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US Congressional Resolution Calls for Annulling the Monroe Doctrine and Ending Sanctions



Gillam's 1896 political cartoon, Uncle Sam stands with rifle between the Europeans and Latin Americans – Public Domain

Now, 200 years after President James Monroe first promulgated his dictate giving the Yankees dominion of the rest of the hemisphere, a congressional resolution calls for annulling the Monroe Doctrine and replacing it with a “new good neighbor” policy. The intent is to “foster improved relations and deeper, more effective cooperation” with our neighbor nations.

Led by Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) and cosponsored by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Delia Ramirez (D-IL), Chuy García (D-AZ), and Greg Casar (D-TX), House Resolution 943 notably calls for ending unilateral coercive economic measures against Cuba and other regional states. Initially introduced on December 19, 2023, Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and Hank Johnson (D-GA) added their co-sponsorships on January 10. Others may join them.

Rap sheet on Monroeism

While the Monroe Doctrine ingenuously claimed to protect hemispheric independence from foreign interference, HR 943 charges that the policy has, in fact, been used as a “mandate” to give the US license to interfere in the internal affairs of other states to promote its own narrow interests.

The resolution forcefully begins with noting the “massive, forced displacement and genocide of Native peoples” by the North American colonialists.

The resolution goes on to enumerate the further progression of the US imperium on the hemisphere. Back in the 1840s, the US took 55% of Mexico. In 1898, Puerto Rico (still possessed) and Cuba (Guantánamo still controlled) were seized. From 1898-1934, Washington intervened militarily in Cuba, Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

In 1904, “international police power” to protect US *and* foreign creditors in the region was claimed under the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. In 1947, the CIA was created with authorization for covert action in the region. Then in 1954, Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown in the “first” CIA coup in the Americas.

In 1961, the US facilitated a 21-year military dictatorship in Brazil. The following year, the still continuing embargo (really a blockade) of Cuba was initiated. In 1973, Washington backed a coup in Chile and the succeeding 15-year military dictatorship.

From 1975-1980, the US coordinated Operation Condor with terroristic military dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. In 1983, the US invaded and overthrew the government of Grenada. And in the 1980s and early 1990s, the US backed “dirty wars” in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

In 1991, the US covertly financed a military coup in Haiti. Another coup in Haiti was precipitated in 2004. Starting in 2000, billions were provided for Plan Colombia, implicated in massive human rights abuses. Meanwhile, from 1941-2003, US Naval operations in Vieques, Puerto Rico, caused deaths and lethal illnesses. In 2002, the US supported an unsuccessful coup in Venezuela. US-backed coups in Honduras in 2009 and

in Boliva in 2019 were both followed by Washington's support for the subsequent illegitimate governments.

Although this amounts to an appalling rap sheet, the resolution just highlights some of the more obvious transgressions. Omitted, for instance, is the 1989 US invasion of Panama and overthrow of that government.

US-imposed institutions of regional control

The resolution notes that the Washington-based and largely US-controlled Organization of American States (OAS) ignores "the many egregious abuses perpetrated" by the US and its client states.

Similarly, the largely US-dominated International Monetary Fund is implicated in the regional debt crises, which has resulted in austerity and stagnant development. Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions, which are often imposed by the US in free-trade agreements, are also criticized in the resolution.

The resolution blames the massive regional immigration of displaced persons partly on Washington's own policies. The Central American "dirty wars" in the 1980s and 1990s and more recently the US-sponsored drug wars and free trade agreements are cited among the problematic contributing causes.

Regarding foreign intervention in the hemisphere, although not noted in the resolution, has been the US's actual abetting of foreign interference; that is, when it aligns with its interests. Just this month, the British sent a warship to Guyana. At the same time, a US deputy secretary of defense was meeting with the Guyanese, backing the claims of a US oil company in territory disputed between Guyana and Venezuela.

Further, the US fully backs what amount to European colonies, regardless of whether they are called dependencies, overseas territories, or even departments. France claims French Guiana, Guadeloupe Saint Martin, Saint Barthélemy, and Martinique. Netherlands possesses Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten. The UK has Bermuda, Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the Malvinas. Washington, too, has its own *de facto* colonies of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

Remedies

Following this devastating bill of particulars, the resolution calls for remedies. The first of which is for the State Department to "send a strong signal" by annulling the Monroe Doctrine. A "good neighborhood policy" is proposed to replace it.

