

Latin America and the Resurgence of the “Third World”

Strengthening the peoples of the Global South

by Juan José Paz y Miño Cepeda,* Ecuador



Juan José Paz y Miño Cepeda. (Photo ma)

(Edit.) With great interest, the “Swiss Standpoint” follows the efforts of the peoples of the Global South to implement the goals set forth in the UN Charter: preservation of world peace, international security, and economic and social progress of all peoples.

With a wary eye, the countries of the Global South are watching the reactions of the West to the tremendous power shifts and upheavals that have been and are being triggered by the former colony China: its inexorable forward strategy into modernity and Russia’s turbulent evolution from the decline of the Soviet Union to the Putin era. Formerly European and now transatlantic neoliberal colonialism has brought immense suffering to the peoples of Africa, Central and Latin America, and Asia.

The “Third World” rightfully hopes for a change from a unipolar world order to a new multipolar world order with more security and more dignified living conditions. In loose succession, “Swiss Standpoint” publishes articles by authors from different parts of the world reflecting these developments.

In the following article, Ecuadorian historian, and analyst Juan José Paz y Miño Cepeda argues that the recovery of the “Third World” is now possible on the background of the ideas of the Non-Aligned States and the development towards a multipolar world.

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Spain benefitted most from the European colonialism in southern North America and South

America. The territory of what is now Brazil went to Portugal and the Caribbean remained a disputed area between the colonial powers. The independence processes in Latin America and the Caribbean between 1804 and 1824 – after the independence of the United States in 1776 – marked the historical end of European colonialism on the continent. The independence of some territories, such as those of both Guyanas, Suriname, and the Falkland Islands, was still pending; the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico became free in 1898.

Late decolonisation in Africa

European colonisation of the African continent has a long history. It was the *Congo Conference* of 1884 in Berlin that regulated the division of this continent among the imperialist states of Europe at that time. The intention was to avoid conflicts among the colonial powers. The beneficiaries were, in this order, France, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Spain. The independence processes of almost all countries, which would be better described as African decolonisation, did not take place until the 1950s and lasted until the 1990s. Several of these processes were violent.

Conditions for underdevelopment

The liberation of Latin American countries made it possible to build nation-states despite the dependencies that developed in the 19th (England) and 20th (United States) centuries. These were able at various times to pursue sovereign policies and modernise economies with relative autonomy. This was not true for the continent of Africa as a whole, as its late liberation impaired overall progress. On both continents, European

* Ecuadorian Juan José Paz y Miño Cepeda holds a PhD in contemporary history from the University of Santiago de Compostela. He is academic coordinator of the *Association of Historians of Latin America and the Caribbean* (ADHILAC) in Ecuador. Likewise, he is a full member of the National Academy of History. He was Dean of the Faculty of Communication, Arts and Humanities

at UTE University in Quito. He has also been a city chronicler and has held visiting professorships at several universities in Latin America, North America, and Europe. Juan José Paz y Miño Cepeda is considered one of the founders of “immediate history”. He has written numerous books and articles on Ecuador and Latin America.

colonisation created the conditions for underdevelopment, dependency, and deep social divisions in almost all countries.

Non-aligned states emerge

Since the emergence of the “Third World” in the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, which launched the Non-Aligned Movement, a long process of pooling of forces, wills, consciousness, and policies has developed leading the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America to demand respect for their sovereignty, independence, and autonomy, with the aim of building their own economic systems and political regimes.

The “Cold War” that divided the world into countries with “freedom” and “democracy” and those in “communist slavery” was an obstacle for a long time. A duality emerged, constructed by the U.S. with the support of the capitalist powers of Western Europe. This allowed them, to advance their interests, to justify direct or indirect interventions in “underdeveloped” countries that had been going on for decades.

Important contemporary historical processes

The duality of the world created by the Cold War disintegrated with the collapse of Soviet and East European socialism. The transnational globalisation that followed seemed to triumph forever. Yet, the rise of China, Russia, the BRICS countries, and “Third World” countries, which has taken hold as never before since the beginning of the 21st century, changed the world map once again. Today, the traditional Western powers can no longer impose their ideas and interests as they did in the immediate past.

