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The joke and the jokers: Old Hawk Diplomacy and Multilateralism: the Role of the US in the Crisis and Honduran Democracy

"Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." - John F. Kennedy

A long introduction

Someone has to say it to the American people. The people of Honduras feel betrayed by the United States government and resent the bad joke played by American diplomats at its expense. We were led to believe first that the US government sympathized with our plight, only to discover gradually that it is willing to back and whitewash the dictatorship imposed on us. It is not a personal impression, although the jokers have names and faces, which we will consign and remember. Nor is it a matter only of declarations but of facts that speak for themselves, and are of, as yet, unknown but almost certainly terrible consequences. Mark Weisbrot, Co-director of The Center for Economic and Policy Research, based in Washington observes:

The Obama Administration has never once condemned the massive human rights violations committed by the coup regime. These have been denounced and documented by [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), the OAS [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) (IACHR), as well as Honduran, Central American and European human rights organizations. There have been thousands of illegal arrests, beatings and torture by police and military, the closing down of independent radio and TV stations, and even some killings of peaceful demonstrators.

In fact more than twenty opposition members have been murdered. Uniformed officers assault Resistance member's homes at night, without search warrants, beat people up and leave. But there has never once a sign of solidarity much less of condemnation from the US. We would not have US military intervention. And we are not asking for particular reprisals (those are sovereign decisions) but only that the US be congruent with the position it had committed itself to, of working within the regional multilateral organizations, towards which it has now turned its back to with the unilateral declaration that it supports and will recognize elections in Honduras a few days from today, in the midst of nationwide protests against the coup and

their repression, elections under the de facto regime (which the US has said is “illegal”) rejected by the international community at large.

I will not try to analyze the role played in the Coup by private North American interests. Nor will I focus on the role of American media, be it the more liberal N.Y and L.A. Times, which have been consistently critical of the coup or the conservative (from the Miami Herald to the Wall Street Journal), apparently inspired by a crusade against Chavez. I am often consoled by the lucidness of the larger academic community, but will not invoke it here. Nor will I try to solve the contradictions of extremist politicians, who have actively defended a regime, infamous to the rest of the world because of its human rights record; at the same time they denounce violations in Cuba or in Venezuela, where, as of today, there is no evidence of torture or selective murder. I will not indulge either in the intricacies of think tank diplomacy, the vagaries, uses and perversions of lobby.

We all know of the open and vocal involvement of Ambassador O. Reich and his lackeys in providing advice, technical expertise and support to coup leaders. And also of US military officers who led people to believe anything against Venezuela would “go well in the end”. I am acutely aware of the importance of these actors. Of the way in which they shape American public opinion, naïve and uniformed which, in turn, conditions policy. I simply have not enough information to venture an interpretation of these parallel, covert and disperse impulses and activities much of which is inevitable in an open society. And supposedly the State is above and resolves their “contradictions”. So I will focus on the official stance of the US.

Even this can be complex and has its own mystery. I also understand that, for the US Administration, the Honduran question is of secondary importance and not only with respect to major war theaters with geostrategic implications, in which American armies are in a quagmire, but also in regional terms; presumably this is the reason President Obama would not receive President Zelaya in any of his six visits to this country since or before the coup. It is not a matter of “policy”.

There is no such thing as a policy for Honduras. I suspect there is no “Policy” towards Central America as such and have difficulty understanding what could be US Policy towards Latin America: to act multilaterally as Obama promised his peers in Trinidad in order to build a “new relationship”? To exacerbate regional contradictions and rivalries, in a game

to divide and control? To contain the Chavez “threat” at any cost? I can’t say for sure. There are too many inconsistencies.

It would seem important to understand that larger policy as context of more pressing problems, which might inspire officials with the idea that they must make “pragmatic decisions” and take cynical choices in Honduras. But since I hold that underlying and overarching policy to be absolutely enigmatic, rather I will concern myself here with official rhetoric, its phrasing and construct, its supposed logic and transparent pretense, its justification. And the concrete actions that derive from these.

