

The Moment of Truth for Our America

The United States under Trump: against the world and its own people

By Gonzalo Santos¹

Abstract

This essay attempts to analyze the current conjuncture in the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean from the perspective of the historical sociology of the world-system. It seeks to demonstrate that the internal crisis in the US and its renewed imperialist policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean (and Greenland) are intimately related as the result of two historical processes of different time-scales: the end of the cycle of US global hegemony and the end of historical capitalism. In these circumstances, where structures and elites lose their firmness and power in societies, space opens up for collective action by all social forces, and with it, the possibility of transitioning to a new and better world-system, or toward a planetary cataclysm. It depends on all of us where we go. We have a new global rendezvous with destiny. Let's get to work.

Keywords: #SystemicCrisis #HegemonicCrisis #UnitedStates #LatinAmerica #Venezuela #DonroeDoctrine

Resumen

Este ensayo intenta analizar la presente coyuntura por la que pasa los Estados Unidos y América Latina y el Caribe, desde una perspectiva de la sociología histórica del sistema-mundo. Intenta demostrar que la crisis interna en los EE. UU. y su renovada política imperialista hacia América Latina y el Caribe (y Groenlandia) están íntimamente relacionadas como el resultado de dos procesos históricos de distintas temporalidades: el fin del ciclo de hegemonía global estadounidense y el fin de la vida del capitalismo histórico. En estas circunstancias en la que las estructuras y élites pierden su firmeza y poderío en las sociedades, se abre el espacio para la acción colectiva de todas las fuerzas sociales, y con ello, las posibilidades de transitar a un nuevo y mejor sistema-mundo, o hacia un cataclismo planetario. Depende de todos nosotros hacia donde vamos. Manos a la obra.

Palabras clave: #CrisisSistémica #CrisisHegemónica #EstadosUnidos #AméricaLatina #Venezuela #DoctrinaDonroe

I. The Two Converging Crises in the World Today and Our Increased Collective Agency to Address Them

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I have been warning since 2018 ([Santos, 2018](#); [Santos, 2022a](#); [Santos, 2022b](#); [Santos, 2024a](#); [Santos 2024b](#); [Santos, 2025](#)) that the United States, the superpower whose global hegemony began to decline in the 1970s and whose decline accelerated dramatically with the arrival of this century, far from continuing to serve as the prosperous center of the world economy and the visionary builder and guarantor of the world order - as it effectively was after World War II and during the Cold War -, has become *the main generator and epicenter of systemic chaos in the modern capitalist world-system*.

This turbulent process of the end of a hegemonic cycle differs from previous ones in historical capitalism (the British and the Dutch) in that it is occurring simultaneously, overlapping with other longer-term secular processes, affected by and contributing to the very end of the capitalist world-system (Arrighi et al, 1999 & 2009; Robinson, 2025).

In other words, we also find ourselves in the even more significant, uncertain, and turbulent *period of systemic transition* toward an uncertain future—either toward a new and superior post-capitalist world-system, in the best-case scenario, or toward the collapse of human civilization and the very life of the planet, in the worst. Hence the great challenge of correctly analyzing, navigating, and overcoming this complex historical conjuncture.

In these chaotic and dangerous conditions of maximum uncertainty, fueled by the two overlapping crises, the structural resilience of the system and the usual power of global elites and ruling circles diminish and even disappear; all social actors today have agency, not only the elites and states of both the Global North and South, but all social forces in global civil society (Wallerstein, 1998).

This includes, of course, the United States and Latin America, their working classes, their students and scholars, their indigenous peoples and peasant communities, women as such, and especially their migrant diasporas, who today are the main hemispheric social bridge and the new historical subject that carries the spark of a transnational future in their backpacks and in their forbidden dreams.

What is happening and what will happen depends on all of us. We are all contributing to the construction or suppression of a vision of a new world and its detailed architecture. We are all

contributing—whether we are aware of it or not—through our social and personal actions, directly or indirectly, to the direction the world, to the history of the world yet to be written.

The moment of truth and collective action toward our shared destiny has arrived, for better or for worse, and no one can or will escape it.

This brief essay is an attempt to explain to ourselves what we are experiencing throughout the Americas, from a historical and global perspective, and what we can and must do both in the United States and in Latin America and the Caribbean. Similar analyses and prescriptions are urgently needed in other regions of the world.²

II. The Accelerated Implosion of the United States Under the Fascist MAGA Project

Every empire and hegemony end, and the American one is no exception. After its undisputed period of apogee of global supremacy in the decades following World War II, the U.S. successively lost its economic, geopolitical, scientific-technological, ideological, and cultural hegemony; but, in a unique anomaly in the history of the modern world-system, it retained its military supremacy, leading the economically sapped superpower to rely more and more on it to try to reverse its hegemonic decline. Paradoxically, this has only accelerated its decline, both due to its extremely high cost, its loss of legitimacy internationally and domestically, and its ineffectiveness in the nuclear age.

