

Violence and Terror: The Ukrainian and Colombian Road to Empire Building

By rendering democratic processes impossible and by overthrowing independent, democratically elected governments, Washington is making wars and violent upheavals inevitable.

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The two paths to 21st century empire-building-via-proxies are illustrated through the violent seizure of power in the Ukraine by a US-backed junta and the electoral gains of the US-backed Colombian war lord, Alvaro Uribe. We will describe the 'mechanics' of US intervention in the domestic politics of these two countries and their profound external effects – that is how they enhance imperial power on a continent-wide basis.

Political Intervention and Proxy Regimes: Ukraine

The conversion of the Ukraine into a US-EU vassal state has been a prolonged process which involved large scale, long term financing, indoctrination and recruitment of cadres, organization and training of politicians and street fighters and, above all, a capacity to combine direct action with electoral politics.

Seizing power is a high stakes game for empire: (1) Ukraine, in the hands of clients, provides a NATO with a military springboard into the heart of the Russian Federation; (2) Ukraine's industrial and agricultural resources provide a source of enormous wealth for Western investors and (3) Ukraine is a strategic region for penetrating the Caucasus and beyond.

Washington invested over \$5 billion dollars in client-building, mostly in 'Western Ukraine', especially in and around Kiev, focusing on 'civil society groups' and malleable political parties and leaders. By 2004, the initial US political 'investment' in regime change culminated in the so-called 'Orange Revolution' which installed a short-lived pro-US-EU regime. This, however, quickly degenerated amidst major corruption scandals, mismanagement and oligarchical pillage of the national treasury and public resources leading to the conviction of the former-Vice President and the demise of the regime. New elections produced a new regime, which attempted to secure ties with both the EU and Russia via economic agreements, while retaining many of the odious features (gross endemic corruption) of the previous regime. The US and EU, having lost thru democratic elections, relaunched their 'direct action organizations' with a new radical agenda. Neo-fascists seized power and established a dictatorial junta through violent demonstrations, vandalism, armed assaults and mob action. The composition of the new post-coup junta reflected two sides of the US-backed political organizations: (1) neo-liberal politicians for managing economic policy and forging closer ties with NATO, (2) and neo-fascists/violent

nationalists to impose order by force and fist, and crush pro-Russian Crimean ‘autonomists’ and ethnic Russians and other minorities, especially in the industrialized south and east.

Whatever else may ensue, the coup and the resultant junta is fully subordinated to and dependent on the will of Washington: claims of Ukrainian ‘independence’ notwithstanding. The junta proceeded to purge the elected and appointed government officials affiliated with the political parties of the previous democratic regime and to persecute its supporters. Their purpose is to ensure that subsequent managed elections will provide a pretense of legitimacy, and elections will be limited to two sets of imperial clients: the neo-liberals, (self-styled “moderates”) and the neo-fascists dubbed as “nationalists”.

Ukraine’s road to imperialist power via a collaborator regime illustrates the various instruments of empire building: (1) the use of imperial state funds, channeled through NGOs, to political front groups and the build-up of a ‘mass base’ in civil society; (2) the financing of mass direct action leading to a coup (‘regime change’); (3) the imposition of neo-liberal policies by the client regime; (4) imperial financing of the re-organization and regroupment of mass direct action groups after the demise of the first client regime; (5) the transition from protest to violent direct action as the major backdrop to the extremist sectors (neo-fascists) organizing the seizure of power and purge of the opposition; (6) organizing an ‘international media campaign’ to prop up the new junta while demonizing domestic and international opposition (Russia) and (7) political power centralized in the hands of the junta, convoking “managed elections” limited to the victory of one or the other pro-imperial pro-junta candidates.

In summary, empire-builders operate on several/levels: violent and electoral; social and political; and with selected incumbents and rivals committed to one strategic aim: the seizure of state power and the conversion of the ruling elite into willing vassals of empire.

Colombia’s Death squad Democracy: Centerpiece of the Imperial Advance in Latin America

In the face of a continent-wide decline of US influence in Latin America, Colombia stands out as a constant bulwark of US imperial interests: (1) Colombia signed a free trade agreement with the US; (2) provided seven military bases and invited thousands of US counter-insurgency operatives; and (3) collaborated in building large-scale paramilitary death squads prepared for cross border raids against Washington’s arch enemy Venezuela.

Colombia’s ruling oligarchy and military have been able to resist the wave of massive democratic, national and popular social upheavals and electoral victories that gave rise to the post-neo-liberal states in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay.

While Latin America has moved toward ‘regional organizations’ excluding the US, Colombia strengthened its ties to the US through bilateral agreements. While Latin America reduced its dependence on US markets, Colombia expanded its commercial ties. While Latin America reduced their military ties to the Pentagon, Colombia tightened them. While Latin America moved toward greater social inclusion by increasing taxes on foreign multinational corporations, Colombia lowered corporate taxes. While Latin America expanded land settlements for its landless rural populations, Colombia displaced over 4 million peasants as part of the US-designed ‘scorched earth’ counter-insurgency policy.

