensive, launched by President Juan Manuel Santos, the US's most loyal client in Latin America. Among the victims were FARC Commanders Jairo Martinez, a participant in the ongoing peace negotiations in Havana and Roman Ruiz.

Colombia works closely with the US, through Bernard Aronson, a very intrusive neo-conservative 'overseer', who is Washington's coordinator in the Colombian counter-insurgency war. The US maintains seven military bases and has stationed over one thousand US 'advisers' in the field and within the Colombian Defense Ministry. The military offensive was launched by the Santos regime precisely when it was officially engaged in two and a half year-long 'peace negotiations', during which three of five items on the 'peace agenda' had been agreed to and the FARC had ordered a unilateral cease fire. Two months earlier, President Santos treacherously set-up the FARC to lower their defenses by appearing to 'reciprocate' when he ordered "the suspension of air force bombing of FARC field camps". In other words, the Santos government and US adviser Aronson used the 'cover of peace negotiations' and the FARC's unilateral 'cease fire' to launch a major military offensive. The FARC ended its cease fire and resumed combat in ten regional 'departments', as the regime intensified its offensive by bombing villages in FARC-controlled regions. While Santos and Aronson escalated their military offensive in Colombia, the FARC negotiators in Havana continued their "peace" negotiations....

President Santos and Aronson have used the cover of "peace negotiations" as a propaganda ploy to launch a full scale military offensive. Concessions and agreements served to lower the FARC's guard, identify its officials and secure intelligence on FARC base camps. US adviser Aronson's role is to ensure that the Colombian government destroys the popular armed resistance, and forces the FARC to accept a 'peace accord' that does not change the status of US bases, lucrative contracts with international mining companies and promotes 'free trade'. The Santos regime announced that the 'peace negotiations' would continue in Havana . . . even as it intensifies the war in Colombia, killing FARC members and supporters. Aronson and Santos pursue a 'peace of the cemetery'.

The Colombia and Washington regimes are conducting a two-pronged 'peace negotiations

and brutal war policy' against the FARC as part of a general world-wide politico-military campaign against mass popular movements that oppose neo-liberal economic policies, US-initiated wars and military bases and onerous 'free trade' agreements.

In each region the US has developed a very 'special relation' with key governments that serve as 'strategic allies'. These include Israel in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf and southwest Asia, Japan in the Far East and Colombia in Latin America.

For the past two decades Colombia has served as the key US operational base for US naval and air surveillance in the Caribbean, Central America and the Andean countries and the launching pad for destabilization campaigns and intervention against the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador and Honduras. Washington's use of 'peace negotiations' as a prelude to a military offensive in Colombia is the prototype of US strategic policy in several other contentious regions of the world.

In the essay, we will identify the countries where the US is engaged in 'peace negotiations' as a prelude to military aggression and political subversion and we will describe in detail the strategy and implementation of this policy in the most 'advanced case' of Colombia. We will focus on how erstwhile leftist governments, eager to improve relations with the US, contribute to furthering Washington's strategic goals of subversion and 'regime change'.

Finally, we will evaluate the possible outcomes of this strategy both in terms of advancing US imperial interests and in developing effective anti-imperialist politics.

Peace Negotiations: the New Face of Empire-building

Throughout the world, Washington is engaged in some sort of direct or indirect 'peace negotiations' even as it expands and intensifies its military operations.

US and Iran: Unilateral Disarmament and Military Encirclement

The mass media and official Washington spokespersons would have us believe that the US and Iran are within reach of a 'peace accord', contingent on Teheran surrendering its nuclear capability (repeatedly proven to be non-military in nature) and the US lifting its 'economic sanctions'. The media's 'narrow focus approach' to the Persian Gulf conveniently ignores contradictory regional developments.

