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**Australia-Cuba Friendship Society**  
**Melbourne NEWSLETTER**  
**February 2019**  
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**Next Meeting**  
**Monday 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**February**  
 7.30pm  
 Unitarian Church  
 110 Grey St,  
 East Melbourne

Melbourne	Sydney	Perth	Brisbane	Canberra	Hobart	Adelaide	Central Coast	NSW/Vic Sthn Border	New Zealand
PO Box 1051	PO Box k364	PO Box 1455	PO Box 5683	PO Box 6139	GPO Box 323	Box 381	PO Box 1082	PO Box 854	220a Adelaide Rd
Collingwood	Haymarket	South Perth	West End	Kingston	Hobart	N. Adelaide	Gosford	Albury	Newtown Wellington
Vic. 3066	NSW 1240	WA 6951	Qld 4101	ACT 2604	Tas. 7001	SA 5006	NSW 2250	NSW 2640	New Zealand

Dear Comrades

28 January, 2019

A happy new year and the best of British luck for those afflicted with Brexit! It's one hell of a mess. Not just in Britain. The three major capitals, London, Washington and Paris, are all under siege from their own people. **In France, we might see a re-run of the storming of the Bastille. Last weekend, Macron's spokesman had to be smuggled out the back after a truck hi-jacked by protestors smashed through the front door of his government building, rocking the very foundations of the Republic.** For more than eight weeks, hundreds and thousands of people from all political persuasions have demanded that Macron should resign. And Trump? Mad as a meat axe. Caved in and has reopened for business, for now, but his Defence Chief 'Mad Dog' Mattis has resigned along with the other subalterns furious at the decision to withdraw from Syria. The real 'mad dog' - unhinged bully-boy John Bolton - openly defies Trump while the Democrat majority in the House is gearing up to impeach him, ignoring the system that put him there and the eight years of Obama's presidency that created him. Trump is a caricature, an embarrassment, America without a mask.

The Empire in decline? Not soon enough. The US military has never been more threatening, with the new Cold War spelling immense danger for all of us. Norman Mailer warned us that American power had entered a pre-fascist era. Others reckon we're already in it. Obama came and Obama went and contrary to his carefully crafted image was one of the most violent of US presidents. He launched seven wars and left office with none resolved. In his last year as president he dropped 26,171 bombs; three bombs every hour, 24 hours a day, mainly on civilians. A bombing technique he made his own was assassination by drone. Every Tuesday he selected the names of those who would die in his 'programme' of extrajudicial murder. All males of military age in Yemen and the frontiers of Pakistan were fair game. Egged on by his Sec. of State Hillary Clinton, Obama destroyed Libya as a modern nation that led directly to the growth of ISIS and a stampede of immigration from Africa to Europe. He overthrew the democratically elected President of Ukraine and installed an openly fascist-backed regime as a deliberate provocation to Russia.

For the rest of us, the capitalist system continues on its unmerit destructive path, which is what the unrest is all about. The richest 26 people now own the same amount of wealth as the poorest half of the world. Last year the assets of those at the top of the heap increased by \$900 billion or by a whopping \$2.5 billion a day, whereas the poorest half went downhill by 11 percent. To put things into perspective, Fat Cat bosses earned more in three days than the average worker's annual salary. And these super-rich bastards are paying less and less tax, in most cases none at all. Since the 2008 'economic crisis', the number of billionaires has doubled.

As a further cheer-up, not exactly news but still worth noting, that the US has 95% of the world's total number of military bases located in 164 countries. Putting a precise figure on it is impossible because

most of them are secret, **'the Pentagon doesn't want to talk about them'**, said the Pentagon. Seventeen years after 9/11 gave the excuse for George W's 'Global War on Terror' has seen Americans actively engaged in 80 nations on six continents with almost 60% of its discretionary budget spent on war preparations.

US subjugation of Latin America started with the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 and is now going full bore, with most of the continent effectively back in Washington's grip, especially Brazil, with Bolivia, Nicaragua and, of course, Venezuela, fighting for their lives. The US, Canada and France (with Australia tagging along), joined seven South American countries - Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Peru, Paraguay, Argentina and Costa Rica - to formally recognise Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido, snubbing the elected socialist government of Nicolas Maduro. Guaido swore himself in as interim president, urging the Venezuelan military to support him.

Ultra-hawkish thugW., US Sec. of State Mike Pompeo, has picked another thug, Elliott Abrams, to act as 'special envoy' for Venezuela, an ideal choice when you want to destroy a country. In the 1980s, Abrams was an 'advisor' to Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush and up to his rotten neck in the murderous activities of the Contra. Speaking to the UN Security Council, **Pompeo has accused Cuba's 'security and intelligence thugs of propping up Maduro's regime'** after Cuba's Foreign Minister attacked Washington for trying to 'orchestrate a coup'. Ecuador is another dismal example. The obsequious government of Lenin Moreno has invited the US military back and threatens to abandon Julian Assange. And a few days ago, Pompeo announced there would be a 'careful review' of the 1996 anti-Cuban Helms-Burton Act in order to 'expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba' and we all know what that means. If the review goes ahead, **it would give power for US courts to compensate former owners of properties lost during nationalisation by the Cuban government, and could mean that US courts demand the houses Cubans live in, the places where they work, the schools they go to and the clinics where they get medical attention.**

And here at home with our heads up our bums, ignoring climate change and just about everything else of importance, our moronic PM is fixated on maintaining the date of Australia Day - most can't even pronounce where we live - but I'll let Leunig have the last word:

***The Prime Minister will tell youse  
 About your Australian values;  
 As soon as he gets the details  
 In tweets and texts and emails  
 Straight from the powers that be  
 In Washington DC.***

**Keep well and keep safe.**

Joan Coxsedg, Commentator-in-Chief, Melbourne ACFS (03) 9857 9249

***Subtle Reminder – Subs are due by February...please help keep the flags flying***

## HELMS-BURTON ACT TITLE III

### [An illegal law with serious consequences](#)

Title III of the inappropriately named Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996 is absolutely illegal, in terms of international law, constitutionality, due process, and judicial competence

### [Nothing more sublime than the homeland](#)

It has been 150 years since an adolescent José Martí wrote “Abdala.” Granma recalls this ode to patriotism

### [Bolivia: Before and after Evo Morales](#)

Poverty has been reduced, rights expanded, and the economy continues to grow

### [The OAS plays Judas in the Americas](#)

It is time for the peoples of the region to wake up and expose the onslaught against Venezuela and Nicaragua

## 166TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF JOSÉ MARTÍ

### [Revisiting Our America](#)

We must read José Martí’s **Our America** over and again, as it continues to surprise us with eloquent and relevant ideas



### [History and culture at Cuba’s Hotel Nacional](#)

As one of Havana’s emblematic sites, the hotel joins festivities for the city’s 500th anniversary



### [Cuba categorically rejects the threat of activation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act](#)

Statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba

## OPERATION TRUTH 60 YEARS LATER

### [The Cuban Revolution: Always of and by the people](#)

During January of 1959, Cuba’s nascent revolutionary government fulfilled one its moral commitments: bringing to justice the Batista dictatorship’s murderers, amidst a ferocious media campaign to destroy the Revolution

### [We must achieve harmonious and sustainable development](#)

The President of the Councils of State and Ministers, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, toured areas of the municipalities of La Sierpe and Trinidad as part of a government visit to the province of Sancti Spíritus