A historical perspective

Everyone in Latin America has heard the old joke that asks, “Why is it that, in the U.S., there never has been a coup de Etat?” And the answer is, “because there is no American Embassy in Washington”. Like most good jokes, this one is unfair but based on hard facts.

I myself have yet to see evidence that the US government was involved in most of the coups that I have been witness to in Honduras, since the one against Villeda (1963) who was cooperating with the CIA and a friend of J. F. Kennedy. At least one of these coups seems to have been an indirect result of U.S. pressure against its protagonists, rather than the other way around. But there is a real problem. US involvement in and support for coups and for dictatorships in Latin America date back to the dusk of the 19th Century. Since 1898, the US has overthrown over forty governments in Latin America, many deservedly unwept. And coups have followed a pattern. Many have been justified by accusing presidents of trying to perpetuate themselves against constitutional limits, paradoxically perhaps -- in America you have reelections -- the Coup against Goulart in Brazil in 1964, for example. While American backed dictators such as Trujillo remained in power for decades, while maintaining “constitutional” structures in place. And coups have taken place mostly against left leaning governments or against the perceived threat of the left. In the first 30 years of the Twentieth Century, years of “Gunboat Diplomacy”, there were 20 US military interventions in the region, five in Honduras: 1903, 1907, 1912, 1919, and 1924, not counting the successful 1911 invasion by American privateers with machineguns. Repentant General Smedley Butler is said to

have said of the first of these, “I made Honduras right for the American fruit companies”.¹

More recently and typically under Republican administrations, which seemed particularly prone to back dictators until now (“democrats and republicans are all gringos” the old saying goes), the Nixon Administration was involved in the Pinochet coup against S. Allende in 1973 and the Bush White House welcomed the last failed coup against Chavez in 2002, although that precocious applause was cause for embarrassment hours later.²

Central America has been particularly vulnerable. The US has pampered, armed and rescued our worst dictators, from Estrada Cabrera (1892-1920) to the last Somoza and systematically organized violent coups against left leaning governments, since the, J. F. Dulles and United Fruit Company inspired Castillo Armas “Revolution” against Arbenz (1954) up to the ten year illegal War against the Sandinista Regime in 1981-1990.³ The US militarized Honduran society under the careful guidance of Ambassador Negro Ponte throughout the nineteen eighties, training officers and terrorists such as Micheletti’s Security Chief Cl. Billy Joya while he christened our trademarked Constitution. This trajectory and the perceptions thereof have bred generation’s old resentments against the United States, which you here, with a curious twist of logic, call “anti-Americanism”. This is a resentment which has become part of a mindset, a slogan, has been consecrated in poetry, and has become a code of identity, hard to fight. More recently in Honduras the Bush Administration, through Ambassador Ford, a specialist on Soft Power, pressured the Zelaya Administration against an accord with Petrosur that provided us with a very convenient oil supply... with commercial reprisals. Though this concept of soft or smart power should have maybe warned us, we were inspired to expect a change when we heard President Obama declare “I am absolutely opposed to and condemn any

¹ Simon Rios quotes in his recent essay on the theme.

² Weisbrot points out that “regarding Allende, there are now thousands of pages of documentation of the role of the Nixon administration in the couple; re/ Chavez, we never had the same investigations but there is very strong evidence that the U.S. was actually involved in the coup (see the notes at bottom to this column: <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/op-eds-&-columns/op-eds-&-columns/venezuelas-election-provides-opportunity-for-washington-to-change-course/> Also, the U.S. engineered the coup that overthrew elected Pres. Aristide in Haiti in 2004, and this was done in broad daylight, they didn’t even try to hide it. See <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20051212/weisbrot>, Personal Communication.