First, the US has embarked on devastating wars against key Iranian regional allies: The US funds and supplies arms to terrorists who have invaded and bombed Syria and Yemen. Washington is expanding military bases surrounding Iran while increasing its naval presence in the Persian Gulf. President Obama has expanded military agreements with the Gulf monarchies. Congress is increasing the flow of offensive arms to Israel as it openly threatens to attack Iran. In reality, while engaged in 'peace negotiations' with Teheran, Washington is waging war with Iran's allies and threatens its security.

Equally important, the US has vetoed numerous attempts to finally rid the Middle East of nuclear arms. This veto safeguards the far-right, militarist Israeli regime's enormous offensive nuclear stockpile, while outlawing any possibility of an Iranian deterrent.

The so-called 'peace negotiations' allows the US to engage in pervasive and frequent espionage of Iranian military installations (so-called 'inspections' by the US controlled International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEA) with no reciprocal inspection of US

or Israeli military bases or that of any of its Gulf client states. Furthermore, and crucial to a sudden military assault, Washington assumes in its ongoing 'peace negotiations', the unilateral 'right' to suspend the talks at a moment's notice under any pretext and launch a military attack.

In sum, the US 'negotiates peace' with Iran in Lausanne, Switzerland, while it supplies Saudi Arabia with bombs and intelligence in its war against Yemen and finances armed Jihadi terrorists seizing half of Syria and large contiguous parts of Iraq.

The Iranian officials, ensconced in Switzerland while negotiating with the US, have played down the military threat to their country resulting from the massive re-entry of US armed forces in Iraq and the installation of the new puppet Haider Abidi regime.

How will the US conclude a 'peace settlement' with Iran while it engages in wars against Iran's neighbors and allies and when Iranian negotiations are framed in military terms?

Are the 'peace negotiations' merely a ploy designed to destroy Iran's regional allies, isolate and weaken its military defenses and set it up for attack 'down the road'? How does this fit into Obama's global strategy?

US-China Diplomatic Negotiations: Military Encirclement and Encroachment

Over the past decade, President Obama and top State and Treasury Department officials have met with Chinese leaders, promising greater economic co-operation and exchanging diplomatic niceties.

Parallel to these conciliatory gestures, Washington has escalated its military encirclement of China by enlarging its military presence in Australia, Japan, and the Philippines and increasing its aggressive patrols of adjoining airspace and vital maritime routes.

The State Department has been inciting border-states, including Vietnam, Philippines, Japan and Indonesia, to contest Chinese maritime borders and its transformation of off-shore atolls into military bases.

The White House has proposed the Trans Pacific Trade Agreement, which specifically excludes China. It has signed off on nuclear weapons agreements with India, hoping to secure an Indo-American military pact on China's southwestern flank.

Obama's so-called 'pivot to Asia' is best understood as a rapid escalation of military threats and exclusionary trade pacts designed to provoke, isolate, weaken and degrade China and push back its rise to economic supremacy in Asia.

So far the US strategy has failed. Washington's diplomatic gestures have lacked the necessary economic substance and incentives to its 'allies'; its much-ballyhooed trade agreements have floundered in the face of far superior and inclusive Chinese initiatives, including its new \$100 billion-dollar Infrastructure Investment Bank and its more than \$40 billion dollar economic agreements with the government of India.

In the face of its economic failures the Pentagon has opted for flagrant military encroachments on Chinese airspace. Specifically, US warplanes are directed to overfly China's ongoing construction of military installations on atolls in the South China

Sea. The Chinese Foreign Office and Defense Ministry have vigorously protested these violations of its sovereignty. The Obama regime has brashly rejected China's diplomatic protests and affirmed Washington's 'right' to encroach on Chinese territorial waters.

After a quarter of a century of failing to dominate China via economic penetration by US multi-nationals and through the liberalization of its financial system, Washington has discarded its 'softer' diplomatic approach and adopted a 'proto-war' stand. This policy uses economic boycotts, military encirclement and encroachment on Chinese maritime, aerial and land sovereignty in the hope of provoking a military response and then evoking a second 'Pearl Harbor' as a pretext for a full scale war engulfing its Asian allies (and Australia) in a major war in the Asia-Pacific region.

