
Dividing the Caribbean, a new U.S. strategy

27/01/2020



"Divide and conquer" was a phrase used by both the Roman emperor Julius Caesar and France's Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite differences with the military tactics used by these historical figures, this approach seems to be the United States' political strategy toward Latin America and the Caribbean, in another desperate attempt to divide peoples south of the Rio Bravo and regain ground in an area that Washington continues to consider as its "backyard."

This modus operandi has been employed in various ways in the region. Offering some carrots and others the stick, applying coercion, promoting conflict or disrupting independent mechanisms of integration, this is how the U.S. administration has worked throughout history. Aware of the risks that unity in Our America entails for its imperial interests, the government has made crafty political moves to undermine integrationist organizations, as part of its plans for a conservative restoration.

On the one hand, the White House promotes the Lima Group and the discredited Organization of American States (OAS) as forums to legitimize the war against Venezuela and other countries that do not submit to its designs. On the other hand, the U.S. maneuvered to incite the exit of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru from the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) in 2018, and in 2019 Ecuador; Ecuador and Bolivia's departure from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP); and the recent withdrawal of Brazil from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Now, U.S. plans seem to be directed toward tearing apart the Caribbean Community (Caricom). Last year, U.S. President Donald Trump met with leaders of a selected group of nations in Florida. Among the topics on the meeting's agenda were regional cooperation and the situation in Venezuela. After the meeting, White House spokesman Hogan Gidley said in a press release that the government sponsored Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) will prioritize the five countries whose leaders met with Trump.

January 21, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in Jamaica, where he held meetings with Jamaican

leaders, including Prime Minister Andrew Holness, and emphasized the importance of Caribbean relations with the U.S.

Barbados Prime Minister and Caricom President Mia Mottley criticized the meeting, stating, "As president of Caricom, it is impossible for me to agree that my foreign minister should attend a meeting with someone and that Caricom members should not be invited. It is an attempt to divide the region," she insisted.

So what is behind this political move by Washington in the Caribbean? First, hopes of gaining Caribbean support within the Organization of American States (OAS) to win approval of escalated attacks on Venezuela, in addition to pressuring these Caricom members to serve U.S. interests and isolate them from their neighbors.

"In 2019 we continue to consolidate relations of friendship and cooperation with the sister nations of the Caribbean, to which we are bound by historical ties and common challenges. The celebration of the 7th Caricom-Cuba Summit next December in Havana will be of vital importance for the country," stated Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla in a January 20 tweet.

In the face of new imperial efforts to separate us, more unity and integration in the Caribbean, and all of Our America, must be the answer, to keep "the giant with seven league boots" at bay.