### [Venezuela is not alone](#)

The Venezuelan people are mobilized, following the call of their legitimate President, Nicolás Maduro, to defend their sovereignty, peace and constitutionality. The Bolivarian nation also has the majority support of the international community

### [Díaz-Canel checks progress of foreign investment in Cuban tourism](#)

Progress has been achieved, the President noted, without compromising the country’s sovereignty, adding that links with national industry must be strengthened, and the volume of products imported for tourist facilities reduced

## CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

### [Guáimaro and Cuba’s enduring constitutional spirit](#)

Some six months have passed since the anniversary of Carlos Manuel de Céspedes’ call for liberty at the Demajagua plantation, when patriots took up arms against Spanish colonialism and slavery, providing a lesson in unity and citizenship

### [Casa de las Américas Prize: Continuity and transformation](#)

The number of books submitted, almost 600, attest to the interest that the Prize still arouses among young authors

### [INTERVIEW WITH MADURO: I thank Chávez, because, with Fidel and Raúl, they constructed a new, dignified beginning for our entire continent](#)

Granma International reproduces excerpts from Ignacio Ramonet’s interview with the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro

### [Another perverse mechanism to encourage the theft of talent](#)

Senators Marco Rubio and Bob Menéndez - with a long record of attacks on Cuba - have proposed to reactivate the Parole Program used to deprive the country of doctors, nurses, and other professionals, in a virtual international “brain drain” operation

### [Projections for the new year from the Ministry of Culture](#)

A special place among priorities is afforded permanent dialogue with creators about their relationship to the Revolution’s Cultural Policy, in defense of identity and sovereignty in the face of imperialism’s colonizing model



# Venezuela gov't beats back attempted coup

Posted in [Latin America & The Caribbean](#), [Venezuela](#)

By John Catalinotto - January 22, 2019

*Bulletin, Jan. 22 — The Venezuelan Ministry of Defense announced today that the Bolivarian Armed Forces had repelled an attempted attack on their facilities in Caracas. At 2:50 a.m. local time, “A small group of assailants assigned to the zone commando No. 43 of the Bolivarian National Guard, betraying their oath of allegiance to the Homeland and its institutions, moved on two military vehicles, then broke into the headquarters of the urban security outpost located in the town of Petare, Sucrem, removing a cache of weapons of war and kidnapping under threat of death, two officers and two national guard members of the aforementioned outpost,” said Captain Gerson Soto Martínez, commander of the Macarao police coordination post. (Telesur English, Jan. 22)*

*The captain also said that the criminals surrendered and were captured, their weapons recovered, and they are providing information to intelligence agencies. The Bolivarian Armed Forces categorically rejected the acts of the low-ranking officers of the National Guard.*

*While the immediate coup attempt appears crushed, it takes place amid a growing effort by U.S. imperialism and reactionary forces in Latin America to overthrow the legitimate Venezuelan government, using sanctions, subversion and economic sabotage to impoverish the masses. Under those conditions, those who oppose imperialism and colonialism should consider any steps the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela uses to defend itself as legitimate.*



Jan. 21 — U.S. imperialism and its lackey governments in this hemisphere, with the strategic collaboration of West European imperialism, have opened up an intensified attack on the sovereign Bolivarian government of Venezuela and its president, Nicolás Maduro.

The new offensive began Jan. 6 when the 14-country Group of Lima, formed in 2017 allegedly to peacefully resolve conflicts within Venezuela, voted 13 to 1 to prevent representatives of the Venezuelan government from entering their countries. Only the new Mexican government led by President A.M. Lopez Obrador voted against this shameful declaration.

The regimes running the other countries — Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and St. Lucia — did the bidding of their local oligarchies and U.S. imperialism.

President Maduro was inaugurated Jan. 10 for his second term, based on his overwhelming electoral victory last May, when he got over two-thirds of the votes cast. Even taking into consideration the low turnout in the May election, Maduro had a stronger electoral victory than did right-wing presidents, including Mauricio Macri in Argentina, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Iván Duque in Colombia. U.S. Vice President Mike Pence immediately denounced Maduro's taking office as illegitimate. Pence and Trump lost the popular vote in the U.S. election in 2016, but that did not stop this arrogant attack on the Venezuelan president.

On Jan. 11, a politician with little name recognition inside Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, who headed the now defunct National Assembly, said he was ready to assume the responsibilities of executive power. Since this sounds exactly like he was calling for a military coup, he was arrested on Jan. 13.

## **Pence, Bolton, Pompeo attack Maduro**

Guaidó then got further verbal support from Pence, National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. That means he has the blessing of the most aggressive militarist faction of U.S. imperialism.

One can hardly imagine any administration other than the one in Washington openly and unashamedly calling for the overthrow of a sovereign elected government.

The posture of this administration makes it imperative for progressive forces inside the United States to defend the sovereignty of Venezuela and thus defend its legitimately elected government. Keep in mind that Venezuela's National Assembly no longer exists. It was declared null and void for ignoring a court order to remove three legislators for voter fraud in 2016; it was then effectively relieved of its legislative responsibilities.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza tweeted on Jan. 16, “Venezuela demands respect for its democracy. While President Maduro calls for respectful dialogue with the U.S., Secretary Pompeo and other extremist spokesmen look to destabilize the country and

incite violence. The Venezuelan people will defend its sovereignty and its constitution.”

To avoid being submerged by a snowstorm of imperialist propaganda vilifying the Maduro government, it is important to keep in mind the following facts:

Venezuela is a target of world imperialism because it sits on the largest reserves of petroleum of any single country in the world.

The Bolivarian governments in Venezuela, first of Hugo Chávez and then of Maduro, are attempting to defend the country's sovereignty and resources and use its wealth in the interests of the poor. Washington has long targeted these progressive regimes. It backed a coup in 2002 that collapsed after a mass movement and sections of the patriotic military rescued then-President Chávez and restored him to power.

Maduro himself was elected by a large majority and is the legitimate president, under the Venezuelan constitution, until 2025.

None of this negates the problems faced by the Venezuelan economy, which has been under relentless attack from imperialism since Chávez was first elected in 1998. Venezuela faces hyperinflation and shortages of goods, exacerbated by sabotage led by the oligarchy and the bourgeoisie and by economic sanctions imposed by imperialism.

In his annual talk, Maduro, a former bus driver, announced a four-fold increase in the minimum wage to attempt to counter galloping inflation.

## **Communist Party defends gov't**

The Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), which has differences with the Maduro government over some parts of its domestic program, nevertheless made clear that it will mobilize working people in the cities and the countryside to defend the government against imperialism. In a Jan. 7 statement answering the Lima Group, the PCV wrote:

“The Political Bureau of the PCV repudiates and condemns the pro-imperialist and anti-democratic pronouncement issued by the so-called ‘Lima Group,’ ... [whose position] corresponds to the plan for the recomposition of imperialist domination, advanced in Latin America and the Caribbean by the United States of America and its European allies, in the context of the sharpening of inter-capitalist and inter-imperialist contradictions for a new distribution of the world, its natural wealth and energy sources. ...

“To achieve this goal, they propose to bury the social, political and cultural conquests of the Bolivarian process and the advances achieved by the correct patriotic and anti-imperialist policy, led by President Hugo Chávez Frías. ...

