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OBAMA, "CHANGE" AND THE DISEMBEDDING OF SECURITY IN LATIN AMERICA. THE TENSION BETWEEN POLYARCHY AND DEMOCRACY

Alejandra Roncallo

Department of International Relations, Bucknell University, United States

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ABSTRACT

In the midst of the 2008-2009 economic crisis, presidential candidate Barack Obama was perceived as a sort of Messiah who could bring the "change" that the wide array of global justice movements were demanding from the Bush administration. However, after a year in power, this optimism waned. In the wake of a new electoral campaign, this paper seeks to analyze US-Latin American relations during Obama's first term. It is contended that the Obama administration represents the continuity of the system, "more of the same" rather than "change", a fourth moment of the New Pax Americana. The key element in the past three years has been the "cosmetic hemispheric change", from the controversial FTAA project towards the search for a "Regional Partnership on Crime and Security". This shift in emphasis from the economic to the security sphere is considered cosmetic because it maintains the same underlying structural matrix, the neoliberal world order. Indeed, because the "Regional Partnership on Crime and Security" project involves the disembedding of the police and judicial institutions from the state, from the public to the private (as it previously was the case with the Central Banks, public enterprises, health and education), rather than promoting security, it has already intensified violence and corruption in those countries in the region that have signed security agreements with the United States. In fact, putting the police in the hands of the elite is leading to the extermination of the poorest of society and, putting the judiciary at the service of the elite can only justify and make legal that extermination (e.g. Merida Initiative and Plan Colombia). The big question is freedom for whom and for what purposes? Thus, the subtitles are, (1) *Promoting "Democracy", Trapped in the Contradiction between Cuba and Honduras*, (2) *Promoting "Security": Police Militarization, Elite "Justice" and Genocide (Plan Merida and Plan Colombia)*, (3) *Promoting Freedom from Hunger, Vultures and "Humanitarian" Aid, The Case of Haiti* and, (4) *Promoting Freedom from Energy Dependency and The Question of Biofuels, The Case of Brazil*. To produce change it is necessary to move away from polyarchy towards popular democracy, to modify the structure and superstructure of world orders, to shift the focus from corporate freedom towards peoples' freedom and to continue constructing a space that is anchored in humanity and solidarity rather than greed.

"The United States shares a special bond with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean.... At the time of President Bush's tour of Latin America last year, three-out-of-five Latin Americans distrusted the United States, and only one-in-four members of Latin American elites held a favourable view of President Bush himself. This has damaged U.S. credibility and decreased U.S. influence in the region.

Barack Obama wants to open a new chapter of cooperation and partnership with our neighbours to promote democracy, opportunity and security across the hemisphere, and to work together to address our common challenges, including economic development, global warming, energy independence, and the battle against drug trafficking and terror. Obama will pursue a program of aggressive, principled and sustained diplomacy in the Americas with a focus on advancing freedom as Franklin Roosevelt described it: political freedom, freedom from want and freedom from fear."

Obama (2008:1)

"People were so pleased at a man like that being elected, and in a situation of crisis, that they thought he was bound to be a great reformer, to do what Roosevelt did. But he didn't. He started badly. If you compare the first hundred days of Obama, what leaps out is Roosevelt's readiness to take on unofficial advisers, to try something new, compared to Obama's insistence on staying right at the centre. I think he's blown his chance. His real opportunity was in the first three months, when the other side was totally demoralized, and before it was able to remobilize in Congress –and he didn't do it. One might wish him well, but I think the prospects don't look terribly encouraging."

Hobsbawm (2010:133)

INTRODUCTION

The 2008-2009 economic crisis brought people around the world into despair and, when candidate Barack Obama pronounced the magic word, "change", he was enshrined, not only in the United States but all over the world, including Latin America. There was a massive multi-class, multi-national, multi-ethnic and multi-age acceptance of the candidate. He became the first black President of the United States and people conferred him the power to produce the "change" he had promised. However, after a year in the administration, it became clear that Obama could not put into practice its many promises. The disjuncture between the high expectations raised and the actual results brought an enormous frustration to those that believed in "change". This paper aims to critically analyze why this change in attitude took place, why Obama lost the acceptance of a specific region, Latin America. It is contended that the Obama administration represents the continuity of the system, "more of the same" rather than "change", a fourth moment of the New Pax Americana. The key element of the Obama administration has been the "cosmetic hemispheric change" in policy making, a shift away from the controversial FTAA project towards a search for the "Regional Partnership in Crime and Security". The concept of security was anchored on "democracy" promotion, combating drug-trafficking, food security and energy independence and, the mode of spreading it was through the formation of "Partnerships" with specific Latin American countries. The notion of "shared responsibility" is what allows for interventionism by giving the illusion that there are no power relations involved between the United States and Latin American countries. It gives the illusion of radical change but the neo-liberal matrix of World Order remains intact. While in the first three decades of neo-

liberalism the ideological illusion endured about ten years -e.g. in the 1980s people did not realize what kind of democracy was being implemented until ten years later and, then, the 1980s became labelled the "lost decade" - Obama's illusion of "change" lasted only a year. This means that neo-liberal ideological creations are being exhausted, that the masses cannot be co-opted any more and, it is this consciousness that gives the space for the emergence of radical structural change, of moving away of neo-liberalism. In this organic crisis there is indeed a space for "organic intellectuals" to guide towards radical change.

The paper is anchored in Obama's Four Freedoms in "A New Partnership for the Americas" and its confrontation with the actual implementation of the policies in Latin America. The document draws on Roosevelt, Truman and Kennedy and the Four Freedoms include *Political Freedom/Democracy* which targets Cuba and Venezuela; the *Freedom from Fear/Security* that centers on Central America, Mexico and Colombia; the *Freedom from Want/Opportunity* focuses in Haiti and the *Working Towards Energy Security* section addresses Brazil and the region as a whole. This strongly ethnocentric and interventionist document is carefully confronted with the actual practice of the Obama administration.

1. "A NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR THE AMERICAS", THE TRINIDAD & TOBAGO SHORT HONEYMOON & THE QUESTION OF "CHANGE"

In 2008, during his Presidential campaign, Obama launched "A New Partnership for the Americas", a document in which he took distance from President Bush's policies towards the hemisphere and promised a "new alliance of the Americas". The centerpiece of that alliance would be the intensification of diplomatic ties such as the reinstatement of the special envoy for the Americas, the expansion of the Peace Corps and the increase in size of the foreign service, particularly with the incorporation of Latin American immigrants as ambassadors to their own countries of origin (Obama 2008:1-2). Drawing on Franklin Roosevelt's conception of freedom as "political freedom", "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear", the candidate added the need to work towards energy security. Rather than focusing on the Monrovia ideal of Pan-americanism - which was present in the regionalist approach of former US administrations and, was also strongly rejected by Latin American and Caribbean countries - Obama preferred to deal individually with different clusters of Latin American countries (see Lowenthal 2010: 5 & 7) such as Cuba, some Central American countries, Mexico, Colombia, Haiti and Brazil, countries that were representatives of his foreign policy agenda.