What we see today is a turning point in this downward trajectory of accelerated decline of the American hegemon, in which the state and the ruling classes have abandoned previous strategies and adopted a much more extreme and desperate project and strategy, which we can frankly characterize as “21st-century fascism”—very similar to the German fascism of the 1930s, adopted by the Nazi state and the German upper bourgeoisie as an authoritarian mode of rule domestically

² In particular, it is urgent to address, both theoretically and historically, the significance of the spectacular rise of China and East Asia in general, especially its hybrid character—extending Marxism-Leninism to its limits, on the one hand, and embracing a capitalism “with Chinese characteristics” (or Japanese or Korean characteristics), on the other; the emergence of an inter-imperialist proxy war in the heart of Europe (US/NATO vs. Russia) in Ukraine, related to the problematic evolution of its European integration project (EU), which excludes Russia and was until recently subservient to US hegemony, but is now overtaken by issues such as inter- and intra-continental migration and the resurgence of fascist movements and parties. It is also urgent to address what is happening in the Arab world, in sub-Saharan Africa, and within international governance institutions.

and an aggressively expansionist imperialist strategy internationally, as the way out of their previous failed hegemonic attempts - which led to their defeat in the First World War, chronic economic crises, and incipient social revolution.³

Since Donald Trump came to power in 2017, and again in 2025, the following has occurred:

(1) In the international economic arena: Trump and his MAGA lieutenants have completely abandoned the field of international economic competition under any pretense of a global free trade regime, which the United States once championed so proudly as the tireless promoter of unrestricted free trade, and the unfettered flow of capital and technology.

Trump and his team adopted instead ultra-protectionist, mercantilist measures: extremely high tariffs on imports and a wide array of restrictions on high-tech exports; currency speculation with the dollar; and continued massive borrowing (the largest in the world) to finance the already unsustainable levels of domestic general consumption; fiscally subsidize and increase the wealth of the oligarchic *Top One Percent*; and greatly expand funding to the military and homeland security apparatus.

These policies, which Biden actually continued and Trump escalated even more in his second term, have not prevented the center of gravity of the global economy and capitalist accumulation from relocating to China and East Asia.

China's accession to the WTO in 2001 and its complete opening to global circuits of investment, manufacturing, and capitalist accumulation—processes initially sponsored by the US as a core component of its neoliberal globalization project—ultimately led China to surpass the United States—preoccupied with its disastrous "endless wars" of hegemonic restoration—in every sector of production, technological innovation, international trade, and global accumulation, making it the world's leading investor, trading partner, and lender—particularly in Africa, Asia, and South America.

³ For an alternative analysis which explains the present behavior of the U.S. from a sympathetic conservative perspective, as a welcome return to the U.S. geopolitical dynamics of 120 years ago, as opposed to the German one 90 years ago, see Ferguson (2026). One can make the case, in fact, that what we are witnessing today is an entirely maladaptive and anachronistic combination of *both* in this era of systemic transition.

Today, China alone accounts for one-fifth of global economic output (20% of global GDP) – East Asia as a whole represents 26%, reaching parity with the US (26% – 29 to 30% if we include Canada and Mexico under the USMCA). Last year, the Asian giant surpassed one trillion dollars in its trade surplus with the rest of the world for the first time, despite all the tariffs imposed by the United States. China is no longer as dependent on trade with the United States as it was 15 years ago. The United States, on the other hand, only managed to reduce its enormous trade *deficit* last year, via its worldwide tariffs - not even evening up.

Other beneficiaries who made progress on the international economic front were (a) the European Union, which consolidated and expanded to 27 states (with 10 on the waiting list) despite Britain's departure (Brexit) in 2016, and which today represents approximately one-sixth (16%) of global GDP; (b) the BRICS+ geopolitical alliance of the Global South (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and six other countries), which today represents 37% to 44% of global GDP - greater than the GDP of the G-7 of the Global North -; and (c) the Bolivarian project of South American economic integration, founded in 2008 under the leadership of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez during the so-called "pink tide" of anti-neoliberal governments, which achieved significant economic and geopolitical advances, such as founding the UNASUR, an economic integration project for South America, and CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), a geopolitical block independent from the United States and Canada. Though both projects have gone into remission due to political divisions fanned by the "*Trumpian wave*" sweeping the region as it has in other parts of the world, their legacy endures and are slowly reactivating, not incidentally thanks to South America's beneficial partnerships with China, its major investment and commercial partner in the last decade.⁴

