

## **The troika of Latin American tyranny**

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The regimes of Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba were recently qualified as “the troika of tyranny” by the presidential adviser for the National Security of the United States, John Bolton.

The tyrannies of Nicaragua and Venezuela share the characteristic of holding on to power at any price. Adapting the legal scaffolding, even if they have to violate the Constitution (in Nicaragua, the presidential re-election and in Venezuela, the Supreme Court of Justice took the functions of the Assembly National) and violating the human rights of citizens who protest against the authoritarian regimes of Daniel Ortega and Nicolas Maduro.

In Nicaragua, there are 535 dead and 4,343 injured, according to the Asociación Nicaragüense Pro Derechos Humanos, since the protests began last April. Moreover, in Venezuela, during the demonstrations that took place from April 1st to July 31st, 2017, the figure rose to 133 people killed, 4,000 injured and 5,051 people arbitrarily arrested, according to the 2017 report of the Foro Penal Venezuela.

Both regimes, in Nicaragua and Venezuela, have faced a crisis of governability resulting from the demands of social groups made up of a broad amalgam of citizens - from teenagers to old people - who took to the streets almost daily to protest peacefully to restore democracy.

Both Ortega and Maduro have lost popular support. Ortega retains only 20% of the electorate, according to the latest survey by Cid Gallup' while Maduro has more or less the same level of popular support according to Datanálisis. So, they have had to resort to paramilitary groups that carry weapons of war as shock forces to suppress the demonstrators, aided by the National Police in Nicaragua and the Bolivarian National Guard in Venezuela, a knowledge transferred from the Cuban experience of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution to control the population.

Likewise, the actions of the paramilitary groups allow Ortega and Maduro to restrict the action of condemnation of the international community to their regimes for massacring the population, because it would be in the presence of an internal conflict between groups of civilians, hence the importance of work of the OAS on crimes against humanity in Venezuela.

The decision of Ortega and Maduro to appropriate a dead revolution, its slogans, its anti-imperialist rhetoric does not win new followers. They only maintain in Nicaragua “the old combatants, historical collaborators, leaders of the unions in the rubble, remnants of the popular organizations”, and in Venezuela to the pro-Cuban faction.

Both Ortega and Maduro resort to nepotism as a state policy. Rosario Murillo and Celia Flores, wives of Ortega and Maduro, are members of the Ortega-Murillo and Maduro-Flores clan. They like the good life. Also, the vice president and first lady of Nicaragua and Nicolas Maduro are

followers of the guru Sai Baba, an Indian spiritual leader who died in 2011, in more shadows than light.

In this syncretism, Cuba plays a leading role. Cuba still needs Venezuelan support to pay the bills because the Cuban economy has slowed down, growing shortages have resurfaced, and new opportunities for employment and foreign exchange earnings have disappeared. Barack Obama's policy of openness (2016) is not possible with Donald Trump, he stopped the thaw. That's why Cuba is looking for Pedro Sánchez, President of Spain, to fill the vacuum, trying to increase Spanish investment in the island. Spain is the third commercial partner after China and Venezuela. Meanwhile, the Cuban system depends on Venezuela's funding, and pays back providing intelligence and security support to secure the Maduro regime on power.

In the case of Nicaragua, the rejection of Ortega by the mass demonstrations of repudiation caused by the reform of social insurance showed the difference that the Cuban regime had regarding the confrontation of the big protests that took place in Venezuela one year before. It was not until the Nicaraguan regime felt the loss of support from business sectors and the clergy of the Catholic Church, small and medium producers, civil society, students, youth, people in the neighborhoods, peasants, that the Cuban-Nicaraguan-Venezuelan leadership decided to use the practice employed in Venezuela: violent repression, the criminalization of protests and fear.

The power entrenchment of the Ortega-Murillo and Maduro-Flores clans with Cuba, which provides the guidelines of political repression, represent the Latin American "troika of tyranny" of the 21st century. They are "a power in the past that continues to kill from the past, incompatible with the present, but more incompatible with the future".