In April 2009, just four months after assuming the Presidency of the United States and at the highest point of *Obama-mania*, Obama met for the first time with the Latin American heads of state at the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago. At the Summit, Obama re-affirmed his interest in improving relations with the region, in his speech the President re-instated his Four Freedoms, recognized the difficult relations that existed in the past and the need to move forward:

"I pledge to you that we seek an equal partnership, there is no senior partner and junior partner in our relations; there is simply engagement based on mutual respect and common interests and shared values, so I'm here to launch a new chapter of engagement that will be sustained throughout my administration...I didn't come here to debate the past -I came here to deal with the future... I think my presence here indicates, the United States has changed over time. It has not always been easy, but it has changed. And so I think it's important to remind my fellow leaders that it's not just the United States that has to change. All of us have responsibilities to look towards the future.... as neighbors, we have a responsibility to each other

and to our citizens. And by working together, we can take important steps forward to advance prosperity and security and liberty. That is the 21st century agenda that we come together to enact. That's the new direction that we can pursue."

Obama (2009)

The respect that the President showed in his discourse by addressing his Latin American peers as "equals", his incredible charisma and the fact that he was the first Afro-American President of the United States raised enormous expectations for "change". Afro-descendants, women, indigenous peoples and all the marginalized people in the hemisphere welcomed the new President, and, when Obama, in October 2009, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples"¹, even Fidel Castro applauded. As Hursthouse and Ayuso have mentioned, a Gallup poll conducted between July and September found that about 51 to 61 percent of Latin Americans approved Obama's leadership and, the annual Latinobarometro poll showed that an even higher number, 71percent, liked Obama (2010:9). What this data shows, in contrast to Obama's misperception, is that there is no anti-Americanism in Latin America. Instead, what exists, is a harsh critique to the hegemonic foreign policy historically implemented towards the region. This is exactly what happened after a year that Obama was in power, when his promises did not match his actions, his image plummeted.

In contrast to the Latin American heads of state, critical scholars, activists and journalists in the North have been very harsh with Obama since the moment that he appointed officials from the Clinton and Bush administrations to key strategic positions and, decided, following the financial crisis, to bailout the corporations but not the people. Robert Latham (N/D), in his "tale of two Obama's", showed the ambiguous feelings, the confusion that most people were starting to experience at that time, on the one hand, a strong disappointment and, on the other hand, wishing to be wrong and that Obama's "change" was not just another ideological veil to cover-up "more of the same". Latham presented himself as a pessimistic-optimistic with respect to social and political change. Drawing on Polanyi, he advanced a possible two-step scenario in the Obama's administration and, therefore, the existence of "two Obamas". According to the author, the moment of the first Obama, based on the appointment of team members of the Clinton and Bush administrations would inevitably lead to failure and deepen the economic crisis because the plans and policies that they could recommend responded to a "U.S.–neo-liberal centric framework of world order", a framework that produced the crisis in the first place. This will lead to the increase of international political pressures and the fragmentation of the elite and, it is here, where Latham sees the seeds of the emergence of a second moment and, concomitantly, of a second Obama, with whom he is more optimistic.

According to Latham, this second Obama would be surrounded by a new and better team and will be "a leader willing to open the structures of power to many voices, contentions, and frameworks from across the world...That sort of turn would by its very nature be a success"². Latham ended his analysis by suggesting that "western progressives will have to do their part: they will need to resist their own tendencies to offer solutions and ways forward long before the second Obama gets a chance to help open up spaces of power and usher in not just new policies but systemic change –otherwise we end up with one Obama" (Latham N/D). Although it is important to think about possible future scenarios, it is a-historical to predict the future, we cannot have certainty about what events will unfold and how different social forces will react and utilize those events in their own struggle. The building of crystal castles fossilizes action. This is why in order to exert

¹ <http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2009>

democracy "from below", it is imperative that constructive critiques constantly emerge to guide the action of our leaders and recall them who the voters are. This is precisely what Naomi Klein has done.

Klein exerted her democratic rights by demanding action from Obama on behalf of the enormous trust that people all around the world had deposited on him. Klein argued that although Obama had a plan to downsize the occupation of Irak, he did not have a plan to end the war; that although he recognized the broadening of the income inequality gap in the US and the world, he did not have a plan to close that gap and; that even if he had the idealism of young environmentalists, he did not have a green agenda that matched the dimension of the current climate crisis (Klein 2008). More demoralized than Klein, activist Vanessa Davis sustained that,

We must understand Obama as a necessity of the US establishment. Obama was the necessary figurehead for the moment in which the US was living, in order to calm the waters and change without really changing. He is a figure who can generate the illusion of change, but without producing that change

Vanessa Davies, quoted in Hester Eisenstein (2009: 21)

In the same vein as Davis, John Pilger sees Obama's foreign policy as "continuation as usual" and argues that in order to show that he is serious about change, Obama has to start by dismantling the "war making machine reinforced during Bush" (Pilger 2008a). However, because Obama has in many cases gone even further than Bush, Pilger considers him a "man of the system", and a "truly democratic expansionist" (Pilger 2008b). Noam Chomsky also considers that Obama recycles Bush's plans, that the Obama-Summers-Geitner programs are not too different from the Bush-Paulson plans, that their objective is "to preserve the institutions intact, whereas to deal with the problems you have to modify the institutions" (Chomsky 2009). This is precisely the heart of the distortion of World Orders, what Robert Cox calls the "mechanisms of hegemony". In order to produce change it is necessary not just to reform the architecture of the international organizations and their undemocratic system" but to turn upside-down all the neo-liberal policies implemented since the 1970s economic crisis, to shift from polyarchy towards popular democracy. To be able to produce radical change, history matters and, when Obama told the Latin American heads of state that he did not go to the Trinidad and Tobago Americas Summit to debate the past but to debate the future, he was denying radical "change". Change is about modifying the structure, superstructure and socio-cultural aspects of World Orders along time, it is about how the interplay of social forces from below and above interact to construct a new global architecture representative of every single human being on earth, to represent the majority rather than a transnational elite. In sum, despite Obama's promise of "matching rhetoric with deeds", his foreign policy agenda towards Latin America represented a rupture between rhetoric and praxis. The big question is freedom for whom and for what purposes?