Colombia's "exceptional" unwavering submission to US imperial interests is rooted in several large-scale, long-term programs developed in Washington. In 2000, President 'Bill' Clinton committed the US to a \$6 billion dollar counter-insurgency program (Plan Colombia) which greatly increased the brutal repressive capacity of the Colombian elite to confront the popular grass roots movements of peasants and workers. Along with arms and training, US Special Forces and ideologues entered Colombia to develop military and paramilitary terror operations - aimed primarily at penetrating and decimating political opposition and civil society social movements and assassinating activists and leaders. The US-backed Alvaro Uribe, notorious narco-trafficker and the very personification of a ruthless imperial vassal, became president over a 'Death-Squad Democracy'.

President Uribe further militarized Colombian society, savaged civil society movements and crushed any possibility of a popular democratic revival, such as were occurring throughout the rest of Latin America. Thousands of activists, trade unionists, human rights workers and peasants were murdered, tortured and jailed.

The 'Colombian System' combined the systematic use of para-militarism (death squads) to smash local and regional trade union and peasant opposition and the technification and massification of the military (over 300,000 soldiers) in fighting the popular insurgency and 'emptying the countryside' of rebel sympathizers. Large-scale multi-billion dollar drug trafficking and money laundering formed the 'financial glue' to cement a tight relationship among oligarchs, politicians, bankers and US counter-insurgency advisers - creating a terrifying high-tech police state bordering Venezuela, Ecuador and Brazil - countries with substantial popular mass movements.

The same state terror machinery, which decimated the pro-democracy social movements, has protected, promoted and participated in 'stage-managed elections', the hallmark of Colombia as a "death squad democracy".

Elections are held under a vast overlapping network of military bases, where death squads and drug traffickers occupied towns and villages intimidating, terrorizing and 'corrupting' the electorate. The only 'safe' protest in this repressive atmosphere has been voter abstention. Electoral outcomes are pre-ordained: oligarchs never lose in death squad democracies, they are the empire's most trusted vassals.

The cumulative effects of the decade and a half-long bloody purge of Colombian civil society by Presidents Uribe and his successor, Santos, have been to eliminate any consequential electoral opposition. Washington has achieved its ideal: a stable vassal state; a large-scale and obedient military; an oligarchy tied to US corporate elites; and a tightly-controlled 'electoral' system that never permits the election of a genuine opponent.

The March 2014 Colombian elections brilliantly illustrate the success of US strategic intervention in collaboration with the oligarchy: The vast majority of the electorate, over two-thirds, abstained, demonstrating the absence of any real legitimacy among the eligible voters. Among those who 'voted', ten percent submitted 'spoiled' or blank ballots. Voter abstention and ballot-spoilage was especially high in the rural regions and working class areas which had been subject to state terror.

Given the intense state repression, the mass of voters decided that no authentic pro-democracy party would have any chance and so refused to legitimize the process. The 30% who actually voted were largely urban middle and upper class Colombians and residents in

some rural areas completely controlled by narco-terrorists and the military where 'voting' may have been 'compulsory'. Of a total of 32 million eligible voters in Colombia, 18 million abstained and another 2.3 million submitted spoiled ballots. The two dominant oligarchical coalitions led by President Santos and ex-President Uribe received only 2.2 million and 2.05 million votes respectively, a fraction of the number who abstained (14 million). In this widely scorned electoral farce, the center-left and left parties made a miserable showing. Colombia's electoral system puts a propaganda veneer on dangerous, highly-militarized vassal state primed to play a strategic role in US plans to "reconquer" Latin America.

Two decades of systematic terror, financed by a six-billion dollar militarization program, has guaranteed that Washington will not encounter any substantial opposition in the legislature or presidential palace in Bogota. This is the 'acid, gunpowder-tinged smell of success' for US policymakers: violence is the midwife of the vassal state. Colombia has been turned into the springboard for developing an US-centered trade bloc and a military alliance to undermine Venezuela's Bolivarian regional alliances, such as ALBA and Petro Caribe as well as Venezuela's national security. Bogota will try to influence neighboring right and center-left regimes pushing them to embrace of the US Empire against Venezuela.

Conclusion

Large-scale, long-term subversion and organization in Ukraine and Colombia, as well as the funding of paramilitary and civil society organizations (NGO) has enabled Washington to: (1) construct strategic allies, (2) build ties to oligarchs, malleable politicians and paramilitary thugs and (3) apply political terrorism for their seizure of state power. The imperial planners have thus created "model states" - devoid of consequential opponents and 'open' to sham elections among rival vassal politicians.

Coups and juntas, orchestrated by longstanding political proxies, and highly militarized states run by 'Death Squad Executives' are all legitimized by electoral systems designed to expand and strengthen imperial power.

By rendering democratic processes and peaceful popular reforms impossible and by overthrowing independent, democratically elected governments, Washington is making wars and violent upheavals inevitable.

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