China's market successes have replaced the US as the dominant economic power in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In the face of this 'usurpation' the US has dropped the velvet glove of diplomacy in favor of the iron fist of military provocation and escalation. The US military budget is five times greater than China's, whereas China's investments and financing of economic projects throughout Asia, Latin America and the BRIC countries are ten times greater than those of the US.

China's 'economic pivot' will clearly enhance Beijing's global position over the medium and long-run, if the US's reckless and short-term military superiority and territorial aggression does not lead to a devastating world war!

In the meantime, China is developing its military capacity to confront the 'US pivot to war'. China's leaders have devised a new defensive strategy, boosting its naval capacity and shifting from strictly territorial defense to both defense and offense on land, air and sea. Off shore defense is combined with open sea protection to enhance China's capability for a strategic deterrent and counter-attack. China's annual military spending had increased on average ten percent per annum in anticipation of the Pentagon shifting 60% of its fleet to the Pacific over the next five years.

US-Cuba Diplomatic Negotiations: The 'Trojan Horse' Approach

For over fifty years the US has mounted a concerted terrorist-sabotage campaign, economic embargo and diplomatic war against its Caribbean neighbor, Cuba. In the face of near total diplomatic isolation in the United Nations (185 to 3 against the US-imposed blockade), universal opposition to belligerent US policy toward Cuba at the Summit of the Americas and in the Organization of American States and surprisingly favorable public opinion toward Cuba among the domestic US citizenry, Washington decided to open negotiations to establish diplomatic and commercial relations with Havana.

On the surface, the apparent shift from military confrontation and economic sanctions to diplomatic negotiations would register as a move toward peaceful co-existence between opposing social systems. However, a closer reading of Washington's tactical concessions and strategic goals argues for a mere 'change of methods' for reversing advances of the socialist revolution rather than a diplomatic accommodation.

Under the cover of a diplomatic agreement, the US will directly or indirectly channel millions of dollars into Cuba's private sector, strengthening its weight in the economy, and forming partnerships with Cuban public and private sector counter-parts. The US Embassy's economic policy will be directed toward expanding the business sectors open to US capital.

In other words, Washington will pursue a strategy of incremental privatization to create economic and political allies.

Secondly, the US embassy will greatly expand its role as financial backer, recruiter and protector of counter-revolutionary, self-styled Cuban 'dissidents' in its 'civil society.

Thirdly, the vast influx of US-controlled telecommunications, cultural programs and exchanges, and commercial sales will have the effect of de-radicalizing the Cuban public (from socialism and egalitarianism to gross consumerism) and reducing Cuba's fraternal ties to Latin America. Anti-imperialist solidarity with popular Latin American movements and governments will diminish as the Cubans adopt the 'Miami mentality'.

Fourthly, Cuba's economic and political ties with Venezuela will remain but the US efforts to subvert or 'moderate' the Bolivarian government may face less opposition from Havana.

Fifth, Washington will foster cheap mass tourism in order to promote a one-sided dependent economy, which over time will replace socialist consciousness with a 'comprador consciousness' - a decadent mentality, which encourages the emergence of a class of intermediaries or 'brokers' engaged in economic exchanges between the 'sender'(the US) and 'receiver'(Cuba) country. Cuban 'intermediaries' between the imperial US and dependent Cuba could become strategic political actors in Havana.

In other words, the concessions Washington have secured via diplomatic politics will form the 'Trojan Horse' to facilitate a 'subversion from within approach' designed to subvert the social economy and to secure Cuban co-operation in de-radicalizing Latin America.

Fidel Castro has rightly expressed his distrust of the new US approach. Castro's pointed criticisms of Washington's highly militarized interventions in the Middle East, the Ukraine and the South China Sea is designed to influence Cuban policymakers, who are overzealous in conceding political concessions to the US.