³ The war continued to the election, and US support for the Contras was mostly open, although Congress did eventually cut off money, which forced Oliver North to do his Iran-Contra schemes.

effort to overthrow democratically elected governments...the test for all of us is not simply words, but also deeds”.

Now, there is no consensus as to the origin and nature of the Coup against the Zelaya government. Two opposing thesis prevail. ALBA countries and The Left argue, on the basis of historical analogy and of end results more than on hard facts, the coup is the product of a US backed conspiracy to intimidate other left leaning governments. There seem to be some US congressmen who would like the leftist version to be true, and as many coup followers as adversaries are convinced of it and promote this version, each for their own usage. The other version, espoused by the US government is that the coup is a product of local political mismanagement, that the US opposed it from the outset, and that it wants to back a process through which, accompanied by the OAS, Hondurans can “reach an understanding” on the basis of defending the status quo ante, “the democratic system”, theoretically threatened by the non binding poll that was to take place on the 28th of June on constitutional reform, invoked as the legal explanation of the coup by its perpetrators. Both these theories ignore basic facts. But only the “American” theory concerns us here.

I do not believe the coup was made in Washington or at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa. (It was made in Coyolito and Casamata). But I do think it has demonstrated how profoundly silly “smart power” can be, how finally ridiculous are the claims to have “solved the problem” and how there has been no real change in attitude. If one draws the lines between the dots, one clearly sees that in Washington the hawks are in control.

US policy: Cynical procrastination in support of “democracy”

Ambivalence and contradiction have characterized US positions and declarations and given them a patina of cynicism. Weisbrot points out that, though it voted for the OAS Declaration, which demanded it, Washington has never called for the “immediate and unconditional return” of President Zelaya to power. Repeatedly asked to clarify, Secretary Clinton has refused to say if “returning to constitutional order” as the US proclaimed meant restoring President Zelaya to power, although it clearly implies the de facto regime is not constitutional. Days after the Coup, the US Southern Command declared to the international press “everything is normal with our forces in Honduras; they are performing their usual activities and joint maneuvers with the Honduran Armed Forces”! What does it mean when

Ambassador Amselem declares in OAS that President Zelaya's return to the country is "foolish and irresponsible" a few hours after Sec. Clinton has declared this "would facilitate dialogue".

While suspending diplomatic visas of some officials and announcing measures that affect innocent people who solicit visas, the US has refused to suspend for the most part the funding that the Millennium Program provides for large infrastructure investment.⁴ Although initially the international financial organizations (WB and IADB) suspended loans and operations with the de facto government, beginning two weeks ago they have resumed loans to both government and prominent businessmen behind the Coup.

And most important, from the beginning we have been reading US diplomats published in **Foreign Affairs** and listening to diplomats in service, anonymously quoted, up to the week before last by **Time** magazine for example, advising the State Department against the stance of the regional community (of repudiating the results of elections that could be held under the de facto regime), since such elections are according to them "the way out" and to reject them would prolong the crisis. The official stance continued to be that the US would follow OAS determinations, until the US blocked a Declaration against elections under the de facto regime five weeks ago. Ambassador Llorens had declared President Zelaya had to be restored to office as stipulated by The San Jose Accord and every American official had recognized the coup regime was not constitutional. But suddenly it didn't matter anymore, when Ambassador Shannon last week declared to CNN the US would recognize elections, whether or not the elected President had first been returned to office. And now all American spokespersons have declared that the U.S. will accompany the electoral process and recognize its results, despite the fact that the Continental Community of Nations continues refusing to do so, while insisting "the US is working with the regional organizations". Both things can't be so, at the same time. Several US congressmen have complained about this apparently abrupt "change".