“To go in reverse, in spite of the inconsistencies, errors and omissions present in the direction of the Bolivarian process, would be not to understand the historical moment and to lose sight of the main enemy: U.S. imperialism and its European allies.”

<https://iacenter.org/2019/01/23/venezuela-govt-beats-back-attempted-coup/>

# Wealth will come from our work

*The economic battle is fundamental, and requires mobilizing all potential to increase production, more efficiently and effectively*

Author: [Vivian Bustamante Molina](#) | [internet@granma.cu](mailto:internet@granma.cu) - January 17, 2019 14:01:57



The Housing Policy designed to overcome the country's housing deficit, within a decade, is another challenge. **Photo:** Vicente Brito

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them <sup>≠</sup> Albert Einstein With the beginning of the new year, we're making lots of plans on the personal level, and among them, one is surely common: prosperity.

The common denominator, in this regard, means having access to greater resources, including money, to satisfy growing needs and enjoy more quality of life, which, with few exceptions, can only come from work, with individual and collective efforts directed toward developing the economy.

As has been reiterated by the President of Cuba's Councils of State and Ministers, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, this battle continues to be the priority task and also the most difficult, for which mobilizing all potential to produce more, more efficiently and effectively, is "the only way that will allow us to grow, and overcome climate impacts and financial tension."

Once again, modest growth is projected for the economy this year, based on fulfilling plans, and keeping necessary financing and resources available balanced, according to experts. But this tactic is important over time, seeking to generate the conditions that will guarantee greater growth in coming years, while projects and programs that will continue to be expanded, and others to be added, are outlined in the National Economic and Social Development

Plan through 2030.

Thus, if the knots that hold back productive forces are untied; if reserves are identified and fully utilized; and every one does what is required in any position, including those in leadership, at the end of 2019, the balance sheet will, at least, reflect the results forecast in the most recent session of the National Assembly of People's Power.

## ENGINES OF THE ECONOMY

There is much to do, but the direction in which we must move to accomplish the goals established is well defined. It is no accident that the strategy designed for the 2018-2019 sugar harvest has already shown results. Before the end of December, production during the "little" harvest surpassed projections, with a record set.

Some 250,000 tons of sugar were produced efficiently, setting the pace for the season, with a total of 1,760,000 tons projected. Reaching this goal would be a great success for agricultural, industrial, and support workers in this strategic sector of the economy, not only given the production of sugar, but also by increasing income from animal feed and derivatives, plus generating electricity with biomass.

The current campaign must establish sustained growth in sugar production, which implies the need to create the conditions needed for the adequate completion of agro-technical activities that allow the productive cycle to function.

## EFFICACY AND EFFICIENCY IN THE INVESTMENT PROCESS

These indicators do not always go hand-in-hand, and there are even those who disdain or ignore the implications of each one. In those situations, I always remember one of my classes with Dr. Hugo M. Pons Duarte, in which he defined economic efficiency as the "expression of rationality determined by the obtaining of increasingly greater results with a lower expenditure of resources..." and efficacy as "the degree to which objectives, goals, and ends are met, accomplished through the plan at different levels and in different scenarios."

With these specifications, there is no doubt that, in 2019, it is imperative to achieve both in the investment process, in order to cover the costs of financing with earnings, and support prioritized plans.

Toward this end, the State Budget approved in December by the National Assembly of People's Power allocated more than four billion pesos to principal social programs and investments that, I would add, imply an increase in constructive capacity in terms of human and material resources, for example.

In this way, supported are construction, preservation, and repair of housing; the recovery and development of the country's railway system; in addition to highway and infrastructure works, including those underway within the Mariel Special Development Zone.

Investment continues in wind farms and photovoltaic parks, and this year should see those related to generating electricity from biomass advance, to contribute to transforming the country's energy profile and increasing the use of renewable resources, which has a double purpose. Beyond the economic advantages, this effort is part of the comprehensive state plan to confront climate change, known as Tarea Vida, which is being gradually implemented.

It should be emphasized that some of these projects are being undertaken with various forms of foreign investment, although the portion of the total needed is still insufficient. Growth in this arena is among the country's priorities, especially in sectors that generate benefits and are indispensable to economic development.

Hotel capacity has continued to increase, and this year, some 4,000 new rooms will be added, with emphasis on the tourist destinations of Havana, Varadero, and keys along the northern coast from Villa Clara to Holguín.

This strategic sector, one of the most dynamic and of greatest impact on the economy, is committed to repeating this year the record number of international visitors and strengthening conditions that allow for lower expenses, greater savings, and substitution of imports with domestic products.



The Cuban government will continue to advance the computerizing society. **Photo:** Ismael Batista

## OURS FIRST

The foundations on which the 2019 plan is based require that national industry be maximized, a fact defined in the Party's program documents and essential to the new economic and social model we are building. Substituting imports, based on the greater use of existing capacity in the country, and increasing productive linkages within the economy in general, should be coupled with greater rationality in import decisions and other foreign exchange expenditures. Of course, quality and price of local products cannot be a barrier, rather they should be a reflection of positive experiences and benefits for all.

## HOUSING POLICY

The broad policy to be implemented beginning this year for the recovery of the nation's housing stock, within a decade, has been much awaited, in its first five years prioritizing damage caused by extreme weather events and cases of families living in precarious conditions.

The effort looks to be intense and is based on two fundamental axes: exponential growth in local production of building materials and popular participation, although a portion of buildings will be erected with different pre-fabricated elements produced by state enterprises.

### Housing in figures:

929,695 housing deficit  
527,575 homes to be built in the next 10 years  
402,120 homes to be repaired in the next 10 years

## NO IMPROVISATIONS

The efficient management of inventories, with a view toward utilizing these as fully as possible, is among the central tasks set forth in the plan, with no beating around the bush, as figures from the last month of 2018 show.

Existent within the country are known inventories worth 2.4 to 2.5 billion pesos, representing 25% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices.

Thus, reducing this proportion of inventory to GDP by 2% would contribute 400 million dollars to the economy.

## OBLIGATIONS AT HOME AND ABROAD

Documents consulted reveal the urgent need to increase export earnings and foreign investment, as well as access to external resources through medium and long-term credits. Despite growth in foreign investment, for several reasons this is still far from the position to be occupied with respect to the nation's total investment, and the intention this year is to eliminate factors of a subjective and organizational nature that limit exports, the availability of credit, and the attraction of foreign capital. It will also be important for the economy to increase revenue from sales abroad and guarantee their payment, in addition to the promotion and diversification of exports of goods and services, which translates, for example, in rescuing traditional lines and identifying new products. Debates in the National Assembly's standing committees during the Ninth Legislature's last period of ordinary sessions helped to define what today constitutes a requirement to fulfilling the plan and laying the foundations which the economy requires in discipline and organization: the fulfillment of projected contributions to the State Budget. To do so, it is essential to increase effectiveness in the use of inventories; achieve projected returns on investments; use accounting as a management tool; and exploit reserves in general. A special call is to increase efficiency in the collection of taxes. Likewise, rationality and control in the use of material and financial resources are needed, in addition to the efficient management of accounts receivable and payable.

## COMPUTERIZATION OF SOCIETY

The Cuban government will continue to advance in its policy of computerizing society. Due to its scope, this task occupies a special place in the implementation of our new economic and social model. Considered a multi-faceted process undertaken for economic, ideological, and social purposes, it should also facilitate the population's participation in decision-making, as reiterated by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez.