2. FREEDOM FOR WHOM AND FOR WHAT PURPOSES? DE-CONSTRUCTING THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF POLYARCHY AND THE PRACTICE OF *TRANSFORMISMO*

2.1. Promoting "Democracy": Trapped in the Contradiction Between Cuba and Honduras

The first "freedom" addressed by Obama was *Political Freedom/Democracy* and its focal point, was to "help advance the cause of freedom and democracy in Cuba," to "empower the Cuban people", to "foster the beginnings of grassroots democracy on the island" and "to position the United States to help foster a stable and peaceful transition in Cuba to avoid potential disasters that could result in mass migration, internal violence or the perpetuation of the Cuban dictatorship." His "aggressive and principled democracy" involved lifting travel restrictions to

Cuban-Americans and the sending of remittances, "while holding back important incentives such as relaxation of the trade embargo and greater foreign aid so that we can encourage change in a post-Fidel government" (Obama 2008:3). Obama also assured that he would close the US Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba (Obama 2008:3), where about 245 suspects of terrorism were tortured and held as prisoners.³

What Obama's first freedom shows is that he bases his analysis on false assumptions, which demonstrates that he has an absolute misperception about Cuba and Latin America as a whole, his language is embedded in the Cold War era and it is strongly interventionist. This requires the clarification of the meaning of "democracy" and "civil society" in the US context and its promotion since the 1980s all over the world, and how Obama is now trying to promote it to Cuba.

"Democracy" in the US and, the one that was promoted abroad was not popular democracy but polyarchy. William Robinson made a clear distinction between these two different meanings and types of democracy. Popular democracy refers to the Greek classical definition, in which the power to rule (*cratos*) was in the hands of the people (*demos*), it is about popular sovereignty and human equality, when the balance was broken, revolutions would produce change to re-balance the power of the majority. This was something that the conservatives, such as Huntington, saw as a threat to the social order and the maintenance of stability and therefore engineered a political system that was neither authoritarianism nor popular democracy, a polyarchy. Polyarchy is an institutional definition of democracy that has the objective to shift the power from the people to the elite, it does so by disembedding the socio-economic system from the political through privatization, leaving the socio-economic sphere in the hands of the elite, which conservatives equate to "civil society". Because it is in this sphere that the distribution of material resources is determined, the elite secures both their revenue and the control of society (Robinson 1998:44-52). This type of "civil society" was what the Santa Fe documents called the "permanent government", while elections became a fictitious circus to make people believe that the elected candidate, the "temporary government" was a product of the old and classical "popular democracy." In other words, paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln, who defined popular democracy as the "government of the people, by the people, for the people", it can be said that polyarchy is the government of the people, by the people –because there are elections- but for the benefit of the elite/corporations.

It is in this vein that Robinson argued that the objective of the promotion of polyarchy since the 1980s was to suppress popular democracy at home and, in the case of US-Latin American relations, to produce the transition from backing dictatorships to backing the elite's pseudo-democratic control. By doing so, a transnational capitalist class was created. Robinson states that,

³ Gavin has demonstrated that the US Guantanamo Bay Naval Base is a colonial residue that dates from the end of the 19th century, when the Spanish were defeated. The Spanish signed the Treaty of Paris, through which Cuba would remain under the *temporary* protectorate of the United States. However, later on, the Platt Amendment strengthened the Cuban dependence on the United States through two key articles; article III stated that the United States had "the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence", and, article VII that, in order for the US to maintain Cuban independence, "the government of Cuba will sell or lease to the United States land necessary for coaling or naval stations". In 1903, the Cuban-American Treaty was signed with the objective to take into effect article VII of the Platt Amendment and, in 1934 a new treaty ratified that Guantanamo would be leased permanently to the US for \$4,085 a year. Because Fidel Castro, due to the confusion of the first years after the revolution, cashed one of those cheques, it was considered that he legitimized the 1934 treaty (Gavin 2010:2).

US "democracy promotion", as it actually functions sets about not just to secure and stabilize elite-based polyarchic systems but to have the United States and local elites thoroughly penetrate civil society, and from therein assure control over popular mobilization and mass movements (that is, correct the "flukes", or "dysfunctions", of democracy)...This is a shift from social control "from above" to social control "from below" (and within), for the purpose of managing change and reform so as to preempt any elemental challenge to the social order. This explains why the new political intervention does not target governments per se, but groups in civil society itself – trade unions, political parties, the mass media, peasant associations, women's, youth, and other mass organizations

Robinson (1998: 69)

Therefore, what Obama really means by "grassroots movements" and by "empower the Cuban people" to overthrow the "Cuban dictatorship" is about de-stabilization "from below" and "from within". It is necessary to clarify here that the Cuban government is a revolutionary government and therefore a true grassroots movement, on behalf of the people not the elite. Yes, there are problems in Cuba, fifty years of embargo and constant aggression by the US government have interfered in the normal functioning of the island, such as the maintenance of the revolutionary alert and therefore lack of elections. But as it was just demonstrated, the existence of elections in polyarchies is a fictitious exercise because it turns the populous, as well as the executive power, into slaves of the elite.

It should also be considered that Obama follows the Brookings Institute project that calls for loosening the 1962 trade embargo in order to allow US offshore oil and gas companies, as well as renewable energy companies, access to Cuba⁴. The special concern is to offset Venezuela's oil investments in the Caribbean, as Obama asserts "some commentators fear that Chavez threatens oil markets and regional stability" (Obama 2008). Since Cuba forms part of the *Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America* (ALBA) from its inception, this has become a struggle between two competing spaces, one hegemonic and the other counter-hegemonic. The contention between these two spaces became clear when Honduras joined ALBA on August 2008 and the battle between popular democracy and polyarchy emerged. Now that the discourse has been de-constructed the analysis can move to the actual practice in US-Cuban relations.

On April 13, 2009 Obama granted Cuban-Americans the right of unlimited travel to the island and the sending of unlimited remittances to their relatives –until then, laws only permitted one visit every three years and the sending of remittances was restricted to a maximum of \$300 per quarter (Hursthouse and Ayuso 2010:5). Besides these two very important steps forward, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control also allowed U.S. based telecommunications businesses to operate in Cuba (Rodriguez 2010:3-4). However, the lifting of the 1962 embargo and the closing of the US Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba are still pending. Paraphrasing Peter Smith, it can be said that these two contradictory issues represent the "talons of the eagle" because on the one hand, Obama demands that in order to ease the embargo, Cuba calls for free and fair elections, institute free press, the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly and release the political prisoners (Rodriguez 2010:2).

On the other hand, the inevitable question is, did Cubans' vote for Obama? What kind of freedom and democracy is Obama referring to when he does not allow Cuba to be free and interferes into the island's internal affairs? The fifty years of the embargo, according to Cuban

⁴ See: Brookings Institute < <http://www.brookings.edu/topics/cuba.aspx>> and *Oil & Gas Journal* 2009.

Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, has cost Cuba about eighty-nine billion dollars⁵, Cuba has already paid a very high price, fifty years is enough. Therefore it is profoundly un-ethical and un-democratic to use the embargo as a coercive blackmailing tool to open the doors to corporate freedom and to polyarchy -as the 1982 external debt was utilized towards the rest of Latin America, the Caribbean and beyond. The embargo should be lifted without asking for any type of concessions on the part of Cuba and, the US should respect the type of trade that Cuba might want to implement once the embargo is lifted. This is a debt that the United States has with Cuba not the other way around.