(2) In the domestic economic, political, and social spheres, the MAGA-Trumpist project openly places the state at the service of corporate oligopolies and the upper bourgeoisie, including assigning billionaires to take direct command of many key federal departments and agencies; it aggressively cancels what remains of the New Deal social contract, dismantles the welfare state set up for the working classes, and deliberately subverts the social, cultural, political, and labor

⁴ The European Union also just announced a sweeping trade pact with four South American countries – Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay - that would create one of the largest free-trade zones in the world, connecting markets with more than 700 million people (New York Times, Jan. 6, 2026).

rights achieved by workers, women, and ethnic and sexual minorities in the last century; and it further expands the military-industrial complex, the prison system, and the security apparatus (all already gargantuan during the Cold War era and later the War on Terror).

Furthermore, it attacks the democratic constitutional order on all fronts (federalism and balance of powers, free elections, a strong rule of law, and two-party governance), and sets out to replace it with an authoritarian, one-party, highly centralized, and law-violating state, excessively corrupt, based on a cult of personality, with an ultranationalist ideology tinged with strong elements of racial supremacy and revanchism, open xenophobia, and religious fanaticism.

In particular, the Trumpian MAGA project turns migrant diasporas and Latino ethnicities into its main scapegoats—just as the Nazis did with the Jews—criminalizing and demonizing them. This began decades ago but today leads to fierce and indiscriminate raids on urban neighborhoods, courts, hospitals, schools, workplaces, businesses, and churches, producing widespread terror, a record level of arrests and incarcerations in the vast prison system built by previous administrations, and heightened mass deportations that violate human rights and due process.

For decades, the United States has been adopting increasingly restrictive immigration policies toward non-European immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, and enforcing fiercely punitive policies toward irregular migration.

An entire prison and deportation industrial complex (the *American Gulag*) had already been built, absorbing a larger federal budget than all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. The Trump administration's MAGA project has quadrupled these budgets, the extra-constitutional prison system, and the deportation flights, and launched the largest mass raids since Operation Wetback in the mid-1950s. It has also closed all immigration from more than 70 countries and shut the southern border to all but a handful of asylum seekers.⁵

All of this has accelerated the militarization of police and law enforcement agencies (a trend noticed since the “endless wars” of 2000s)—especially immigration enforcement agencies, whose

⁵ See Nancy Hiemstra & Deirdre Conlon (2025); Jacobin (2025); Lytle Hernandez (2010); Gedeon (2026).

agents now roam heavily armed freely, masked and without identification, roughing up people without any regard for legal norms, or respect for the law.

Throughout 2025, we have witnessed the increasing use of the actual military, and other federal agencies and National Guard troops, in anti-immigrant raids in multiple cities, under the pretext of “supporting” immigration enforcement but undoubtedly for *training* (as Trump has admitted) for anticipated future repressive actions targeting sectors and social movements of *American citizens* who dare protest and resist the MAGA fascist project. These sectors include not only the usual targets - communities of color, LGBTQ, women, striking workers - but increasingly the white population that takes to the streets to protest the ICE raids or any other cause, incessantly labeled by Trump and his associates as “domestic terrorists,” “Antifa,” “Marxist communists,” and “enemies of the homeland.”

Those most affected, of course, have been undocumented immigrants and their mixed-status families, and the ethnic communities where they reside; but we have also seen how police brutality has increased in Black communities and how hate crimes against non-white and non-Christian communities have skyrocketed. Homophobia, misogyny, and transphobia have also manifested themselves, leading to hate crimes and laws that affect their rights and collective security. And now immigration enforcement goons are beginning to beat, arrest, and shoot U.S. citizens—not only Latinos and African Americans, but also whites, as we just witnessed this past January 7 with the cold-blooded murder by an ICE agent of Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis, a white legal observer of an ongoing raid—which immediately prompted the Secretary of Homeland Security of accusing *her* of being a “domestic terrorist.”

American citizens, both white and non-white, are beginning to realize that the cruel and violent actions of the Donald Trump's regime are also directed at them, and it has unleashed a massive wave of street protests which foreshadows increasingly widespread social resistance. This, given present trends, will only invite more repression from the hyper-militarized state, causing a spiral of increasing violence and chaos in the streets.

Inevitably, this is also generating enormous chaos in the American political and governmental system, with the duopoly brought to a standstill. The empire is imploding from within.