Shannon's revelation was if you will the punch line. In more elegant terms, because this is tragic comical, in literary theory we speak of the moment in which protagonists finally see clearly the truth that had been veiled to them although it be obvious to knowing spectators from the beginning. That is

⁴ By contrast observes Weisbrot, "On August 6, 2008, there was a military coup in Mauritania & MCC aid was suspended the next day. In Madagascar, MCC announced the suspension of aid three days after the coup of March 17, 2009. Mark Weisbrot, "Top Ten ways..."

always the center of the piece. This was such a moment maybe planned from the beginning. And I confessed I laughed, though pained. Now Ambassador Llorens hails the electoral process to take place two weeks from yesterday as the fulfillment of Honduran's sacrosanct democratic rights at the same time he confesses he "obeys orders even when he disagrees with them", which seems reasonable if sanguine.

After falsely leading President Zelaya to believe that he would be restored to his position at the beginning of this month in order to get him to sign the "Agreement", U S diplomats proclaimed "a solution", and now that it has become evident there was no such thing they offer him backing for his restoration "after elections" and with a clear goal of thus consecrating election results. The US has not in the meantime condemned Micheletti's proclamation of a "unity government" he has selected singlehandedly and under his command. And now senior officials declare cynically that President Zelaya has "backed out of the accord after realizing his support in Congress to be weaker than he thought", when in fact, President Zelaya exhorted Congress to pronounce itself and de facto authorities have refused to convene Congress for the decision.

The other game in which the Obama Administration seems to have been entertained from the outset is the question of definition. Is this a military coup? The theory implies that a "military coup" would have "interrupted the democratic process" while a coup by Congress say, or the Supreme Court named by Congress, could be a "defense of Democracy"? One only has to see General Romeo Velasquez's grin when he responds gaily to the press "if this had been a military coup, I would be in charge". He is laughing at the dilemma and the theory behind the question: that the military obeyed "orders" from Congress and The Supreme Court --although not completely-- when they took the President hostage and flew him forcibly to Costa Rica! It is supposedly because of this lack of definition that most aid has not been cut. In fact, all military coups in Honduras have had the backing of political parties and of official circles in the past. And others may not, but the American government knows full well that the military made the crucial decisions on the 28th of June and are in command.

In consultation exclusively with the lawyers of the party they wish to favor, the U.S. Law Library of Congress lawyers based an analysis of the coup on a

formulaic interpretation of treacherous laws.⁵ And in that way paradoxically conclude Honduran democracy was threatened by our proposal of constitutional reform to amplify representation and direct citizen participation, so that ousting the elected executive was but “a peaceful and legitimate constitutional transition in defense of democracy”. They replicate the regime’s propaganda and fallow up on precedents.

“Democracy” nevertheless is the key word, the catchword? Everyone is a defender of Honduran Democracy. Micheletti proclaims himself a defender of democracy and peace and sovereignty. Mr. Shannon’s clownishness has gone to extremes in calling Micheletti along with President Zelaya, “a hero of democracy”. Though democracy supposedly periled when the Zelaya Administration organized a non binding poll with open and voluntary participation to ask people whether they wanted to be consulted on constitutional reform. After all four months before the Coup during the Bush Administration, Mr. Shannon had in fact declared --as if it was his concern and competence-- that “Honduras had other more urgent and pressing matters”, than discussing or having a referendum on constitutional reform. And today supposedly, democracy is to be assured with elections! No matter of what kind, even under military authority. Understanding these contradictions requires real understanding of our current political system.

Democracy as catchword rather than substance

While avowedly committed first and foremost with supporting democracy, the US seems never to concern itself with the substance of that ideology. Rather, it seems to confuse it with and react mechanically to the formalities of an electoral system. Local politicians have clearly identified this weakness and adapted themselves, with a strategy to provide the trappings and forms while denying any substance, manipulating institutions against democratic civic life, proclaiming the letter, not the spirit of the thing. And it seems to work perfectly, with a wink and the complicity of all. It is as if American officialdom had some kind of score card with catchwords and lines for political parties (yes and no), regular elections (yes and no), theoretical universal franchise (yes and no), independent (alas!) electoral tribunals (yes and no) and decided whether they support a system on the

⁵ The “analysis” was refuted by other congressional lawyers and Senator Kerry called publicly for it to be rescinded, though not before the Coup regime had converted into a prophesy

basis of a majority of yes answers. Only in this fashion can anyone conclude that Honduras has had a democracy. What am I missing here?