The maintenance of US Guantanamo Bay Naval Base as a detention and torture center for prisoners suspicious of terrorism cancels the authority of President Obama to demand the release of political prisoners in Cuba. On January 22 2009, Obama signed an executive order declaring that Guantanamo should be shut down in less than a year since that moment and, prohibited the utilization of torture as an interrogation method -the document went beyond Guantanamo when demanding the CIA to close all its network of secret prisons. Considering that the cost of maintaining a prison within the United States would save about US\$180 million a year, it was proposed to move the Guantanamo prisoners to an empty maximum-security detention center in Thompson, Illinois (Gavin 2010: 4). The first steps would be to revise the status of the 245 detainees -it is known that about half of them are innocent- in order to determine if they should be transferred, released or prosecuted (Gavin 2010: 3-4).

According to Bearden, who, based on the analysis of new classified documents,⁶ mentioned that an oversimplified "threat matrix" was designed to decide whether a prisoner should be held, transferred or released. In this matrix, the prisoners were categorized according to a "risk level" that was very vaguely defined and what was seen as potential signs of danger included "wearing a Casio F91W watch, traveling without documents, claiming to be a farmer, cook, or in the honey business, and being uncooperative" (Bearden 2011: 1-2). Moreover, the "risk levels" were based on the testimony of other prisoners under the pressure of torture and, even based on mentally ill prisoners; as a result, many innocent men have been incarcerated while, some high-risk prisoners were released (Bearden 2011: 1-2). It is estimated that about half of the prisoners were innocent (Gavin 2010: 5), this demonstrates that Obama did not "set the example" that he had announced (see Obama 2008: 3). Thus, both the embargo, the closing of the Guantanamo prison and the return of the territory of Guantanamo Bay – which is a colonial residue - are key issues at stake in order to produce "change" in US-Cuban relations, so far, an outdated cold war diplomacy has prevailed.

The dichotomy between polyarchy and popular democracy re-appeared in the Honduran crisis. The promotion of polyarchy in Honduras took place in the 1980s, during the Reagan administration and, the power of the elite was locked into the neo-liberal constitution designed at that time, as Edelberto Torres-Rivas explained, "democratization did not imply a transition, it was instead the result of agreements amongst fractions of the military, business and political elite guided by 'the Embassy'." (Torres-Rivas 2010: 57) The "constitutions from above" secured that the wealth of the country remained in the hands of the fourteen richest families and by doing so, it intensified poverty and the abuse of human rights in the country (Torres-Rivas 2010: 56). These families dominated in both political parties, the National Party (conservative) and the Liberal Party -President Zelaya belonged to the latter- and both parties opposed Zelaya due to his search for popular support and policies were seen by the elite as a "betrayal to his own

⁵ Cited in Rodriguez (2010: 2).

⁶ These classified documents were released to *The New York Times* and National Public Radio and also through WikiLeaks on April 24, 2011 (Bearden 2011: 1)

class". (Torres-Rivas 2010: 61) Zelaya called for elections and, on June 28, 2009, a military coup d'état ousted and deported him to Costa Rica.

The main reason behind the military coup was the fact that in June 2007 Zelaya joined the Bolivarian Alliance for Our Americas (ALBA), led by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, signed a contract to buy cheaper oil from *Petrocaribe* and invited Presidents Chavez and Ortega to Honduras. However, more than that was at stake. Zelaya clashed with the legislative power, he wanted to appoint his own people in the new Supreme Court, especially because he wanted to call for a referendum to modify the Honduran constitution to allow for the Presidential re-election, if this would have taken place, Zelaya would have been President until 2014. Thus, Zelaya's "problem" was to join the counter-hegemonic construction of space, try to reduce the power of the Supreme Court –the heart of polyarchy and the reproduction of social injustice- and modify the constitution to strengthen the executive power. In other words, he was trying to undo the polyarchical domination.

The international reaction against the coup was massive, especially from the part of the Latin American countries, however, the US took a contradictory standing. At first, Obama joined the other criticisms and condemned the coup as illegal but, because Zelaya was a Chavez ally, he also had to respond to the Republican opposition at home. When Brazil intervened to press the United States to help with Zelaya's return to Honduras, Obama opted for a diplomatic solution by sending assistant secretary of state Thomas Shannon to the region. The result was the signing of an accord in which both sides agreed that Zelaya could return to Honduras, that the elections in November would proceed and that the results would be respected by everyone. However, Latin Americans wanted the democratically elected Zelaya to continue in power independently of the results of the new elections. It happened that the fraudulent "elections" were won by the leader of the conservative National Party, Porfirio Lobos. With this result, the U.S. retained Honduras, its Central American military bunker, under its polyarchical domination/conservative control but, the relations with the rest of Latin America were profoundly damaged (see Shifter 2010: 68-70; Lowenthal 2010: 4; Torres-Rivas 2010: 61-6; Hursthouse and Ayuso 2010: 2-3).

2.2. Promoting "Security": Police Militarization, Elite "Justice" and Genocide

The second of Obama's Freedoms, *Freedom from Fear/Security* seeks to halt violence, gang activity and to tackle organized crime and drug trafficking. Mexico, Central America, and Colombia are the main targets and, the policies suggested to combat insecurity included the support for the development of an independent police and juridical institutions through the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and Homeland Security (DHS) and, to continue the support of the *Mérida Initiative* and the *Andean Counterdrug Program* initiated by his predecessors (Obama 2008:5-7). Obama's objective was to extend hemispheric security by creating a "Regional Partnership on Crime and Security," to this end, he stated that,

*Barack Obama believes that we need a new security initiative with our Latin American neighbours –an initiative that extends **beyond Central America**. This initiative will foster cooperation within the region to combat gangs, trafficking and violent criminal activity. And it will marshal the resources of the United States to **support the development of independent and competent police and judicial institutions in the Americas**.*⁷

Obama (2008: 5)

⁷ The bold highlighting was added by the author.

Comparing Obama's plans as Presidential candidate and his actions towards the region once in power, it seems that hemispheric security reforms are replacing the FTAA as a regional hegemonic project. In fact, there is a notorious shift from the previous emphasis on trade to one on security and, an interest in disembedding the police and the judicial institutions from the state, from the public to the private –as it previously was the case with Central Banks and public enterprises. However, rather than promoting security, these measures can only intensify violence and corruption. Putting the police in the hands of the elite –what Obama calls "civil society"- is leading to the extermination of the poorest in society and, putting the judiciary at the service of the elite will justify and make legal that extermination. The impact of this interventionism into the internal affairs of other nations will be illustrated below with the cases of Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Argentina and Peru.