Libya, Ukraine, Syria and Yemen: Negotiations as Prelude to Wars

Negotiations between Libyan President Gadhafi and Washington led to a dismantling of the country's advanced military defense programs. Once essentially defenseless from NATO attack, the US and its European and Gulf allies embarked on a full-scale bombing campaign for 'regime change' in support of tribal and sectarian warlords destroying the country's infrastructure, ending the life of its leader and tens of thousands of Libyans and driving hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers from sub-Saharan Africa into exile as refugees.

Negotiations between the democratically-elected leader of the Ukraine and the US-NATO based opposition led to political concessions that were quickly exploited by US funded foreign NGOs and domestic neo-Nazis. Street mobs took over government buildings in Kiev leading to a putsch and 'regime change', as well as detonating a brutal ethnic war against eastern Russian speaking Ukrainians, opposed to NATO and favoring continued traditional ties with Russia. Despite 'negotiations' between the NATO-backed regime and Donbass federalists leading to a European-brokered cease fire, the government in Kiev continues to bomb the self-governing regions.

The US, EU, Saudi Arabia and Turkey (the "Quartet") back armed Islamist mercenaries and jihadist terrorists seeking to overthrow the Bashar Assad government in Damascus and rebel Houthi government coalition in Yemen. Under the guise of seeking a 'negotiated

political solution', the 'Quartet' has consistently pursued a military solution.

Negotiations and diplomacy have become chosen tactical ploys in Washington's repertory for pursuing war.

Wars are preceded by or accompany diplomacy and negotiations which act to weaken the target adversary, as was the case in Libya, the Ukraine and Colombia.

Diplomatic overtures to China are accompanied by a 'military pivot', aggressive military encirclement, and provocative acts such as the recent arrest of visiting Chinese scholars and repeated violations of Chinese airspace.

The diplomatic overtures to Cuba are accompanied by demands for greater "access" to proselytize and subvert Cuban officials, and its people.

US negotiators demand the unilateral demilitarization and pervasive oversight of Iran's strategic military defenses even as the US expands its proxy wars against Teheran's allies in Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Meanwhile Washington rejects the comprehensive ending of economic sanctions against the Iranians.

Negotiations, under the Obama regime, are simply tactics to intensify and expand the strategy of war. The "peace negotiations" between the US-backed Santos regime and the FARC follows the global script outlined above.

Through phony 'partial agreements', which are never seriously intended to be implemented, the US-backed Colombian military and their paramilitary allies continue to ravage the countryside. Displaced peasants and farmers attempting to return and reclaim farmland continue to be assassinated. Human rights lawyers and workers are still murdered.

The Santos regime escalates its military offensive against the FARC, taking full advantage of the "unilateral ceasefire" declared by FARC leaders in Havana.

The true intentions of the Santos regime toward the FARC were revealed in the aftermath of the assassination of 40 guerrilla combatants: The regime demonized the FARC, justifying the offensive by criminalizing the insurgents, linking them to drug and human traffickers.

The gap between what the regime negotiators say in Havana and what the military commanders do in the Colombian countryside has never been greater. The disconnect between the peace talks in Havana and the military offensive in Colombia is the best indicator of what can be expected if an agreement is signed.

Santos and the US adviser Aronson envision a highly militarized state advised by thousands of US agents and mercenaries. The disarmament of the FARC will be followed by the persecution of former guerrilla combatants and the expansion of mining contracts in former guerrilla controlled territory. The military command will increase its sponsorship of cross border paramilitary attacks on Venezuela. The Santos regime will find a pretext to continue the incarceration of the majority of political prisoners. There will be no agrarian reform or repossession of illegally seized land. There will be no reversal of the US-Colombian free trade agreement. The hundreds of thousands of displaced peasants will remain without land or justice.

Very little of what is agreed in Havana will be implemented. FARC leaders will be confined

to playing the electoral game, providing that they are not assassinated by ‘sicarios on motorcycles’. Guerrilla militants without land, employment or security may join the drug traffickers – in a re-play of the so-called “Peace Accords” in El Salvador.