That sounds nice. But, as the resolution notes, then US Secretary of State John Kerry mouthed similarly soothing words in 2013 and nothing came of that.

Notably, this resolution adds a bite to the bark, specifically calling for terminating all unilateral coercive economic sanctions. These measures are a form of collective punishment and as such are illegal under international law and condemned by the United Nations.

Regarding the recidivist US practice of backing “extra-constitutional transfer of power,” the resolution urges Congress to legislate automatic reviews of assistance to coup governments. Aid would only be reinstated after the both the US *and* the majority of regional states agree that constitutional order has been re-instituted.

Interestingly, the resolution calls for the “prompt” declassification of all US secret documentation on coups, dictatorships, and human rights abuses. Cover-ups from the past would be exposed.

In terms of regional governance, the resolution insists that the OAS be reformed. Without naming US-sycophantic Luis Almagro, the resolution requests accountability for unethical and criminal activities by the organization’s secretary general plus full transparency on financial and personnel decisions (not explicitly named, but including his girlfriend). An ombudsman’s office is proposed. Human rights rapporteurs and electoral observation would be independent. Similarly, the US is asked to work cooperatively with other regional bodies such as CELAC, CARICOM, and UNASUR.

Unspecified reforms of the International Monetary Fund and other international financial institutions are proposed to ensure equity for loans to developing countries. International Monetary Fund Special Drawing Rights are cited, which would help regional development and climate adaptation. Contributions are also recommended to the Amazon Fund.

Citizen initiatives

Of the sponsors of the resolution, three had been on a delegation to Brazil, Colombia, and Chile in August facilitated by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), where they met with high-level officials. CEPR’s Director of International Policy Alexander Main commented that the delegation sought to “promote a fresh approach to US relations.”

CEPR publishes the monthly Sanctions Watch, which reports on the asphyxiating impact of the unilateral coercive economic measures. Longest sanctioned, Cuba is in dire need of humanitarian relief from Uncle Sam. Particularly debilitating for Cuba was President Trump’s inclusion of the island nation on the State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT) list, which cuts it off from otherwise available aid.

The SSOT policy has been continued by President Biden. A call to reverse the policy is absent from the proposed congressional resolution, which is sponsored by Biden's fellow Democrats. However, the National Network on Cuba (NNOC) and the Alliance for Cuba Engagement and Respect (ACERE) are among the many organizations working to get Cuba off that list. These include faith-based groups such as the Presbyterian Mission and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Even the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), which is the DC-based think tank that serves to give a liberal gloss to State Department policies, wants Cuba removed from the list.

The Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition (NSC) works on reversing US sanctions there and is gearing up against a new congressional initiative to extend the grueling collective punishment. Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice (FTT) and the Venezuela Solidarity Network are among the North America groups working to take the US sanctions burden off of Venezuela.

The SanctionsKill campaign opposes all economic coercive measures, including those imposed by the United Nations. A growing coalition started by Friends of Latin America, CodePink, and the Alliance for Global Justice is working for an "Americas without sanctions." CodePink and World Beyond War hosted a mock "funeral" for the Monroe Doctrine in December.

Counter initiative

Earlier on December 1, María Elvira Salazar (R-FL) and Chip Roy (R-TX) had introduced a resolution, which was opposite of the intent of the resolution led by Velázquez. This other resolution celebrated the Monroe Doctrine's bicentennial and was joined by fourteen other Republican representatives as cosponsors. They asserted that the need is greater than ever to protect against "malign overseas influence." Salazar warned, "China, Russia and Iran are trying to invade the Western Hemisphere."

Although Velázquez's and her fellow Democrats' HR 143 calls for annulling the Monroe Doctrine and ending sanctions, we should have no illusion that their resolution will end US imperialism any time soon. Unfortunately, many on the blue team including their standard bearer have developed a fervor for American exceptionalism similar to the wingnuts on the other side of the aisle.

But, given the seemingly unlimited bipartisan appetite for foreign intervention, it is at least a step in the right direction and a platform that can be used for organizing, particularly against sanctions. As the Spanish daily *El País* commented, the resolution to annul is a "charge against two centuries of US expansionist policy."

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