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6th International Congress against Military Bases and War

by Julieta Daza

Most of the aspects I want to consider today are related to the place where I speak from, and I mean not only the place from a geographic point of view, but from a geopolitical one.

I was born in Colombia, which is a country that has been under an armed, social and political conflict for more than 75 years now. In that time period the Colombian state has always been subordinated to the interests of US-imperialism and has followed its policies from “war on communism, trough war on drugs, to war on terrorism”. So Colombia became the most important recipient of US-military assistance in our region of the Americas, specially since 2000 through the so called Plan Colombia.

But not enough with that, in 2014, under another right government, Colombia became global partner of NATO.

This history of US-security assistance and interference in Colombia didn't stop the conflict. On the contrary, it continued, got worse, and the US have to be consider a part of this conflict because of their export of weapons, military training, presence in the territory, and of course because of many cases of human rights violations.

But on the other hand I live in Venezuela, a neighbor country of Colombia, here in the strategic North of South America. More than 20 years ago Venezuela started a revolution that aimed for building aimed to build a country with social justice as well as independence and self-determination, breaking the chains of neo-colonial and imperialist relationships. Of course that isn't easy and of course there was going to be a reaction of the US, formerly first importer of Venezuelan oil. So since 2015, when the former US-president Barack Obama declared Venezuela to be an “national security threat“, we have been suffering under a number of many and different economic sanctions that deeply affect the Venezuelan people.

But in this process Venezuela has become an important player in the construction of a new pluripolar and multicentric world, because of its new political and economic relations with global powers like Russia, China, and Iran among others.

These are expressions of a reality: Latin America and the Caribbean is a region in dispute between the struggling US-imperialism and other global powers and its own and different foreign and economic policies. Which role will the region play in this dispute? That's the question.

And so, at last I'm getting to our topic. But this introduction was important to me, because it is the base for my conclusions.

Some weeks ago the current president of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, first progressive president in the history of the country, who was elected one year ago, said something about the war in Ukraine, that I consider interesting.

In an interview with the Spanish journal El País he compared the conflict between Ukraine and Russia with the situation between Colombia and Venezuela in 2019. Of course there are a lot of big differences, for example that Russia is a global power, whilst nor Venezuela nor Colombia are in that way. But there

are some similarities to. Like Colombia and Venezuela, Russia and Ukraine are two neighbor countries, that share a history, share a culture and a language in part of the territory, and share a brotherhood in many aspects.

But the constant NATO expansionism as well as the US-interference in Ukraine, at the latest since 2014, including the practice of regime change, the violation of the Minsk agreement, the support for, or at least tolerance of, fascist groups, and the constant attacks against the region of Donbas, produced the conflict we are seeing and suffering today.

In 2019 there was an aggression against Venezuela, coming from Colombian territory, but clearly with US-support, which is being confirmed today.

Fortunately these events on the border between Colombia and Venezuela remained a provocation. But similar to the Ukraine war it would have been a proxy war, which would have benefited only the US, deeply affecting the peoples of Venezuela and Colombia and their historical brotherhood.

Russia isn't fighting only against Ukraine, but against NATO. But the war in Ukraine only benefits the US, affects the peoples of Russia and Ukraine, and even if they are not yet aware of that, peoples of many European countries, because of the rising energy prices and the risk of becoming more and more part of the war, among other consequences.

Fortunately today we have some leaders in our region, who have a critical position towards the conflict, condemning any invasion, but also rejecting the delivery of weapons and appealing for dialogue. Some examples, obviously with their differences, are Colombia's president Petro, the president of Brazil Lula and the president of Mexico López Obrador.

We could say the governments of Venezuela and Cuba are closer to Russia. Some months ago Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, visited Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua. Washington even accused Russia, as well as China, of opening military bases on Cuba. That's very ironic considering that it is the country with the most military bases around the world, there are hundreds of them, including Guantanamo on Cuba, and a lot more in the Caribbean and Latin America. Based on an investigation of Telma Luzzani, from 2012, there are more than 70 US and NATO military bases in our region.

Today Russia, Venezuela and Cuba share one dramatic reality: the economic sanctions of US and European imperialism, that affect their peoples.

These wars and these sanctions are justified by a narrative, in which the western capitalist powers are civilized, represent a world of freedom, are superior and therefore can judge about the political decisions and actions of what they qualify as tyrannies, dictatorships, and speaking of their leaders bellicose madmen and sexists, among other labels. So there is a very colonial ideology, of the alleged civilized on one hand and the "barbarians" on the other.

Based on the experience of Colombia and Venezuela we can say:

- US-security assistance, their and NATO's weapons export, and any other expression of their interference won't put an end to the war or have any positive consequences for the peoples of Russia and Ukraine, and Europe in general,

- The economic sanctions against Russia are part of the war. They affect the people of Russia, although they are not responsible for the conflict. These sanctions even affect peoples of other countries in Europe and around the world, for example because of the prices of some food products,

- There have been and are today lots of other war situations and conflicts around the world. Many of them were caused by US-invasions. But western governments don't condemn them. Maybe because they are part of them through NATO.

- And finally, for those of us who call ourselves anti-imperialists and have denounced the violations of human rights by US-imperialism, the possibility of a new pluripolar, multicentric and de-dollarized world with the rise of global powers like China and Russia among others is interesting. But we know very well that it has to be not only a world for new and independent global powers, but especially a world with self-determination for the peoples. So as social movements, as left organizations we cannot leave decisions to the powerful governments and corporations alone. We have to organize, discuss, create, mobilize against war, against armament, against imperialism and neo-colonialism, for a new world with peace, social justice, protection of nature and environment.

Today, in the face of the nuclear threat, it isn't a possibility, but a necessity for the life on our planet.