One final observation is that when the Cold War ended, the U.S.'s nemesis, the USSR, was the first to collapse, and when it did, it did so from within, due to the accumulated weight of its own long-standing contradictions; when it collapsed, it did so peacefully, without a shot fired, without civil war (except in Chechnya), and certainly not an international war. Now, contrary to the universal triumphalism that accompanied the circles of power in the U.S. in the immediate post-Cold War period, it is the power elite and *their* dreams of regaining lost global hegemony that are collapsing. And when, in desperation and utter shamelessness, they resort to adopting a fascist project similar to the one they help defeat 80 years ago, what they are provoking is the implosion of their own country, in an apotheosis of state repression and social violence, with very serious consequences for the future of their nation, which has shed so much blood for its expanded liberty and social contract. They, the plutocrats and their political agents in the broken duopoly, do not deserve to govern.

Today, the ruthless state repression and obscene hatreds fostered by MAGA-Trumpism are mostly being directed toward immigrants, non-white ethnicities, and other vulnerable groups; but with each passing day, the fascist project expands, affecting *all* communities—including the 58% of the population that is white.

No one should rejoice. Whatever happens in the United States will affect the world—and especially Our America - Latin America and the Caribbean and the Latin diasporas living in the U.S., and who make up 20% of its population. We must help set that country on the right path before it implodes. We must offer our unconditional solidarity to its multicultural people in all their glorious diversity and democratic traditions, as they increasingly struggle against the Trumpian MAGA fascist project, just as the peoples of the world who are facing and resisting Yankee imperialist aggression require *their* unconditional solidarity, too.

III. The Renewed US Imperialist Onslaught on the Western Hemisphere

The other fateful turning point we are witnessing today consists of a major escalation of the ultra-protectionist policies of the Trumpian MAGA project (which affects even the U.S.'s main trading partners in North America), and, crucially, *its spillover from the economic sphere to the geopolitical sphere*, intensely focused on the American continent, as formally announced in the new National Security Strategy (downloadable [here](#)) as the “Trump Corollary” of the resurrected

Monroe Doctrine: The United States unilaterally declares that from now on the Western Hemisphere constitutes *its exclusive economic and geopolitical zone*. In other words, it belongs to the U.S. state and corporations, they will appropriate all its natural resources and be its sole investor and trading partner, period.

The calculation behind this audacious declaration redolent of imperialist hubris seems to be that, given the economic and geopolitical failures of the former hegemon in Europe (vis-à-vis Russia and the European Union), Asia (vis-à-vis China and India), and Africa (vis-à-vis China and Europe), and the disasters and chaos in the Middle East (including the Israeli genocide in Gaza), the MAGA slogan “America First” - which in Trump’s first term had purely mercantilist but geopolitically isolationist connotations -, will now mean the decision to disengage from multilateralism, retreat from all alliances, treaties, organizations, and ignore international law and governance bodies⁶ to adopt, without constraints, a much more aggressive geopolitical strategy.⁷

This time around, it retreating not unto itself - as in the first term, even at the exclusion of its immediate neighbors and principal trading partners, Mexico and Canada - but to a vast, self-designated “sphere of influence,” the entire Western Hemisphere, where it intends henceforth to dominate and project all its power for its exclusive U.S. benefit, without requiring anyone’s approval, including the Latin American states, whose national sovereignties are henceforth nullified - without any adherence to any principle of civilized coexistence, moral justification, or

⁶ On January 7, 2026, President Donald Trump signed a presidential memorandum directing the United States to withdraw from 66 international organizations - 31 United Nations-affiliated entities and 35 non-UN organizations. Notable organizations and treaties the U.S. is exiting include:

- **Climate & Environment:** The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (the foundational 1992 treaty for the Paris Agreement), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the International Solar Alliance, and the International Tropical Timber Organization.
- **Human Rights & Social Policy:** UN Women, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.
- **Development & Governance:** UNCTAD (Conference on Trade and Development), the UN Democracy Fund, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).
- **Security & Cooperation:** The Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Partnership for Atlantic Cooperation, and the Venice Commission. See (NPR, 2026).

⁷ It is worth comparing this new strategy with the previous one of the Joe Biden regime (White House, 2022), which emphasized as its highest priority the geoeconomic war with China, but also the geopolitical containment of Russia and Iran based on NATO, UN, and OAS multilateralism.

international law—including those governing the Organization of American States (OAS), and alliance that the U.S. helped set up when it was hegemonic.

At the level of the interstate system of the world-system, this represents a declaration that the United States is renouncing the international order that it itself established after World War II, renouncing the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of the Organization of American States, and all other Pan-American obligations it undertook, and that it has decided to return to a system of inter-imperialist rivalries like that prevalent in the 19th and early 20th centuries, where the only prevailing law was the law of the strongest, leading to the unbridled exploitation and plunder of the colonial world, and eventually provoking two world wars.

And in the current context, the new U.S. “*Donroe Doctrine*” (as Trump calls it) constitutes a declaration of economic war against China in the Americas (and, to a lesser degree and by extension, against all other extra-continental economic powers). It is, of course, a frontal attack on the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and self-determination of the nations and states of the American continent (and Greenland/Denmark).