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Income to be generated from territorial taxes for economic and social development of municipalities amounts to 1.358 billion pesos, reflecting projected growth of 15%. The goal is to achieve a balance that allows for the expansion of productive projects, which create income, jobs, linkages, and other benefits that contribute to greater economic growth, without neglecting social programs.

## SPECIFICATIONS

To achieve a growth rate of 1.5% in the economy in 2019, it is imperative to work purposefully, in a coordinated fashion, without resorting to empiricism, and with economic management bodies playing a leading role. This year, gross income should rise by 4%, with the state sector predominating (85%), confirming its principal role in the economy. The contributions of non-state management forms increase by 16% and represent 13.3% of total income. Increases are estimated in a number of sectors of the economy that have a direct impact on production: agriculture, livestock ranching and forestry, the sugar industry, construction, commerce, transport, and communications. This year, 5.41% of the energy generated in the country must be generated with renewable sources.

## SOURCES:

- 2019 State Budget Law.
- Reports on the proposed 2019 State Budget from the National Assembly's Standing Committees on Economic Affairs, and Constitutional and Legal Affairs.
- Speech by Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of Cuba's Councils of State and Ministers, closing the Second Period of Ordinary Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power Ninth Legislature.

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-01-17/wealth-will-come-from-our-work>



Investments in wind farms and photovoltaic parks continue, and projects to generate electricity with biomass are progressing. **Photo:** Ismael Batista

# Internet wars: U.S. plans to overthrow the Cuban Revolution with new technologies



Photo: Radio Granma

*Cuba is committed to the safe, democratic, and responsible use of the internet, while the government, and in particular Fidel, have continued to promote the development of new technologies and full access to the internet for all citizens*

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february 8, 2018 20:02:47

In this modern era of cell phones, the internet, and social networks, it is easy to forget that the U.S. has been using communications technologies to attack Cuba ever since the age of shortwave radios and the emergence of television.

The U.S. State Department's announcement this past January, of the creation of a Cuba Internet Task Force is, therefore, just another scheme in a long saga of Washington's subversive plans to overthrow the Cuban Revolution.

From psychological warfare propagated by the mass media to unconventional warfare, which has been adapted to the internet age, Cuba has been a test site for U.S. schemes designed to overthrow governments which do not respond to its interests.

However, the competence of Cuban authorities and support of the entire population for the Revolution has meant that these plans were doomed to failure.

## - March 17, 1960:

Then U.S. President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, approved the so-called Program of Covert Action, designed to destroy the Cuban Revolution. Among other aspects, the CIA was tasked with setting up a radio station broadcasting political propaganda. On May 17, 1960, 1160 khz frequency Radio Cuba Libre (Radio Swan) was picked up for the first time on the island.

## - September 22, 1981:

President Ronald Reagan signed executive order 12323, establishing the "Presidential Commission on Broadcasting to Cuba," tasked with developing a recommended plan for radio broadcasting intended for transmission to Cuba, such as Radio Martí.

## - May 20, 1985:

Radio Martí hits the airwaves for the first time, as part of a plan by the staunchly anti-Cuban Ronald Reagan administration, to launch an illegal radio station able to reach the island and incite a popular uprising against the Revolution.

## - March 27, 1990:

Following the failure of subversive radio schemes, TV Martí was launched, costing the U.S. taxpayer millions of dollars and violating international norms. Dubbed "the TV no one watches," the signal was effectively blocked by Cuban authorities across the entire island.

## - 2004:

The Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba or Plan Bush is created by the George W. Bush administration to identify additional ways to hasten an overthrow of the "Cuban regime."

Regarding technology, the plan proposes, among other things to "Encourage willing third-country governments to create public access Internet facilities in their missions in Cuba."

Other initiatives included expanding "the distribution of information and facilitate pro-democracy activities," and "Greater access to these types of equipment" in order to do so.

## - 2006:

The Cuba Fund for a Democratic Future was created, providing 24 million USD worth of funding for anti-Cuban propaganda, including online initiatives.

## - February 2006:

The U.S. Department of State, headed by Condoleezza Rice, creates the Global Internet Freedom Task Force, specifically aimed at "maximizing freedom of expression and free flow of information and ideas" in China, Iran and Cuba.

## - July 2007:

President Bush announces the creation of a fourth 'cyberspace' army at the Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, designed to maintain the U.S. military's competitive advantage in this new theater of operations.

## - December 2009:

U.S. citizen Alan Phillip Gross arrested for bringing illegal communication devices into Cuba as part of a USAID program. In March 2011 Gross was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for "Acts Against the Independence or the Territorial Integrity of the State," in the Courtroom for Crimes Against State Security of the People's Provincial Court of Havana. Gross returned to the United States following the announcement of a process of rapprochement between the two countries on December 17, 2014.

## - March 2011:

Operation Surf, unmasked by State Security agent Raúl - Dalexi González Madruga - consisted of smuggling equipment and software into the country to install illegal antennas to access the internet.

## - 2011:

At the request of Senator Richard Lugar, the most prominent Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Carl Meacham, director of Latin America on the Senator's political team, met with staff from the State Department, senior foreign diplomats and industry representatives over several months to investigate how social media and technologies could be used to promote and strengthen what they consider to be democracy in Latin America. In his report Meacham shamelessly praises subversive actions and plan by the U.S. government against Cuba.

## - March 21, 2012:

The ultra conservative Heritage Foundation attended an event sponsored by Google Ideas, and entitled "How the internet can unfreeze an island frozen in time."

## - April 2014:

The ZunZuneo initiative, financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is launched. The platform was designed as a messaging network similar to Twitter through which thousands of Cubans would receive "non-controversial content" like news messages on soccer, music, weather reports and announcements. However, later subscribers would begin to receive political content aimed at inspiring Cubans to organize mass demonstrations akin to "smart mobs" to destabilize the country.

The Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) which oversees Radio and TV Martí, launched a service similar to ZunZuneo called Piramideo, an SMS-based social network that would offer the possibility of sending a massive message to members of a "pyramid" at the cost of a single SMS. The objective was to prepare a platform for subversion.

Comotion: A tool developed by the Washington-based New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute (OTI), which was originally intended for military use, to create independent wireless networks. Although there is little to no information on its functioning in Cuba, U.S. government sources speaking to the **New York Times** noted that millions of dollars had been dedicated to the project.

## - September 12-13, 2016:

The U.S. government organized the "First Cuba Internet Freedom Conference" headed by the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) which oversees illegal anti-Cuban radio and television broadcasts. The event brought together "independent" journalists from the island and digital innovators and activists who support the use of new technologies to bring about a regime change in Cuba.

## - January 2018:

The Trump administration announces the creation of a new Internet Task Force designed to subvert Cuba's internal order. Composed of government and independent officials tasked with promoting the free flow in information on the island, the initiative is Washington's most recent attempt to disguise its plans to destabilize Cuba through the use of new technologies.

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-01-25/internet-wars-us-plans-to-overthrow-the-cuban-revolution-with-new-technologies>

# Over 420,000 Cubans to Support Referendum on New Constitution

Havana, Jan 25 (Prensa Latina) - More than 420,000 Cubans will work on February 24 to guarantee the success of the referendum on the new Constitution, Alina Balseiro, president of the National Electoral Commission (CEN), said.