On April 16-17 2009, *Mexico* was the first Latin American country visited by President Obama, just before the Trinidad and Tobago Summit and, although the agenda included immigration policy, climate change and trade, the focal point was about how to curb cross-border drug violence (Gay-Stolberg 2011) and the role in it of the *Mérida Initiative*. The *Mérida Initiative* is a security partnership between the United States and Mexico, Central America, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic that was signed on June 30, 2008 during the Bush administration and, which was supposed to endure until September 30, 2010 yet, its timeline has been extended. According to the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (BINLEA) the partnership represented a "shared responsibility" to "confront criminal organizations whose actions plague the region and spill over into the United States...we confront this regional threat with a regional solution". The Initiative includes the funding for inspection equipment, communication technologies, technical advice and training to the institutions of justice and the provision of helicopters and surveillance aircraft (BINLEA 2010). So far, about US 400 million a year has gone to Mexico and about 100 million to the other countries in the program; in total 1.42 billion US dollars in the above cited effects, not in cash, has been transferred to the signatory countries of the *Mérida Initiative*. Notwithstanding this effort, the so called "war on drugs" has not stopped the cross-border flow of narcotics to the U.S. nor the flow of American guns into Mexico, with which, the violence has reached unprecedented levels.

In fact, during the four years of the *Mérida Initiative*, 40,000 Mexican lives have been lost and, according to Soltis, the trafficking of arms, particularly AK-47s semiautomatic rifles –which can perforate bulletproof vests-, from the United States has increased from 2,000 in 2007 to 5,000 in 2009. In 2007, the Mexican police seized 9,562 arms and in 2009 it reached to 32,332 (Soltis 2011). On March 3 2010, the tension between both countries escalated when the existence of the US "Operation Fast and Furious" was made public in CBS news (Carlsen 2011: 1). The aim of this operation carried out by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) office in Phoenix Arizona, was to allow more than 2,500 AK-47s and Barret.50 caliber rifles to be sold to suspicious traffickers in order to be smuggled into Mexico and guide the ATF towards high ranking individuals in crime organizations. However, once the guns crossed the border, the ATF lost the track (Carlsen 2011; Soltis 2011).

When it became known that one of these guns was utilized by the drug cartels to kill agent Brian Terry, an American Border Patrol, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Attorney General Eric Holder were interrogated regarding the existence of the "Fast and Furious Operation (Carlsen 2011: 2)." President Obama defended Holder in both Univision and CNN and stated that neither him nor Holder knew about the operation, which led Carlsen to advance two conclusions, that either "Holder authorized an operation that likely violated U.S., Mexican, and international law and armed dangerous drug traffickers" or "the head of the Justice Department is presiding over rogue staff that decided not to tell their boss about an operation that poses

major legal, ethical and diplomatic breaches." (Carlsen 2011: 2) One of the reasons advanced by Soltis regarding Obama's inability to curtail gun trafficking is due to the influence of the National Rifle Association (NRA) lobbyists, who argue that policies towards that end infringe upon their 2nd Amendment rights (Soltis 2011: 2-3). This insecurity at the heart of Obama's engine for a regional security partnership is very dangerous for both the U.S. and the Americas as a whole and it indicates the fragility and inability of elected governments to produce "change" when they are under polyarchal domination. Under these circumstances, security agreements will inevitably be followed by trafficking in guns and the intensification of genocide.

On March 6, 2001 a massive "March for Peace" that took place in Mexico, demanded President Felipe Calderon to put an end to the war on drugs, for justice –not elite justice- dignity and called for the immediate demilitarization of the country. A protester has mentioned that the war on drugs was "leaving out the most important part –eliminating political corruption and financial corruption, the foreign interests and businessmen that give them the money" and, another mentioned that "Under the pretext of the war on drug-trafficking, they're exterminating the lower levels of society...We can't let the logic of war prevail. It's unacceptable that it's cheaper to kill the poor than to end poverty." (cited by Carlsen 2011b: 2)

Notwithstanding this panorama, on June 10, 2010 Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signed a security partnership with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) known as the *Caribbean Basin Security Initiative* (CBSI), in which the U.S. committed to \$45 million in 2010 and requested \$79 million for 2011,⁸ an amount approved on June 22, 2011. The CBSI complements Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative, which led to the expansion of *maquiladoras* into the region, showing the continuation of the Republican and Democrat projects. Time will say if this security armour will lead to the intensification of violence as it happened in Mexico. The CARICOM includes amongst its members St. Vincent & Grenadines and Antigua & Barbados, the Caribbean islands that form part of Chavez led ALBA. It will be interesting to research how being in two different economic blocs can affect the development of the islands. The U.S. is recuperating its spatial domination, first Honduras and now locking-in St.Vincent & The Grenadines and Antigua & Barbados.

As Senator, Obama has opposed President Bush's *Plan Colombia* and the US-Colombia FTA due to the poor human rights records of the country and the assassination of union leaders. However, as President, Obama continued the policies of his predecessor and his policies also mirrored those of his northern conservative neighbour, Prime Minister Harper, who, despite the strong opposition of Canadians, signed an FTA with Colombia in 2010. There is a vicious circle that engulfs free trade agreements, the intensification of violence and corruption. On the one hand, an FTA with the United States, a country that strongly subsidizes its farmers, will jeopardize the possibility of Colombian farmers to compete with imported food and therefore, this will inevitably push more Colombian farmers towards the more profitable cultivation of coca, what neo-classical economists call the "supply side" of drug trafficking. On the other hand, the production of coca is driven by a high demand of drugs in its main market, the United States. When neo-classical economists talk about the "demand side", or consumption, they point to a social health issue, however it is deeper than that, people that fall into the consumption of drugs, as the poor farmers that produce coca are the victims of inequality, of the lack of redistributive policies that cut opportunities for the majority of the population.

Thus, when policy makers put emphasis either on the "supply" or the "demand side" or try to "regulate" or "legalize" drugs, they do not attack the core of the problem, which is the structural

⁸See <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/06/142950.htm>

matrix, the neo-liberal model, which forces farmers in the Andes to produce coca and the marginalized in the North that do not find a way out of poverty, to consume it once it is processed into cocaine. This scapegoating works as a smokescreen that hides the real beneficiaries of drug trafficking. So far, the economic cost of "supply-demand equation" has been 7.3 billion dollars for the US and 55 billion for Colombia (Suarez Montoya 2011) and; the social cost, 5.2 million forced displaced Afro-descendents and indigenous peoples (CODHES 2010) and, thousands of deaths -including about 2,200 union leaders murdered since 1991 (Witness for Peace 2011); while in the US the majority of the population in prison due to drugs are African Americans, even when the main drug users are white (Reiss 2010: 30). This has led Suzanna Reiss to argue that it is necessary to move beyond supply and demand, that the question to be answered is "Who gets to supply what and who gets to demand? Then, she states,

"Focusing on the commodity overshadows the people and political struggles at the heart of the 'drug' conflict. It is not drugs per se, but rather competition to control their production, distribution, and consumption that has generated violence over the last half-century...Despite the frequently staged spectacles of drug enforcement officers burning marijuana fields in California or airplanes fumigating coca fields in the Andes, it is necessary to restate the obvious: The United States has never waged a 'war on drugs'. Rather, it has waged various 'wars' on specific groups of people...the power hierarchies of who gets to supply and who gets to demand also ripple through racial, economic, and social disparities."