The fact that China is already South America's main trading partner, with substantial investments on the continent, or that Denmark is a member of NATO and the forced annexation of Greenland would lead to this Atlantic military alliance dissolution, seems to matter little to the MAGA regime.

Some might think all this is unheard of and unexpected in the 21st century, assuming we've left that sordid imperialist history in the past. But a brief review of the historical evolution of the US-Latin America relationship, combined with an examination of the serious problems the former global hegemon and its diminished strategic interests face today, explains why it has decided to retreat and go for the direct domination of the entire American continent, as the only strategy it believes it has left.

And I say “*it believes*” because the United States—especially now that it has embraced the Trumpian MAGA project—has long been dominated internally by an insatiable and rapacious plutocracy, and its power elites have always been, and continue to be, die-hard imperialists. It's just that before they disguised it, and today they're completely flaunting it.

In what follows, for those still incredulous, is a brief overview of the Monroe Doctrine - for a deeper look I recommend the new book "[America, America](#)" by Greg Grandin (2025):

While the Monroe Doctrine (formulated in 1823, but initially proposed by the British Foreign Office) declared that the U.S. would block European colonial expansion in the Americas during their struggles for independence—especially Spain's attempts to reclaim its empire—by 1898, the U.S. used it as a pretext to launch its own imperialist war against Spain, seizing its remaining colonial possessions in the Caribbean and Asia (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines).

Under the “Roosevelt Corollary,” issued by Teddy Roosevelt in 1904, the U.S. declared its unrestricted right to intervene militarily in the continent to protect/advance its economic interests and “restore order” wherever and whenever it deemed necessary, inaugurating the period of “gunboat diplomacy” that led to multiple U.S. invasions and changes of regimes in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America - including the intervention to separate the province of Panama from Colombia, build the famous Canal, and seize the Canal and its surrounding area for one hundred years (a relatively moderate move compared to having taken Guantánamo Bay in Cuba “in perpetuity” and acquiring Puerto Rico and the Philippines as colonies).

This openly and proudly avowed imperialist policy of the United States under the modified Monroe Doctrine continued until the second Roosevelt (Franklin) announced his so-called “Good Neighbor Policy” in 1934, which aimed to respect the sovereignty of Latin American countries and seek their alliance in anticipation of World War II—without preventing him from helping to install the “banana republic” dictatorships of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, and Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, all during the 1930s.

After World War II and throughout the Cold War, the Monroe Doctrine was resurrected as an aggressive and paranoid national security doctrine, supposedly anti-communist and anti-subversive, projected across the entire continent.

What the United States actually wanted to prevent at all costs was the geopolitical autonomy and economic independence of the countries of the Americas so they could prioritize their own development.

This led to a series of coups and invasions: Guatemala and Paraguay (1954), Haiti (1957), Brazil (1964), the Dominican Republic (1965), Bolivia (countless times), Cuba (1961), Chile and Uruguay (1973), Argentina (1976), the counterinsurgency wars in Central America in the 1970s and 80s, Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), Honduras (2008), and Venezuela (2002 and 2019).

From 1975 to 1981, the United States orchestrated a covert campaign of terror, torture, disappearances, and assassinations, “Operation Condor,” which coordinated intelligence and training in eight South American countries against all democratic, labor, and dissident movements against the pro-US military dictatorships of the time (Lessa, 2025). Cuba, on top of suffering an invasion in 1961 and a relentless economic blockade from 1962 up to this day, was subjected to a relentless campaign of terrorist actions for decades (Ferrer, 2022). In Mexico, it is well documented how the pro-democratic student movement of 1968 was brutally repressed in coordination with the CIA (Bartley & Bartley, 2015).

Now, under the “Trump Corollary,” the United States has carried out the lightning invasion of Venezuela and the decapitation of Nicolás Maduro’s regime, is bombing boats and seizing oil tankers, and is demanding that all mineral and oil resources (Venezuela has the world’s largest oil reserves) be handed over to the U.S. and its companies, under threat of further invasions. There’s not even the pretense of “restoring democracy” this time around.

This is the beginning of a prolonged period of destabilization, with a high probability of more interventions and military attacks in the pan-Caribbean region (which includes northern South America, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean), leading to insurgencies, civil wars, coups, failed states, and new massive flows of displaced populations.

The Trump regime naively gambles—just as the Bush Jr. regime recklessly gambled when it invaded Iraq in 2003 with 200,000 troops to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime—that by simply launching a spectacular attack (a tactic known as *Shock & Awe*), the Venezuelan regime and people will submit to its patently illegitimate and predatory imperial dictates.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The peoples of the Global South have already learned, since the wars in Vietnam, Algeria, and the Portuguese colonies in Africa, to interpret these kinds of *recolonization spectacles* for what they are: a pantomime of imperial power, which, although it

can cause much harm, can no longer be imposed for a prolonged period, as it was during the era of imperialism prior to World War II.