According to the official, the figure includes electoral authorities, collaborators and pioneers, as students of primary schools are called in Cuba. The latter are the responsible of taking care of the polls.

Balseiro said during the Cuban roundtable TV program that the country is working on organizational details, when there are one month left to the consultation in which more than eight million Cubans are called to ratify the Constitution approved on December 22 by the People's Power National Assembly.

Colonel Mario Mendez, Chief of Identification, Immigration and Foreign Affairs Direction, said that the electoral register with its public, permanent and trade nature contributes significantly to the transparency of the elections.

At the polls, in addition to those authorized to vote in Cuba, thousands of Cubans who comply with official missions abroad, including diplomats, collaborators and scholarship holders, will be capable of doing so.

The conditions for this process have already been established, in which 1,051 polling stations will be involved in about 120 countries, said Marcos Rodriguez, president of the Special Electoral Commission at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<https://www.plenglish.com/index.php?o=m&id=38036&SEO=over-420000-cubans-to-support-referendum-on-new-constitution>

## Why are the 'yellow vests' protesting in France?

The wave of protests sweeping through France is not a rejection of green policies. It's a revolt against the 1 percent.

by [Rokhaya Diallo](#), 11 Dec 2018

more on [Emmanuel Macron](#)

- [What's behind the growing dispute between Italy and France?](#) yesterday
- [France: 'Yellow vests' protest despite Macron's grand debate](#) 6 days ago
- [Macron's 'grand debate' comes under fire from French opposition](#) last week
- [French 'yellow vests' rally in fresh round of protests](#) last week



Protesters wearing yellow vests occupy a roundabout in Cissac-Medoc, France on December 5, 2018. The slogan reads 'Urgent, purchase power, dignity for all' [Regis Duvignau/Reuters]

For the past three weeks, [France](#) has been experiencing one of the most significant social mobilisations in its recent history, which laid bare the country's social ills, anti-elite sentiment, growing inequalities and thirst for social justice.

It all started on November 17 when tens of thousands of people took to the streets across the country to protest against rising fuel prices.

The protesters, dubbed "[Les gilets jaunes](#)" (the yellow vests) after the high-visibility jackets they adopted as a symbol of their complaint, blocked roundabouts, burned effigies and clashed with the police. They were angry about the almost 20 percent increase in the price of diesel since the start of the year, as well as the planned fuel tax hike President [Emmanuel Macron](#) had recently announced.

While Macron said the tax was necessary to "protect the environment" and "combat climate change", protesters claimed the decision was yet another sign that the "arrogant" and "privileged" president is out of touch with regular folk struggling to make ends meet.

The intensity of the protests quickly forced the government to make a U-turn and [first suspend](#) and later [permanently shelve](#) its plans for fuel tax increases. However, the protest movement was not only about fuel prices. It encompassed wider anger and frustration against the political establishment in general and President Macron in particular. As a result, the government's decision to abandon fuel tax hikes failed to calm tensions.

The "yellow vests" want further concessions from the government. Their demands include a redistribution of wealth as well as the increase of salaries, pensions, social security payments and the minimum wage. Some say they will not settle for anything less than the president's resignation.

### [Can Macron survive the biggest challenge to his presidency?](#)

So how did day-to-day frustrations about fuel prices and "green taxes" transform into a nation-wide protest movement attracting hundreds of thousands of people in a matter of weeks?

It all comes down to Macron's apparent failure to connect with the people, understand their concerns and steer France away from destructive neoliberal policies.

### [Misleading the electorate](#)

40-year-old Macron was elected last year on pledges to change the face of French politics, create more jobs and improve lives.

On the eve of the 2017 presidential election, French voters were tired of career politicians. They wanted a different kind of leader, someone who can understand their long-rooted social and economic concerns and deliver real, practical solutions.

For the past four decades, French people have been worried about the erosion of social protections in their country. Since Francois Mitterrand's socialist government controversially decided to impose austerity policies in 1983, successive governments have taken slow but consistent steps to dismantle the French welfare state.

All this gradually accentuated the economic concerns of the French middle and working classes and led them to be more and more suspicious of all mainstream politicians on the right and the left. They came to believe that the political elite protects the interests of the wealthy and does not care about the wellbeing of ordinary citizens.

Successfully diagnosing the public's frustration with the political class, Macron worked hard to differentiate himself from the establishment in Paris and act as the representative of a "new world order" throughout his election campaign.

He had the youth, the energy, the positive message. He was the leader of a brand-new political party, aligned neither with the right nor the left. He appeared to be carrying no political baggage. Many viewed him as a possible saviour and did not hesitate to give him their vote.

Moreover, he was running against National Front leader Marine Le Pen. This also made him look like a "progressive saviour". A significant portion of the French electorate was ready to vote for any moderate candidate who could stop the far right from taking power. So, they voted for Macron, even though many of them did not support his agenda completely or have faith in his ability to respond to their concerns.

### **France abandons petrol tax rises after deadly protests (2:35)**

As a result, Macron was elected by a landslide. However, it didn't take long for his supporters to realise that his "reformist", "new world" image was nothing more than an illusion.

Macron's failure to bring about change should not have surprised anyone. Even though he seemed "young and new", he was part of the establishment.

He had served as the minister of the economy, industry and digital affairs from 2014 to 2016 under Francois Hollande - he was in charge of implementing the former president's infamous Labour Law reform, which caused widespread protests across the country. Before that he was a Rothschild investment banker.

Once elected, Macron showed his true colours almost immediately. He decided to amend the wealth tax - known in France as "ISF" - by narrowing it to a tax on real estate assets, rather than covering all worldwide assets over the value of 1.3m euros. This led to him being swiftly labelled the "president of the rich".

### **Macron's disdain for the poor**

On top of making controversial policy decisions that favoured powerful corporations and rich individuals, Macron also repeatedly demonstrated his unfamiliarity with - and at times disdain for - ordinary people struggling to survive in the country's increasingly harsh economic environment.

In 2016 while he was the minister of economy, for example, Macron was confronted by angry trade unionists and was recorded [telling](#) one young man: "You don't scare me with your T-shirt. The best way of paying for a suit is to work."

In a July 2017 speech Macron [said](#) train stations were wonderful places, for there you can cross paths with both "people who succeed" (people like him) and "people who are nothing" (presumably ordinary French citizens like the rest of us).

In October of the same year he was filmed accusing disgruntled workers of preferring to stir up "chaos" rather than find jobs. "Instead of kicking up bloody chaos, some of them would be better off going to see if they can get a job over there," he [said](#), alluding to an aluminium factory in Ussel, a region in which employers were struggling to hire new workers.

More recently, in September this year, Macron told an unemployed man he could easily find work if only "he crossed the street". "Everywhere I go people say to me that they are looking for staff," the president said.

### **French paramedics, students join 'yellow vest' protests (2:05)**

This lack of empathy coupled with business-friendly policies helped shape the French public's perception of Macron as an arrogant, privileged politician who is a friend of the rich and the powerful.

The fuel tax that he tried to impose on people that are already feeling their economic concerns are being ignored was the straw that broke the camel's back.

This is why the yellow vest movement is not only about fuel prices but about social justice. There is a profound discontent among ordinary people in France who see themselves as the losers in a world dominated by international elites who don't seem to care or understand what they are going through. Macron is pursuing the exact same neoliberal agenda his predecessors pursued in the 1980's. And just like the policies of his predecessors, his policies are hurting the poorest and helping the rich get even richer.