Reiss (2010: 30)

Since its inception in 1971, under the Nixon administration, the war on drugs has cost more than US\$1 trillion and hundreds of thousands lives, yet, the production of coca has not diminished (Curtin 2011: 1). Reiss sees that the unstated goal of the "war on drugs" is the global expansion of U.S. military hegemony, that "the United States does not so much wage war on drugs as wage war with drugs" and that, since the 1961 Single Drug Convention, it sought to control the "legal" market, for which the main consumers of coca leaves were the pharmaceutical companies that were authorized by the U.S. government to produce the flavouring extract for Coca-Cola, research and medicinal use. Reiss states that "while the United States spends billions of dollars attacking 'drugs', the legal drug industry is regularly among the top five most profitable industries in the country" (Reiss 2010: 28). This answers the question of who produces fear and insecurity, an insecurity that intensified when President Obama signed a ten year defense cooperation with President Uribe to establish seven military bases in Colombia, five airbases and two naval installations, one on the Pacific and the other one on the Caribbean. According to "Global En Route Strategy", a white paper produced by the U.S. Air Mobility Command, the Palanquero airbase –one of the five in question-, could become a "cooperative security location" from which "mobility operations could be executed" as "nearly half the continent can be covered by a giant C-17 (military transport) aircraft without refuelling (quoted in Matsunaga 2009)." See also Shifter 2010: 70 and Lowenthal 2010: 4). This incident produced a strong reaction of all the South American heads of state, who called for an urgent meeting of UNASUR in Bariloche, Argentina, in which Presidents Uribe and Obama were invited to explain the motives behind this militarization and to guarantee that the operation was restricted to Colombia. President Obama declined the invitation but Uribe participated from the meeting.

At the meeting, President Cristina Kirchner of Argentina mentioned that she "had never heard that loads of drugs would be bombarded, drugs were not combated with C-17 planes, even less with the placement of radars", that "the establishment of military bases looked more as a project for conventional wars rather than for combating drug trafficking" (LatinoAméricaAhora 2009). In

his part, President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay argued that "the security of our countries is at stake" (LatinoAméricaAhora 2009) and, the most vociferous of all the South American Presidents were Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia and Lula da Silva of Brazil. Correa, who ended a ten year agreement with the United States -an agreement that allowed the northern country to utilize Ecuador's Manta airbase as a regional hub for anti-drug surveillance operations-, and a year earlier, had broken relations with Colombia when Colombian troops bombarded a FARC rebel camp in Ecuadorian territory (Piette 2009; Oualalou 2009) argued that "it was unnecessary to ask for military help from the United States to combat drug trafficking and terrorism...that Plan Colombia had failed...experience has shown that in those places in which the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) was expelled, the capture of drugs had improved" (LatinoAméricaAhora 2009). In the same vein, Evo Morales considered that Colombia wanted to "justify the unjustifiable", that with all the foreign military help that Colombia had received "drug-trafficking and terrorism should have been eradicated (from the country)", that, "the *pueblos* will never again allow the interventionism of the United States" (LatinoAméricaAhora 2009). On his part, Chavez referred to the Colombian agreement as a "declaration of war" and that it responds to "the United States global strategy of domination" (LatinoAméricaAhora 2009).

Uribe's response to the criticism of the other South American heads of state was that he felt that Colombia, was a "victim...of a strong political interventionism", and he sustained that this conflict should be dealt within the frame of the Organization of American States (OAS), not at its back. Lula strongly disagreed with Uribe and, according to him, the place where this conflict should be treated was the Defence Council of UNASUR, not the OAS. Lula added that the United States, as the world's principal consumer of illegal drugs should combat drug-trafficking within its borders rather than doing so in South American territory (LatinoAméricaAhora 2009). Lula was especially uncomfortable with the fact that one of the Marines' bases was located at the doorsteps of the Brazilian Amazon. Moreover, Lula mentioned that American floats were just below the oil reserves discovered in Brazil in 2007 (Oualalou 2009). The only South American country that sided with Colombia and the United States was Peru, whose President Alan Garcia, had signed, in December 2005, a Free Trade Area (FTA) with the United States, which entered into effect in February 1, 2009.

As it happened in Mexico, when NAFTA entered into effect and the Zapatistas rebelled, the US-Peru FTA was followed by massive Amazonian indigenous peoples protests. The implementation of the FTA meant that indigenous peoples would lose their common lands and, the doors of the Amazon would be open to transnational corporations such as mining, timber, oil, gas and, hydroelectric and biodiversity companies, for which laws were de-regulated to facilitate their entrance into the jungle. When land and nature were put up for sale, indigenous peoples initiated peaceful protests in all five departments of the jungle region, blocking highways and gas and oil pipelines. Garcia sent the police and the military to attack the protesters, producing a massacre. Indigenous peoples reported 50 people dead and about 400 disappeared and, indigenous peoples mentioned that many of those disappeared were burned and thrown into the river to hide the massacre. Instead, the government reported that 11 indigenous peoples and 23 police officers have died. Alan Garcia accused the indigenous peoples of being "terrorists", "savages", "assassins", "extremists" and that formed part of an "international conspiracy" led by Bolivia and Venezuela who feared that Peru's development would turn into a competition in the gas and oil sectors. Garcia even dared to say that those who opposed intensive exploitation of the Amazon region were like "orchard dogs," who "don't eat of let anyone else eat" (Zibechi 2009). It seems Garcia wanted to eat it all and by doing so, become part of the transnational capitalist class. When seen from the South, Free Trade Agreements mean the implementation of an unethical and criminal legal system that generates population displacement, massacres, the

looting of natural resources and that, by destroying the soil through intensive exploitation, deepens climate change, a reality very different from the one expressed in the North, where neoliberal governments argue that trade is attached to human rights.