The world has already been decolonized, and it will not be recolonized; it is not for nothing that Chairman Mao called Yankee imperialism, in the midst of the brutal Vietnam War, a “paper tiger.” If that was the case despite President Lyndon Johnson sending half a million forcibly drafted soldiers, and President Richard Nixon bombing Vietnam with more bombs than in all of World War II, and even earlier this century seeing how the United States' “endless wars” in Central Asia ended in disastrous, costly, and ignominious defeats, how much more so now with what amounted to an “invasion lite” in Venezuela – one that studiously avoided landing occupation troops or regime change, reducing Trump and his cronies to merely engaging in media bluster, machine-gunning fishing boats for TV consumption, and seizing rusty oil tankers to defray costs. As spectacles goes, this one was a pretty sorry one, military prowess of the flash commando raid aside.

Furthermore, and more substantially, the United States is frankly fiscally bankrupt, albeit well-disguised while it continues to accumulate a federal national debt that today reaches \$38.4 trillion, as a result of its accelerated loss of global economic hegemony and its costly military disasters. The United States simply no longer has either the resources - or the support of its people - to continue invading countries for any extended period of time, under false pretenses or illegitimate, predatory objectives.

And finally, in terms of its military supremacy, the United States indeed remains a colossus with nuclear teeth and the most advanced military technology, but with feet – and I would add stomach - of clay. It lacks even the treasury resources to finance the oil companies in spending over a hundred billion dollars to repair the infrastructure of the Venezuelan oil industry; nor, even if subsidized, are these companies particularly willing to do so, given the great geopolitical uncertainty that now prevails and the complicated negative economics involved (read “[Big Oil Knows That Trump’s Venezuela Plans Are Delusional](#)”) (Karma, 2026).

But the main point is that the United States is now an old tiger, battered and frail, and made of shredded paper. The neo-imperialist national security strategy under the fascist MAGA project is destined for utter failure in its ill-conceived renewed scramble to dominate the Americas.

None of this, however, has prevented Trump and associates from imagining a trilateral world order "divided" among three predatory imperial states: Russia, China, and the United States. And he has begun to act on it targeting, since returning to the White House, Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Greenland, Cuba, and Nicaragua for potential interventions in "his zone" if they do not submissively comply with Washington's dictates.

He has already "reached an agreement" with Panama, whose president summarily expelled Chinese port companies from both sides of the canal; and also with the president of El Salvador, who has allowed – profited from - Venezuelan asylum seekers and other deportees from the United States to be imprisoned in his atrocious gulag.

And with the president of Mexico, who has been yielding to the incessant torrent of onerous demands (“cooperating,” she says) that Trump and his team present to her government in those constant “high-level meetings on bilateral relations,” on issues of migration, security, and economic penetration, supposedly under the guiding principles of “Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, Shared and differentiated responsibility, Mutual respect and trust, and Cooperation without subordination.” It’s all a Kabuki Theater.

Under the incessant threats of imposing high tariffs and military interventions on Mexico, the Sheinbaum administration (as previously the AMLO administration) has followed a strategy of “feeding the tiger to avoid being attacked,” but covertly: appearances are scrupulously maintained, a nationalist discourse and a dignified, serene, and temperate stance are unfailingly displayed; the government is careful to periodically rally its popular support (which is unquestionably large) for shows of determination to “defend national sovereignty.” But step by step, it has been gradually succumbing, giving way in substance.

Mexico, for example, has already deployed 10,000 soldiers to its northern border to intercept migrants (previously, AMLO did the same on the southern border with 25,000 National Guard troops), accepted over 145 thousand deported Mexicans since Trump came to office – 29 thousand on flights to the south of the country, to prevent them from returning –, received about 12 thousand more deportees from third countries, and expelled thousands more from its own territory; accelerated the capture and extradition of drug kingpins; and imposed recent tariffs of up to 50%

on various imports from China and other Asian countries; all of this in compliance with directives from Washington under the “*Donroe Doctrine*,” as Trump calls it.

And that's not all. It's worth quoting Mexican analyst Viridiana Ríos in her recent article, “[What Trump Really Wants from Mexico](#),” to understand the extent to which the Donald Trump administration seeks to dominate Mexico. After reviewing the list of demands that the Trump administration persistently makes of President Claudia Sheinbaum's government in all those closed-door bilateral meetings, she concludes:

Trump doesn't want Mexico to be his trading partner. He wants Mexico to be a cheap, subservient producer, colonized by U.S. companies that enjoy regulatory and structural advantages. Nor does he want a Mexico capable of implementing industrial policies that benefit Mexican companies. In the list of U.S. demands to Mexico, only a few allude to truly bilateral or mutually beneficial matters. The majority are demands aimed at forcing Mexico to modify its regulatory framework in favor of U.S. companies or pave the way for them to dominate our market and weaken national competitiveness. The central demand is the total alignment of Mexico with the economic interests of the United States.