### **The protests are not rejecting climate change action**

The yellow vest movement should not be seen as [the public's rejection](#) of the green transition. The French state indeed has a responsibility to take action to combat climate change and protect the environment. But powerful companies that are primarily responsible for the pollution, and not regular citizens, should bear the brunt of this necessary revolution.

The yellow vest movement is, of course, not perfect. Some protesters were responsible for outrageous racial and homophobic attacks. Some also damaged national monuments and were violent towards police officers.

While we should not turn a blind eye to any of this, we should remember that the yellow vests movement is a reflection of the ongoing tensions in France. Almost 11 million people voted for the far right only a year ago in this country. There are some extremist elements in the French society and they were inevitably some among the protesters.

But we should not dismiss the entire movement as "extremist" because of this. The yellow vests are the French people who we never see on TV. Their despair can at times appear offensive because anger is neither polite nor sophisticated. It is disorganised, shocking and comes with emotion, which can translate into violence. The point is not to defend any of the violence that has tragically occurred, but to remember that the unrest France is currently facing came in response to other forms of violence, much more insidious and harmful: social exclusion and injustice.

Unemployment, discrimination and poverty are at the root of the daily humiliation French people feel which has now transformed into a general despondency. The French political elites will find it hard to pacify this public anger unless they commit to introducing radical changes to the way this country is governed.

*The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.*

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/yellow-vests-protesting-france-181206083636240.html>



# Revealed: the inside plot against Brexit

18 January 2019 - [News, Brexit](#)

**Every plot needs plotters. And thanks to the *Daily Telegraph*, we now know who some of them are – and what they are hoping to do.**

Shortly after the overwhelming defeat of the government's proposed deal with the European Union on the evening of 14 January, three senior ministers sat down for a conference call with ten representatives of big business. Doubtless such meetings go on all the time, in secret, but this time a recording of the conference call reached the *Telegraph*, which published [a transcript](#) on 17 January.

In a call that lasted around an hour, Chancellor Philip Hammond, Business Secretary Greg Clark and Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay discussed options with leading business figures.

## Instructions

As Fraser Nelson, editor of the *Spectator*, summed it up in the *Telegraph* on 18 January, saying it looked like “a capitalist cabal issuing instructions to politicians who seem to be at their beck and call”.

Hammond told the business leaders “the ‘threat’ of a no-deal Brexit could be taken ‘off the table’ within days and potentially lead to Article 50 ‘rescinded,’” while Clark argued, “we can’t have no deal”.

Hammond set out how a backbench Bill could effectively be used to stop any prospect of no deal. He suggested that ministers may even back the plan when asked for an “assurance” by the head of Tesco that the Government would not oppose the motion.

He claimed next week’s Bill, which could force the government to extend Article 50, was likely to win support and act as the “ultimate backstop” against a no-deal Brexit, as a “large majority in the Commons is opposed to no deal under any circumstances”.

## Multinationals

Significantly, the first three business leaders into the discussion all represented foreign-based multinationals.

Jurgen Maier from German-based Siemens UK, which backed May’s agreement, wanted to know what certainty he could give his board about no deal. So did Doug Gurr from Amazon UK – a company that pays its workers the absolute minimum and returns almost nothing in tax to the UK, and Keith Anderson, from Spanish-owned Scottish Power.

Specifically, they wanted to know that the government would do nothing to stop moves in parliament to block no deal. Hammond’s response dripped with duplicity. He said the government couldn’t take no deal off the table, but then washed his hands of responsibility:

“But in a sense that is not a decision for us to take. Backbenchers have tabled a draft bill and are taking this forward. It will be the parliamentary arithmetic that determines what happens, not a decision by the Government,” Hammond said. “The Government hasn’t yet looked at this in detail and decided on a formal position.”

## More EU control

Greg Clark backed him up, hinting at even greater EU control than even May’s deal offered. “I think it’s pretty obvious that there is a big majority to avoid no deal. They need to come together and crystallise into an agreement but the right ingredients are there,” he said.

What’s his role: to encourage the opponents of a clear, clean Brexit. “Some members of parliament want to go even further in terms of a closer relationship. Our job is to crystallise that and make that happen.”

So, Britain’s leading capitalists lap up Hammond’s words about taking “no deal” off the table despite all the election pledges to respect the Referendum vote. And who is up there in the alliance with Hammond and big business? Most Labour MPs and party members, it seems!

<https://www.cpbml.org.uk/news/revealed-inside-plot-against-brexit>

# Shut-out federal employees say: Stop the war on workers!

Posted in [Class struggle](#), [Immigrants & Refugees](#), [Indigenous](#), [Labor solidarity](#)

By Kathy Durkin - January 15, 2019

**“Stop the war on workers!” and “We want work, not walls!” read signs held by furloughed federal employees at the White House and in cities around the U.S. on Jan. 10. They were protesting the Trump administration’s shutdown of nine federal departments and several federal agencies — one-quarter of the federal government — since Dec. 22.**



National Treasury Employees Union members rally in Washington, D.C., Jan. 10.

Some 800,000 government workers are not receiving paychecks. Half of them have been shut out of their jobs, while the other half have been forced to work without receiving paychecks — on threat of being fired. It is a severe hardship for many of those impacted by the longest shutdown in U.S. history, which could go on indefinitely.

The reason for the aggressive attack on these workers: President Donald Trump, backed by top Republicans, is demanding that Congress fund a \$5 billion wall at the southern U.S. border with Mexico to bar the entry of desperate Central American families fleeing government repression, violence and poverty, and looking for safe places to live and work. Many of the ills they are running from are caused by U.S. political interference and/or economic exploitation in their countries.

Trump’s rants about the need to build this wall are xenophobic and white supremacist to the core. He and his political allies are holding federal workers hostage in their ploy to build the wall, blaming the migrants for the shutdown and deliberately ramping up anti-immigrant hostility to pursue their racist agenda. This is a familiar divisive tool used by the capitalist class and its political representatives.

All progressive forces, particularly labor unions, must strongly oppose the administration’s bigoted rhetoric and show solidarity with these Central American refugees. They are workers, too. This is about class solidarity.

## Time for new tactics

The American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal government union, called out its members to demonstrate in Washington, D.C., and around the country on Jan. 10. Now is the time to “think outside the box,” to push back the intransigent right-wingers in the administration and their ruling-class backers. This will take creative and militant actions nationally and locally.

The labor movement courageously occupied factories in the 1930s to win union recognition and worker benefits. Public workers were part of the sit-down wave.



The historic Civil Rights Movement sat in at segregated public facilities to break the grip of racist Jim Crow laws in the South. It organized countless demonstrations, including a massive rally in August 1963 in D.C.

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power organized militant actions in the 1980s calling attention to the AIDS crisis and demanding research and life-saving treatment.

And last year, disabled activists occupied local congressional offices and Senate office buildings in D.C. to defend the Affordable Care Act. For many, it was a life-and-death struggle.

There are new, progressive Democratic members of Congress, many women of color. Some of them, along with longtime congresspeople, are joining workers' protests and speaking out on their behalf. A number are denouncing "Trump's wall" and bigotry.