At the beginning of February 2011, an US Air Force C-17 transport plane was seized by the Argentinian custom authorities at the Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires because it brought camouflaged, non declared sensitive material into the country. According to the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the illegal cargo contained weapons, equipment for intercepting communications, various GPS, technological equipment with secret codes and a trunk full of different types of drugs, among them, morphine. Argentine customs officials considered the cargo to be "war material" (Lantos). President Cristina Kirchner sustained that the US Air Force has attempted "to violate Argentine laws by bringing in hidden material in an official shipment", and the Argentine Foreign Affairs Minister, Héctor Timmerman added that "The United States must understand that they can't send war materials without informing the government" and, he was outraged at the fact that the Assistant Secretary of State Arturo Valenzuela "refused to cooperate with the investigation" (AFP 2011). Moreover, Valenzuela expressed "concern on behalf of the US Defense Department over the seizure of items related to the security of the United States" (AFP 2011). The State Department spokesman Philip Crowley added that "we are puzzled and disturbed by the actions of Argentine officials," because they conducted "an unusual and unannounced search of the aircraft's cargo". He then added that "the material seized was routine for exercises in which US military experts train the Argentine federal police in advanced hostage rescue and crisis management techniques" (AFP 2011). The big question is how can the United States decide to train the Argentine federal police without the Argentine government knowing it? It is an un-democratic practice to interfere in other countries internal affairs. In sum, the meaning of Obama's *Political Freedom/Democracy* is to militarize and arm the Latin American police, to continue with FTAs that favour the entry foreign companies that loot, displace and assassinate Afro-descendents, indigenous peoples, and all those living close to the natural resources desired by the transnational corporations. In another words, it is to strengthen the polyarchical structure that emerged in the 1980s, together with structural adjustment programs.

2.3. Promoting "Freedom" from Hunger, Vultures and "Humanitarian Aid": The Case of Haiti

The third of Obama's "freedoms", *Freedom from Want/Opportunity* represents a re-assertion and continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), which represent an authoritarian social contract, a market approach to health, education and other social provisions. This time, the target country was Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Obama refers to Haiti as a "fragile country with a history of political instability", as a country that was hit by the world food crisis, in which the price of rice, the local staple, soared, producing hunger, which lead to massive food riots. According to Obama, what restored the calm was the arrival of foreign aid and subsidies that lowered the price of rice. Then, Obama announced his short-term and long-term policies towards Haiti, the short-term one would be to provide food assistance and, the long-term one, provide technical assistance and job training. This would be done as always, supporting "freedom" and "democracy" (See Obama 2008: 8). The questions that arise from "Obama's New Partnership for the Americas" are, Who produced Haiti's history of political instability? What policies led Haiti, a country that until the 1980s was food self-sufficient, enter into a severe food crisis? What are the consequences of foreign "aid" and subsidies? Technical assistance and job training, for what purposes? For sweatshops?

Although Obama is not prone to look at the past, history matters, and, it is precisely through a historical analysis that these questions can be answered. Haiti's political instability is a result of French colonialism, three American occupations, Canadian complicity, structural, superstructural changes and the commodification of livelihood through the so-called "poverty reduction strategies", which leaves the reduction of poverty in the hands of the private sector. When France recognized the Haitian independence in 1825, thirty four years after the slave revolution took place, France demanded that Haiti pays an indemnity of about 150 million French francs, for the loss of its property, the slaves (Robinson 1996: 262). According to Ashley Smith, the equivalent would be today about US\$ 21 billion (2010: 4). Haiti finalized paying this debt in 1947, which means that Haiti did not have the means to develop both economically, politically and socially. To this should be added the US occupation during 1915-1934, which used as justification for it, the existence of political instability in Haiti, however, the objective was to allow the entrance of American corporations and the installation of the Haitian National Army to secure American capital and repress the peasants that opposed the corporations when being displacement from their lands. When the US ended the occupation in 1934, it continued intervening in the politics and the economy of Haiti –with a pause during the Carter administration- indeed, it supported the genocidal administrations of "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc Duvalier" (1957-1986), whose aim was to convert Haiti into an offshore assembly site for US corporations, secured by the army and the Tonton Macoutes, the death squads. This crystallized during the Reagan administration and the President's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), which not only opened-up the area to maquiladora industries but also to agricultural corporations, with which local farmers could not compete. This of course, was coupled with "democracy promotion" measures that led to the creation of polyarchy and a transnational capitalist class. Until that moment, Haiti was self-sufficient in rice production but the heavily subsidized US rice and wheat pushed the Haitian producers out of business and their lands. The peasants migrated then to the cities, where only a few of them were hired in sweatshops, which, as many say, represent "modern day slavery". It is this scenario of exploitation that gave rise to the Fanmi Lavalas movement, headed by the Liberation Theology Catholic priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, aborting the formation of a Haitian polyarchy. In 1990s Aristide won the elections and, a year later, President George Bush Sr. backed a military coup against Aristide, which was followed by three years of a brutal regime (Smith 2010: 8). In 1994 the US restored Aristide to power with the condition that he implemented neo-liberal policies, however, it was René Préval who two years later would put them into practice. In 2000 Aristide won the elections again and took a mixed approach, on the one hand, he raised the minimum wage, built schools and demanded that France refund the \$21billion colonial debt that forced Haiti to pay between 1824 and 1947. On the other hand, to maintain the calm of the aggressors, Aristide allowed new sweatshops to be installed in Haiti. Nevertheless, due to his progressive actions, the US, Canada and France imposed economic sanctions and Aristide was forced to exile in South Africa. The US delegated the occupation to the UN, to MINUSTAH, mostly formed by Brazilian troops, which are still there today. In 2008 the food crisis went out of control, with no locally produced food and not being able to pay for the price of American produced rice, Haitians had to survive eating mud-cakes. Of course, rebellions arose and so did repressive measures. In that moment, UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-moon, appointed Bill Clinton as special envoy to Haiti, who was accompanied by Paul Collier, a former World Bank research director, with the task of re-activating Haiti's economy. The so-called Collier Plan was anchored in three main measures, investment on the tourist industry, sweatshops for the cities and mango plantations for the countryside (Smith 2010).

In January 12, 2010, an earthquake of 7.0 richter scale magnitude struck Haiti leaving about 230,000 people dead and 3 million affected – of a total population of 9.7 million (Gupta 2010: 1). Obama appointed Bush Jr. and Clinton to collect donations through the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund,

soon stories started to emerge regarding the militarization of what was called "humanitarian aid," some mentioned that the US aid resembled a military occupation (Waterfield 2010; Gupta 2010; Smith 2010) and that aid was slow to arrive, that the relief efforts seemed to be like a replay of Katrina (Gupta 2010). The American troupes were obstructing the arrival of what Haitians needed the most, doctors, medicine and food. It is unconceivable that in such a dramatic moment the trafficking of children was on the rise and that Monsanto donated hybrid seed maize to farmers. La Via Campesina considered the donation to be a "deadly gift" that would eventually erode the farmers food sovereignty, this is why ten thousand Haitian farmers marched to protest against Monsanto (La Via Campesina 2010). Moreover, the lucrative business of reconstruction in the hands of foreign companies uncovered what type of 'aid' and freedom from want can be expected from the United States.