It is not a new thing, this proclaimed and peculiar American admiration for “Honduran democracy”. For decades now US Ambassadors to Honduras -- and I have been privileged to interview them all for different kinds of official reasons-- have not only shown complacency with the “admitted deficiencies” of our political system but also praised it as “great progress” and construed it to their circumstantial convenience. Negroponte praised our democracy during the Iran Contra Affaire, when hundreds of citizens were disappeared for the crime of dissent and Almaguer demanded the inscription of a foreign national as presidential candidate, in defense of “democracy”. But what is Honduran Democracy? Por sus frutos los conocereis.

Is it government by the people, of the people, for the people? If so, why is it that after three decades of “democracy” the economy grows, but per capita income in real terms remains virtually stagnant, so that yet 65% of the population remains in poverty and extreme poverty? Why do 30 of each one thousand children born alive, die during the first year of infancy due to preventable causes and 31% of survivors are still malnourished five years later? Why do we have 20% illiteracy rates and room for only one third of primary school graduates in middle school? Why do we have to export people to such an extent that remittances are our number one source of foreign exchange earnings? Isn't democracy about social integration rather than a machine of systemic marginalization? What kind of democracy is this that they are defending, if it does not allow a poll to be taken? What sort of democracy has to repress popular demonstrations day after day for four months when repudiated by a majority of the population, but will be redeemed by militarized elections? How could participatory democracy in Honduras threaten the US? Why does the US take party against reform when its system is a product of such reform? Does it assume paternity of the system?

A short history and portrayal of the Honduran political system

No political system should call itself a democracy when it perpetually condemns two thirds of its population to poverty without efficiently addressing the need of basic services (health and education, justice and elemental opportunities) financed through fair and proportionate taxes nor should any system pretend to be a democracy when most citizens can not

participate in civic life of their own accord. Yet such has incontrovertibly been our system in Honduras. The Constitution, that reserves representation to traditional party machines is its kingpin. And it is impossible to solve the problems of the majority when you have in power unconcerned elite.

One of our foremost legal experts, Efrain Moncada Silva, who has published a **History of Honduran constitutions**, declared a few weeks before the Coup that none of the dozen or so Honduran constitutions has ever been issued by a representative assembly or produced a social pact, an understanding between different segments of the population as to how we were to govern ourselves. Nor can the one we have today be amended to that purpose. The 1982 Constitution was born under a dictatorship, party bosses selected the candidates to the assembly and it constituted a political system such as historian F. Xavier Guerra calls, apropos of Porfirian dictatorship, “a fiction of democracy”, in which politics are played and power distributed with complete exclusion of the governed. It is the system founded on that document which came to a crisis, of which the Coup is only a consequence.

When Oscar Arias, Nobel laureate, Costa Rican President and the American chosen mediator, who has repudiated de facto authorities, proclaims that the present Honduran Constitution is “a monstrosity”, he perceives only the tip of the iceberg. He would be further scandalized were he to delve deeper into the complementary laws, the workings of our pretended democracy, in which a handful of political bosses determine the totality of the nominees for elected office, without consulting anyone and in which no one can aspire to participate in elections to even the humblest post of alderman or local party representative without the blessing of those bosses and an affiliation in a nation wide political organization (movimiento) with official certified presence in a majority of counties and departments. It is a ridiculous thing.