It's a big political party. Where are its leaders? They could call for a massive demonstration to circle the Capitol. Democratic members of Congress could take the floor and insist on an end to "business as usual" until the shutdown ends and all furloughed employees and contracted workers are paid lost wages.

But this is a party of Big Business. The workers cannot rely on it for solutions.

### **Shutdown's impact on federal workers**

U.S. imperialism's main instrument, the Pentagon, is not affected by the shutdown. It was fully funded earlier by a vote of both congressional parties.

But many federal workers who perform vital social functions like inspecting food, taking care of national parks, administering public housing, curtailing pollution, preparing and serving food, and working as custodians in federal buildings are either furloughed or working without pay.

This shutdown is harming the lowest-paid workers the most. Many are having difficulty paying for mortgages, rent, transportation, child care, medication, food and utilities. While they will receive lost pay retroactively, they need their income now! Many are taking part-time work, relying on family members and/or taking out loans with interest fees. Some are turning to food pantries, churches, and charities and/or setting up online fund appeals.

The shutdown has exposed the reality that millions of workers, federal employees or not, lack the funds to get through a crisis. It has further exposed the financial inequities faced by African-American, Latinx and other workers of color.

Women comprise the majority of the federal workforce, and 81 percent of women workers in the U.S. live paycheck to paycheck. Many are heads of households and sole supporters of their families. Cuts in essential government services are endangering them and their families' health and well-being. Gender-oppressed people are among those harmed by this shutdown.

### **Contracted Black and Latinx workers**

The federal government also relies on contracted workers; 2.8 million of them perform service jobs, from health aides to computer programmers. Many are women. Some of them are affected by the shutdown. A vast pay gap exists among these and other federal workers. Those doing food service and facility maintenance, those who are administrative assistants and security guards all work long hours for little pay — many earning only the federal contractor minimum wage. Already among the lowest paid in the federal workforce, they will continue to feel financial pain for years to come. Unlike other federal employees, they are outrageously blocked from receiving pay lost due to the shutdown — even those who support families.

Julie Karant, representing Service Employees Union Local 32BJ covering 2,000 federal contract workers in the D.C. area, says, "Our members are predominantly, if not exclusively, African-American and Latino. They don't necessarily have health care or pension benefits and most of them have multiple jobs." Loss of a paycheck means they have to choose among medications, food and electricity. (Think Progress, Jan. 12)

This crisis is disproportionately hitting African Americans, who comprise 18 percent of federal workers. Because of the racial wealth gap in the U.S., more of these employees lack the emergency savings needed to get by without regular paychecks. In many Black families, several wage earners work for the federal government, due to private sector racist discrimination.

Lora Williams, a 26-year employee of the National Parks Service, told the Jan. 11 Guardian that she lacks cash reserves and, even with online fundraising, is "barely staying above water." This Black woman is concerned about NPS contractors who provide essential services like trash collecting but have not received back pay after past shutdowns.

Shaneece Hill and her spouse, both contract workers for the Food and Drug Administration have gone through their emergency savings. They are not guaranteed retroactive pay. (Guardian, Jan. 12)

### **Millions of women, seniors, refugees**

The shutdown has repercussions on the working class beyond the federal workforce, especially for women of color, people with disabilities and seniors. Food and nutrition program (WIC) funding for 7 million women, infants and children has already stopped, reports the Jan. 10 Business Insider. Food stamps should continue through February.

Domestic violence shelters countrywide cannot obtain federal funds they depend on. So they are curtailing crucial services for victims/survivors, including housing, transportation, medical care and food.

Federal funds have been suspended for the Indian Health Service, which provides care to over 1 million Indigenous women.

Five million people who receive federal housing subsidies could face eviction as Section 8 vouchers lapse. Women head 75 percent of households living in public housing

The Department of Housing and Urban Development abruptly stopped funding many assisted living facilities for low-income seniors, with no warning.

Asylum hearings have been postponed for thousands of refugees. Central American adults, youth and children denied asylum continue to be held in inhumane U.S. detention facilities. Families are still separated.

Moreover, national parks are deteriorating. Pollution and aviation safety inspections have ended. The FDA stopped checking food, despite widespread food-borne illnesses. Even small farmers are hurting, deprived of federal financing.

End the shutdown! Reinststate all federal employees, contracted workers and programs! No racist wall!

<https://iacenter.org/2019/01/16/shut-out-federal-employees-say-stop-the-war-on-workers/>



# War as a common denominator

Today, it is not uncommon to hear about conflict in the Middle East, especially when it comes to the war in Syria or Iraq, or when coverage includes North African or Asian nations

Author: [Elson Concepción Pérez](mailto:Elson_Concepción_Pérez@internet@granma.cu) | [internet@granma.cu](mailto:internet@granma.cu) - January 15, 2018 16:01:53

The geographical region known as the Middle East, where 60% of the world's oil reserves are concentrated, has been changing, as has been reported, following the geopolitical dominance of the United States in the area.

Today, it is not uncommon to hear about conflict in the Middle East, especially when it comes to the war in Syria or Iraq, or when coverage includes North African or Asian nations. The explanation – in my view – must be sought in the common denominator of this geopolitics: the role of the United States.

Washington's latest act of war and destabilization – Donald Trump's announcement to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem – is part of a long-standing history, ever since the persecuted Jewish victims of WWII were given Palestinian land.

Zionist expansion was the trigger – today seen in thousands and thousands of settlements – that exacerbated tensions and diminished the possible peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

From the very beginning, the United States has supported and militarily supplied Israel.

The disrespectful announcement of Trump was one of the biggest slaps in the face to the international community in 2017. When the UN condemned the decision, the President issued threats, and is already cutting off U.S. aid to those countries that voted against him.

Trump began by significantly cutting the U.S. funding budget to the United Nations itself.

## **SYRIA DESTROYED; IRAQ MUTILATED**

The Syrian nation has suffered the worst war in the region in the last six years, while Iraq continued to suffer from the mutilation caused by the U.S. invasion and occupation. Tens of thousands of foreign mercenaries, mainly from Europe, terrorists from the region financed from abroad, and groups formed according to ethnic factions have all participated in this destruction, alongside the common denominator: the United States.

Since 2014, a so-called international coalition led by Washington has been bombing Syrian territory – without the permission of the country's authorities – on the pretext of defeating the terrorists of the Islamic State. However, these actions have in most cases been directed at Syrian Army positions and civilian facilities including homes, schools, churches, and others.

Given this context, the government of Bashar al-Assad requested Russia's military support to eliminate the terrorists. Russian aviation was deployed to the area in September 2015, and by December 2017, alongside local forces of the Syrian Army, they had managed to liberate almost the entire country from the presence of armed terrorists.

In this bloody war against terrorism and those who support it, Syria invested 67% of its Gross Domestic Product, according to the **EFE** news agency.

At least 346,612 people have been killed in Syria since the conflict began in 2011 and more than 5.9 million Syrians have been forced to migrate and live as refugees in other countries.

Iraq has also experienced a year fighting against the terrorism of the Islamic State, which emerged in its territory.

Today, the destruction caused by the extremists adds to that which was left behind and never rebuilt following U.S. and NATO bombardments. For Iraqis, 2017 drew to a close amid the destruction and the ungovernability of the country, with clashes between historically opposed factions.

More than a million Iraqis have been killed or injured and a wealth of cultural heritage sites destroyed.