In short, and as we can see, it's not just about Venezuela. Latin America, the Caribbean, and Greenland are under attack from a renewed, voracious, and overbearing U.S. imperialism under a new fascist MAGA project. Therefore, far from being wise or advisable for any of the affected states to adopt at this juncture a narrow, shortsighted, “every man for himself” or “duck & hide” strategy, or worse, capitulate and surrender to Maga Trumpist neo imperialism, what is needed is *a universal and coordinated condemnation of this imperialist shift*, including the continent's and the world's firm and unequivocal solidarity with Venezuela and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, and Greenland/Denmark.⁸

⁸ It is very encouraging, in that sense, to see the massive protests in solidarity with Venezuela that have taken place in the streets of many cities in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the role that Mexico and Brazil played in condemning the US invasion at the OAS and the UN. It has also been very encouraging to see the immediate, forceful, and unified rejection by the member states of the European Union of the threats to invade and attempts to “buy” Greenland that the Trump administration has escalated, including their firm rejection and counter-threat to the blatant attempt to impose tariffs. Lastly, the world just gave Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney a standing ovation at this year's World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, for his forceful declaration that Pax Americana has ended and henceforth Canada will actively seek other trading and geopolitical partners besides the United States (See Stevis-Gridneff & Austen, 2026).

This strong condemnation and genuine solidarity are *especially and strategically required from the American people themselves, who are also under attack*, and most particularly from their immigrant diasporas and Latino communities residing there *who are being savagely persecuted*.

To activate this solidarity requires a level of transnational and intersectional organization and coordination that has not yet been seen among the U.S. people and the peoples and governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, involving their respective immigrant diasporas in the U.S. and 65 million Latinos in the U.S., as well as coordination with all other social sectors on both sides of all borders affected by the Trumpist MAGA project.

The countries of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Greenland have the full and unrestricted right to their sovereignty and independence, to the full control of their own resources, and to maintain economic and geopolitical relations with whomever they wish, without interference from anyone, including relations among themselves to forge a great zone of peace and prosperity, and to be allowed to contribute a strong, autonomous, clear, and unified voice in all world forums. That is the Bolivarian dream, and that is the vision that hundreds of millions of Latin Americans have embraced throughout this century. They will not be denied their envisioned future and their strong presence in stage of world history any longer. Those that would seek to recolonize the Americas will only harvest the storm.

IV. In summary: The United States is imploding and today is attacking Latin America and the Caribbean with its imperialist/fascist MAGA project. They shall not pass!

The United States has a long, sordid, and dishonorable history of interventionism in the Americas, of subverting democracies and stifling the just aspirations of its peoples, of exploiting its workers and plundering its resources. But the peoples of the Americas have resisted and fought back and advanced. It also has a long, sordid and dishonorable national history of subjugating, enslaving, dispossessing, and exploiting its own indigenous peoples, ethnicities, and immigrant diasporas. But the peoples of the United States have resisted and fought back and advanced.

Due to the evolution of the capitalist world-system, the United States consolidated itself, after a Civil War that nearly tore it in two, became a continental nation-state and became a world power. As such, it rose to, achieved, and then lost global hegemony within the capitalist world-system.

Along this path, it defeated, together with the Soviet Union and other allies, the global fascist threat, established a new world order based on international law and multilateral governance, supported the decolonization of Africa and Asia (provided it happened on its “Free World” camp and aligned to its hegemony, vis-à-vis the camp of the other, “contained” superpower), introduced great technological innovations to the world, and ushered world prosperity for a while.

And after long and arduous social struggles waged by its own national working classes and marginalized communities, it undertook the task of building a more just, open, tolerant, equitable, and inclusive multicultural society, expanding, step by step, struggle by struggle, its limited democracy and its limited social contract. All this while remaining a profoundly capitalist country, always controlled via its peculiar duopoly - sometimes more generously, sometimes less so - by the capitalist class and other military and cultural elites. Everything was going relatively well when its global hegemony reached its apex, and a vibrant culture emerged that was exported to the whole world.