Under these circumstances why does the FARC’s current leadership proceed toward a suicidal agreement and its own extinction? In past conversations with leading Cuban foreign policy officials, including former Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, I was told that the Cuban government was deeply hostile to FARC and was eager to end hostilities in order to improve Cuban relations with the US. Likewise members of the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry told me that they co-operated with the Colombian government in arresting and deporting FARC officials and sympathizers in order “to secure their borders from Colombian military and paramilitary incursions”.

In other words, there are valid grounds for viewing the FARC negotiators as operating under intense pressure from its supposed allies to continue ‘talks’ and reach a ‘peace agreement’, even if the results will be neither peace or justice!

Conclusion

The US strategy of “war through peace negotiations” is an ongoing process. So far the US military build-up against China has failed to intimidate China. Beijing has responded by launching its own strategic military response and by financing a huge number of Asian economic projects which, in the long-run, will isolate the US and undermine its offensive capacity.

The ‘war through negotiation’ strategy succeeded in destroying a nationalist adversary in Libya, while also devastating a profitable oil and gas producer, creating a ‘failed state’ on the Mediterranean and unleashing jihadist groups throughout North Africa. The NATO-Obama campaign for ‘regime change’ in Libya led to the mass exodus of millions of sub-Saharan workers formerly employed in Libya with untold thousands drowning in the Mediterranean in their desperate flight.

The US ‘war and negotiations policy’ toward Iran remains inconclusive: Washington has encircled Iran with proxy wars against Yemen and Syria but Iran continues to gain influence in Iraq. The US has spent \$40 billion on arms and training on an Iraqi army whose soldiers refuse to fight and die for US interests, allowing the neo-Baathist- ‘ISIS’ coalition of Sunni insurgents to seize one-third of the country. The more serious and motivated militia defending Baghdad is composed of the Shia volunteers, influenced by Teheran. The horrific break-up of what was once sovereign secular republic continues.

Washington’s dual strategy of negotiating with the Rohani regime while encircling the country is intended to degrade Teheran’s defense capability while minimizing any relief from the economic sanctions. Whether this one-sided process will lead to a ‘final agreement’ remains to be seen. In the final analysis, the US relations with Iran are subject to the power and influence of the Zionist power configuration in the US, acting on behalf of Israel, over and against the European Union’s interest to develop trade with the 80 million strong Iranian market.

The US “subversion via negotiations” approach to Cuba has moved forward slowly. The Cuban security apparatus, military, and, especially, important contingents of Fidelista officials, militants and intellectuals serve as an important counter-weight to the

zealous liberal “modernizers” who envision “market solutions”. Washington does not expect a rapid transition to capitalism. It is banking on a ‘war of positions’, securing joint ventures with state officials; a massive infusion of consumerist propaganda to counter socialist values; funding private capitalists as potential strategic political allies; encouraging Cuban foreign policy officials to cut off support for leftist movements and governments. Cuba’s leaders, at all costs, must not return to an economically dependent relation with the US – which is the strategic goal of the US. Washington is seeking through diplomacy to secure what 50 years of warfare failed to achieve: a regime change and a reversal of the gains of the Cuban Revolution.

The US strategy of war through negotiations has mixed results. Where it confronts a burgeoning world power, such as China, it has failed. With a weak, disarmed state like Libya, it succeeded beyond its wildest dreams (or nightmares). With “middle level powers” like Cuba and Iran, it has secured political concessions but has not yet eroded the security and defense capabilities of the governments. In the case of Colombia, Washington is deeply embedded in the regime and has openly embraced a naked military solution.

The FARC’s ‘inner leadership’ cannot continue with the unilateral ‘cease fire’ unless it wishes for suicide; the ‘outside leadership’ appears committed to negotiations even as the war escalates. The results are uncertain, but what is obvious is that the Aronson – Santos regime have no tolerance for a ‘peace with social justice’. Their goal for the long struggling Colombian people is the ‘peace of the cemetery’, as the historic FARC leader Manuel Marulanda declared in the aftermath of the broken peace negotiations of 1999-2002.

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