## **LIBYA, DOES IT EXIST OR NOT?**

Many sources refer to Libya today as a "failed state," while others ignore altogether the very existence of the North African country. For many media outlets, Libya is only mentioned in reference to the migration of hundreds of thousands of African refugees who cross its territory en route to the Mediterranean to reach Europe. Thousands die in the attempt.

The most developed country in Africa a decade ago, today Libya's human development indicators are truly striking.

A press note indicates that after seven long years of war, Libya has lost practically all its infrastructure, and the chaos due to the lack of authority has forced the population to find its own means of survival.

Basic services like the water supply are inexistent, to the point that people are forced to break through the asphalt on those streets that have survived the war, in the search of old water pipes, even though the country has the third largest aquifer in the world.

Meanwhile, the business of people smuggling has inundated the nation, and the methods used to prevent the hungry and those fleeing tribal and other wars from reaching European countries, have been condemned by the international community as detrimental to the physical well being and moral integrity of hundreds of thousands of human beings, who today find themselves trapped in the country in search of a way out.

It is worth remembering that Libya, bombed by NATO when the United States decided to overthrow President Muammar Al-Gaddafi, following that terrible massacre, saw an unprecedented racial and ethnic cleansing. Some 55% of Libyans have been forced to flee their country to neighboring states.

According to UN data, 65% of the country's hospitals are closed, while the dinar (local currency) has collapsed and oil production has plummeted from 1.9 million barrels per day to just 250,000.



Bombings in the Middle East. Photo: AFP

## **AFGHANISTAN POORER**

To assess the situation in Afghanistan, albeit briefly, it must be noted that this Asian nation is today much poorer than when it was invaded 16 years ago by U.S. troops.

It is also more unstable, ungovernable, and violent.

Terrorist groups have not been eradicated, nor has the country been rebuilt. Not a week goes by without an attack, mainly against the U.S. troops still based there, or against the Afghan military trained by them.

The U.S. President wants to reverse this situation by sending a further 6,000 troops to the country. Over 15 years of war in Afghanistan, Washington has deployed tens of thousands of soldiers and officers, modern warfare and all kinds of intelligence services. But little or nothing has been invested to alleviate the situation of the impoverished Afghan people.

The Pentagon has spent 828 billion dollars, while more than 2,000 U.S. soldiers have been killed and 20,000 injured.

## **YEMEN: BOMBS AND FAMINE**

Yemen is one of the poorest nations in the entire Middle East and has fallen prey to rivalry between different ethnic groups.

In addition, Saudi Arabia is involved in the conflict and air raids against the country are common.

Suffering the war between rival factions and foreign military action, 2017 came to a close with 18 million Yemenis in need of urgent humanitarian aid. Two million Yemenis have been displaced, 190,392 have fled to neighboring countries, and 280,395 are seeking security in their own land.

According to the **BBC**, Yemen is in danger of losing its future, with 500,000 severely malnourished children. In two years of war, homes, hospitals, and schools have been destroyed by bombings.

According to information from the United Nations, more than 10,000 people have been killed and at least 40,000 have been injured.

In an incomplete analysis of 2017, adverse indicators are noted, such as some 40.2 million people going hungry in the Middle East and North Africa, in the wake of the conflicts that affect the region, warned the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), according to the agency **EFE**.

In both Syria and Yemen, between 70% and 80% of the population depend on humanitarian aid, a percentage that is around 30% in Iraq, and 20% in Libya.

This is the most tangible result of a geopolitics whose common denominator is war and its main promoter: the United States.

<http://en.granma.cu/mundo/2019-01-25/war-as-a-common-denominator>

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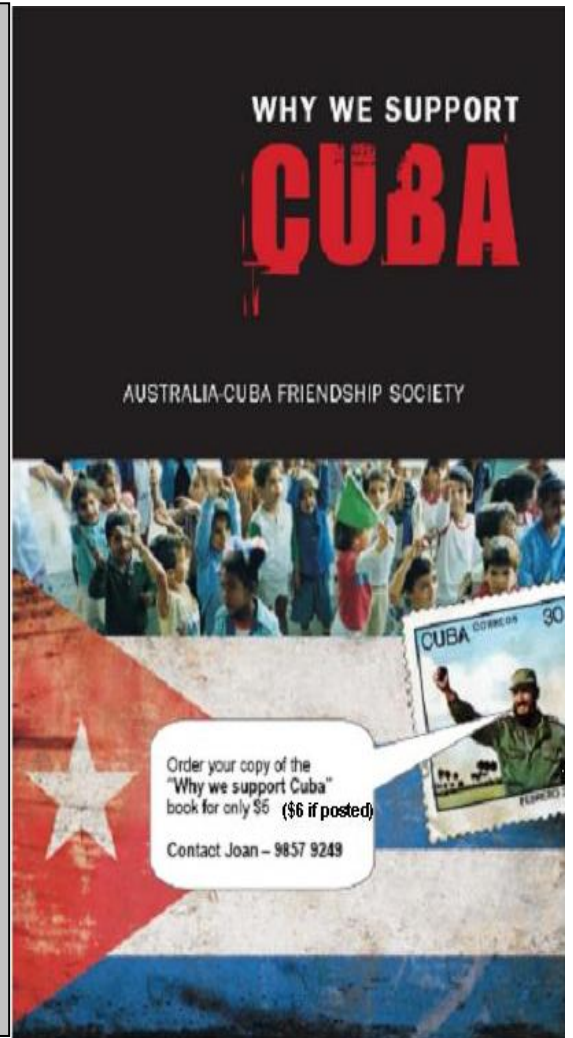
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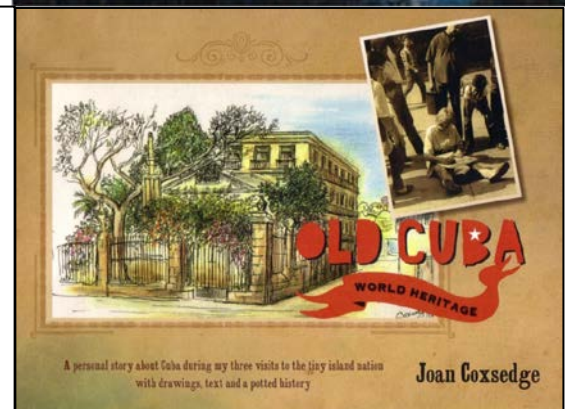
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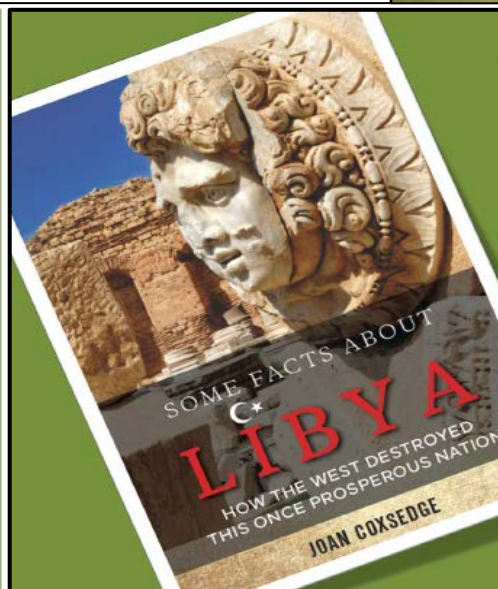
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