What happened is that, in the absence of changes to the entrenched oligarchic power in both its economic and political structures, when the United States began to lose its global hegemony and tried to regain it at all costs, it began to reverse all the social progress achieved by its workers during the New Deal era, and by ethnic groups, women, and others during the Civil Rights Movement era. And to justify the largest transfer of wealth from the bottom 99% to the top 1% in the history the country, it increasingly resorted, eventually with truly pathological obsession, to scapegoating and targeting diasporas of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants—with particularly relentless ferocity shown toward Mexicans, Central Americans, Haitians, and Cubans. The liberal Democrats, increasingly complicit in the plutocratic structures of wealth and power, failed to prevent this, and the Republicans knew how to exploit it.

The liberal center became discredited and collapsed and gave way to an increasingly radical rightwing; while the left, tamed and coopted by the success of the New Deal project and Civil Rights project they helped install, and ruthlessly purged during the rabid anti-communist witch-hunts of the McCarthy era, proved too feeble to create a viable radical alternative to the radical right.

From this political asymmetry and ideological vacuum emerged the fascist MAGA project, which today is directly attacking all subaltern social strata in the United States for the benefit of its insatiable power elites, generating in the process enormous chaos, polarization, social violence, state repression, and a complete lack of governance. This oligarchic reactionary offensive has also led to the rise from the ashes of a new, more combative, audacious, and farsighted radical left, manifested in the two Bernie Sanders presidential campaigns, the appearance of the Occupy, Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Climate Change, and Immigrant Rights movements. This latter movement has now grown to encompass the broader movement of American citizens defending their communities and preserving their rights to free speech and peaceful protest across the nation. The battle has been joined. The fate of the country hangs in the balance.⁹

The flip side of this process of implosion of the former hegemonic superpower is its ostentatious and dangerous abandonment of the international order it itself erected, and its reversion to the most blatant predatory imperialism in the Americas, engaged in open geopolitical and geoeconomic— if not yet military— cold war with China, the rising superpower of the world-system, and with all other extra-continental powers. The raw annexationist impulse towards Greenland shows just how far the U.S. under Trump is willing to go to attack even its NATO allies, and risk dissolving that strategic military alliance.

China's response will not be military for now, but rather on the economic, political, and diplomatic fronts.¹⁰ China does not need weapons, although it also possesses them, to respond to US imperialism, as it has demonstrated, in the recent rare earth negotiations, its capacity to subdue it without resorting to arms. But the inauguration of a new stage of more severe and dangerous geopolitical rivalries is destabilizing and generating great chaos in the world-system.

⁹ To thoroughly analyze the strategic role that Mexican and Latin American diasporas already play in the vision and construction of a better integrated, balanced, rational and just North America, with a much more inclusive and advanced social contract than the one we saw in the previous process of asymmetrical, socially unjust and politically chaotic neoliberal integration, and which we now see in the full process of chaotic disintegration by the Trumpian Maga, see Santos (2024c).

¹⁰ It is worth highlighting, as a prime example, the key agreement that China and Canada sealed on January 16 for the mutual reduction of tariffs. Contrast that with Mexico's supine imposition of 50% tariffs to China.

And all of this overlaps and contributes to the chaos unfolding in the turbulent transition period of the dying capitalist world-system to a new one, much more capable of providing urgent systemic solutions to the acute systemic problems it faces.

Among these problems, the most prominent are the need for a comprehensive, sustainable architecture of global governance, another to create a world economy that fosters shared, equitable, and sustainable development and reduces global inequalities, another to mitigate climate change and prevent/combat pandemics, another to abolish war and outlaw nuclear weapons, another to guarantee a universal social contract that extends citizenship on a regional, transnational level, and yet another to regulate new technologies for the good of humanity—especially biotechnology, robotics, communications, and artificial intelligence.

Despite the enormous challenges we face, this is also an era of immense possibilities, where the agency in all of us—including the flutter of a butterfly's wing, which, according to chaos theorists, can cause a hurricane—can influence the direction of the world. In these conditions of systemic uncertainty, where structures are creaking if not collapsing, we possess agency.

It will not be possible to transition to a new and superior world-system capable of resolving all these challenges without the participation of everyone—including, of course, China and East Asia, but also the United States, Russia, and Israel, the greatest purveyors of violence in the world today, and other rogue states whose atrocious behavior we could not analyze in this essay, although they also deserve to be held to account and brought into the fold, as the most dangerous sources of growing chaos, suffering, violence, and global instability.

It is necessary to confront and defeat all *implosive domestic* and *explosive international* tendencies, to restore and transform the states and societies that badly require it, to set them on the constructive path the world demands of them and of all other countries already on that path: for unrestricted global collaboration to build lasting peace and abolish all attempts to impose themselves by force.

Other countries are already doing so. As difficult as the current outlook seems, can the United States change in time? Russia and Israel? Other rouge states? All of humanity?

We will know before the middle of this century... if we make it. It's up to all of us to make it. The moment of truth has arrived. Yes, we can. Let's get to work.

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