This situation is the result of a series of contemporary historical processes, some of which will be highlighted here:

- The experience of interventionism has provoked growing rejection and resistance among the peoples of Latin America.
- Advances in education and communications technology are raising the consciousness of citizens and making information and knowledge accessible to everyone, making attempts at deception difficult or impossible.
- Economic modernisation and material progress favour autonomous choices, expand relations between countries, and modify “dependencies”.



- Markets create new relationships. This gives rise to social movements and progressive and democratic forces (usually identified with the left) betting on a transformed society.
- New governments and projects are established, aiming at strengthening sovereignty.
- A regional identity is growing in Latin America.

The Global South demands dignity

Under these new conditions of global development, the old colonial powers are being challenged. In the past week alone, unprecedented events have been accumulating: French President *Emmanuel Macron*, on a tour of four African countries (former colonies), said he wanted to reduce the French military presence and questioned those countries’ rapprochement with Russia and China.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, President *Félix Tshisekedi* confronted him, demanding that he be respectful and that “the way Europe treats us must change”.¹ In West and North Africa, street protests against France are increasing. Namibia’s President *Hage Geingob* also reprimanded the German ambassador for complaining that there were more Chinese than Germans in the country.²

With unique audacity, Republican U.S. Congresswoman *María Elvira Salazar* warned the Argentine government that the U.S. would not stand idly by and watch this “pact with the devil” as Argentina built a factory for Chinese fighter

jets, and that “there are two worlds: the free world and the world of slaves. I hope Argentines will stay in the free world”, she threatened,³ to which the Argentine government spokesman delivered a strong response.⁴

Mexico – a free and sovereign country

Republicans *Lindsey Graham* (South Carolina) and *John Neely Kennedy* (Louisiana) proposed that the U.S. executive branch should have the ability to authorise the use of armed force to intervene in Mexico against drug trafficking.⁵

President *Andrés Manuel López Obrador* responded with words that reflected the broad sentiment of Latin American peoples. He criticised the U.S.’s “mania” and “bad habit” of “thinking it is the world government,” adding, “but what is even worse is that they want to intervene with military force in the public life of another country. In other words, they invade a foreign country under the pretext of hunting down terrorist drug traffickers. This is, of course, pure propaganda. We must reject all these interventionist pretensions.” And finally, “Mexico is neither a protectorate nor a colony of the United States. Mexico is a free, independent, and sovereign country. We do not take orders from anyone.”⁶

The pressure exerted on Latin America to take a position on the Ukraine war is also aimed at positioning the region in line with the interests of the Western world. However, the region wants to maintain its status as a zone of peace without being absorbed by a foreign power. Becoming embroiled in a conflict is contrary to Latin Amer-

ica’s sovereign interests, even if the war has already been condemned regionally.

Unstoppable rise of the “Third World”

It is evident that the hitherto dependent countries are experiencing a slow but historically unstoppable upswing, made possible by the disintegration of Western hegemony and the emergence of a multipolar world. In this emerging 21st century “Mundus Novus” [“New World” is the title of *Amerigo Vespucci’s* 1502 travelogue], the ideals of the *Bandung Conference* are gaining strength and deserve to be renewed.

This development creates the conditions for the rapprochement of Latin America with the other nations of the “Third World” with the aim of creating a geopolitical front that will also have an impact on the international scene, based on new forms of political integration in defense of sovereignties against the intentions of Western powers to once again divide the world into the alleged bloc of “democracy” and the “diabolical sphere” of the regions of “authoritarianism”.

Source: author’s blog “*Historia y Presente*”. <https://www.historiaypresente.com/america-latina-y-el-renacer-del-tercer-mundo/>, 13 March 2023.

(Translation *Vilma Guzmán* and “*Swiss Standpoint*”)

¹ <https://bit.ly/3mCPTVQ> / <https://bit.ly/3LdQ6ZQ>

² <https://bit.ly/3yspCMP>

³ <https://bit.ly/3ZVwFZN>

⁴ <https://bit.ly/3Jolano>

⁵ <https://bit.ly/3ZxmpqV>

⁶ <https://bit.ly/3JqHihP> / <https://bit.ly/3SZD6sP> / <https://bit.ly/3YzyQBv>