In sum, it is the interventionism of foreign powers that did not let Haiti develop. If global justice would be implemented to restore to Haiti what belongs to Haiti, France should return the US\$21 billion, the US indemnify Haiti for the 97 years of criminal and corrupt interventionism, same goes for Canada since it became involved in this new colonial mission. Brazil should respond for its role in MINUSTAH and, the UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-moon for the irresponsibility of giving the task for economic recovery to the same people that have destroyed the economy of the country –and the entire world. Foreign corporations should leave the country and allow Haitians generate their own businesses and grow for themselves, that is popular democracy, that is the real meaning of freedom.

2.4. Promoting Freedom from Energy Dependency and the Question of Biofuels. The Case of Brazil

Lastly, *Working Towards Energy Security* is a call to invest in renewable energy with the objective to achieve independence from oil producing countries –a contradiction with Obama's interests in Cuban, Venezuelan oil and Canadian tar sands- and combat climate change. Obama sees Latin America as a magnificent source for renewable energy and mentions that in 2007 the US entered into a Biofuels Partnership with Brazil, a country in which half of the cars are flex-fuel –can run either in ethanol or gasoline (Obama 2008). Brazil is the target country for biofuels from sugar cane –note that Cuba has also shifted to sugar cane biofuels- but Obama's plan was more ambitious, to create an "Energy Partnership for the Americas", in his terms, to,

"help Latin American nations become more energy independent and promote sustainable growth for the region. The partnership also will create additional markets for American biofuels and American-made green energy technology. Obama will enlist the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and other international organizations to support these efforts."

Obama (2008)

This strongly hegemonic discourse was also present a year earlier, when Obama sustained that,

"We need a global response to climate change that includes binding and enforceable commitments to reducing emissions, especially for those that pollute the most: the United States, China, India, the European Union, and Russia. This challenge is massive, but rising to it will also bring benefits to America. By 2050, global demand for low-carbon energy could create an annual market worth \$500 billion. Meeting that demand would open new frontiers for American entrepreneurs and workers."

Obama (2007: 7)

Thus, the objective of Obama, or a green capitalist approach to the environment, is to create new environmentally-friendly industries, increase green-employment and open a new market niche for American-made clean energy technology. This could be a way out of the crisis for the United States, but it is not so for the majority of the countries that will have to open their doors to this new foreign technology, whether they want or not, because they will be forced to do so through their link to free trade agreements. As Heather Rogers has clearly put it, "Green capitalism is an approach that says we can use the levers of the market to fix the broken environment" (2010:1). Is this commodification of the environment that has led to the creation of a fictitious commodity such as the carbon market, that leads to what Bumpus and Liverman call "accumulation by de-carbonisation" (2008).

Biofuels can be produced from sugarcane, corn, wheat, sugarbeet, manioc, palm oil, soy beans, cellulosic –especially from eucalyptus-, cassava, vegetables, sorghum and also jatropha, algae and waste. However, the two main products utilized for biofuels so far are corn and sugarcane, while the former reduces only 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, the latter reduces them by 91 percent, making sugarcane more "efficient" than corn, environmentally speaking. However, if the impact on society is brought into the picture, a very different result pops-up. First, all of these products, besides algae and waste, need land and, therefore it becomes an engine for population displacement by the corporations that invest on this type of production. In the case of Brazil, sugarcane for ethanol is produced in the surroundings of Sao Paulo but, by doing so, it pushes cattle into the Amazon, intensifying deforestation, as pointed by the Brazilian Landless Movement (MST). Second, it increases the value of both, the land and food, pushing the world into a food crisis. Other issues left out of the studies on biofuels is that the burning of sugar cane necessary to produce ethanol releases a huge amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, so does too the mechanized harvesting and transportation to the processing plants. To this should be added that the use of fertilizers and pesticides have a negative impact on the environment. In sum, this is a new field that requires an interdisciplinary study in order to evaluate the pros and cons of biofuels.

CONCLUSION

In sum, Obama's administration represents a fourth moment of the New Pax Americana, in the name of "freedom" and "democracy" the US has been penetrating Latin America piece by piece, now it is the turn of the independent police, the judiciary, oil and renewable energy with the objective of creating a new market niche for green raw materials and American clean products – biofuels, wind, solar and nuclear energy.

In order to produce radical change is necessary to start by moving away from polyarchy towards popular democracy, to shift from corporate freedom towards peoples' freedom, to reform or create a new architecture of World Orders, perhaps in distinct locations –not all concentrated in the US. This new architecture should modify the current structure of World Order, re-embed the social to the political sphere, to change the superstructure to solidify a new morality that eliminates power disparities and includes all human beings in the planet. This is not to return to the Keynesian World Order, it would be impossible to do so because we are in a different historical conjuncture. This new architecture must respond to today's needs. The current moment is way more complicated than the end of World War II, when Keynesianism was implemented. Indeed, at that time, for example, tax havens, the main distorters of the world economy did not exist, the military-industrial complex did not have the power it has today, technology was not as developed as today –computers, cell-phones, etc did not exist. It is necessary to create something new by analyzing former ways of organizing society, by evaluating their positive and negative characteristics, this has been the passion and commitment

of Karl Polanyi.

Latin America is not anti-American, as Obama believes, Latin Americans admire the tenacity, creativity and values of the American people, what Latin Americans criticize are the policies implemented by the American elite –both Republicans and Democrats- and their counterparts in our countries, which has led to the impoverishment of the majority, to the elimination of the social cushion and to genocide. Obama might represent the American dream but, he certainly is not Dr. King's dream, that dream is yet to come. Democracy, as Aristotle put it, "is when the indigent, and not the men of property, are the rulers", something that Abraham Lincoln had very clear when he said "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy." Hope there is a tale of a second Obama, as Latham proposed, and hope that this time, he knows the distinction between polyarchy and popular democracy, to start building a better America and new forms of peaceful relations with Latin America and the rest of the world.

BIOGRAPHY

Alejandra Roncallo (Ph.D in Political Science, York University, MA in Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh, BA in History, University of Buenos Aires) teaches in the Department of International Relations at Bucknell University. Her teaching and research interests include an interdisciplinary approach to the IPE of the Americas, particularly the transition from the Old to the New Pax Americanas, multi-scalar governance arrangements, policy analysis, natural resources, gender, indigenous peoples, transnational law, social reproduction and human rights. Dr. Roncallo has also taught at The University of Western Ontario, Ryerson, York (Keele campus and Glendon College) and at the University of Toronto at Mississauga. She has been a visiting researcher at Bolivia's Program for Strategic Research (PIEB-Programa de Investigación Estratégica de Bolivia, a guest visitor at the Centre for US-Mexican Studies at the University of California-San Diego and has worked in various research projects in the Americas. Her upcoming book is entitled *The Politics of Space in the Americas: The New Pax Americana* (Routledge). Alejandra has been recipient of numerous fellowships, including the Fulbright-IIE Graduate Fellowship (US), the Center for Latin American Studies Graduate Fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh (US) and the American Association and International Federation of University Women International Fellowship (Washington-Geneva).

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