Maybe one has to have been in the belly of the monster, of The Honduran Leviathan to fully grasp its inner workings, and that is the reason most foreigners and even most Honduran citizens, who are in fact excluded, have such great difficulty understanding it. I have been there. For in the last twenty years, I have been a candidate in the primaries in the Liberal Party, (despite my opponents and due to inherited privilege) to congress, to the vice presidency and to the presidency on different occasions, and if unfortunate at polling booths controlled by adversaries with a refined culture of fraud, as a result, I have served two terms as a minister and as cabinet coordinator. I have dealt, as a candidate, with The Supreme Electoral Tribunal and Party

Commissions and I have served in the Central Committee of my Party, founded at the end of the 19th century & the largest in the isthmus till now.

I know this system well and I have witnessed how rotten it is and have written about it. It is an astute creature, but it is no democracy. Or rather, it is a sham democracy, a racket. And for all who know it or suffer it, it must be a shame to have the Great Democracy of the World duped by its racketeers, or complicit with them! To have the US defend and praise this system, which your government has done for decades, arguing that it represents huge progress over the military dictatorships of the 1970s, when we are in fact in the midst of a new disguised military dictatorship!

It is also an unpopular system which has generated an ever increasing disenchantment and massive citizen alienation from it, due to a profound lack of credibility. People understand that it does not solve their problems, that it does not even address their worries, that it is a machine that generates electoral propaganda and rhetoric but then afterwards, breeds unavoidable, incurable corruption. So that although thirty years ago almost 80% of the population voted for a Constituent Assembly, now only one half of electors vote and parties have to agree to proportional stuffing of ballot boxes in order not to seem ridiculous. It is a machine that systematically has co-opted the people's will and betrayed their interests; and produced governments that, after winning elections with promises of redemption, turn their back on the general interest in order to privilege and reward party bosses splendidly and feed profit to economic power groups we aptly call "argollas", rings, with ringleaders, una "cosa nostra", Honduran style.

I did not agree with everything President Zelaya said or did, but I identified with him and many of his collaborators in wanting to change that system, not to establish a dictatorial authoritarian regime, rather to democratize it, to demand accountability, to raise awareness, citizen participation. It is also true that we had somehow managed to prevail in elections within that system, but we were unsympathetic to its perversions, acutely aware of its powerful inertia and convinced we had a responsibility to open a new path.

Since the coup, in order to restore legitimacy, peace and a minimum of security to its citizens, President Zelaya has conceded every point in the San Jose Accord and accepted the unacceptable. Arias, Insulza, every independent dignitary has declared so. He has renounced the call for constitutional reform. He knows he needs not be the one to demand it and

has been consistent in his position. He has renounced also the offers of amnesty and of deals that would put him personally in comfort and out of harms way. And in this way has preserved personal integrity and popular trust. Only he can restore peaceful governance. On the other hand North American diplomacy, ambivalent and vacillating from the beginning, forced initially to seemingly collaborate with a hemispheric consensus, has imposed the condition to renounce political reform, and now has backtracked and served as fortress and last ditch defense of coup positions and a corrupt political system. This is tragic because it feeds popular prejudices and stereotypes of transparent hypocrisy. The old cruel joke again.

Conclusion: The perverse dynamics of defending a dictatorship

With no small insolence, and insinuating that US recognition will be enough in the end, US Ambassador Amselem asked the OAS Assembly last week: “What does not recognizing the coming elections mean, not in the the world of magic realism, but in the real world?” Since diplomats won’t, let me explain to such a well read man that it means that Honduras is going to go to a Revolution, with the backing of the peoples and governments of The Continent and, that being the circumstance, perhaps it is not in the interest of the country he represents and which purports to back multilateralism, to stand in our way.

The problem of American policy is not paranoia about Hugo Chavez or Chavez’s paranoia (mirror images one of the other) although paranoids too have real enemies.⁶ Nor is it that the US “underestimates the importance of the Honduran crisis”, as D. Ortega argues. But rather that, as American historian Greg Grandin posits, because these countries are considered inconsequential, US officials think that they can afford to experiment with them, and with their political and human rights. The problem is precisely that there is no coherent policy. The State Department is perhaps logically focused on other serious problems --as it was before, with the Soviet Union--

⁶ Chavez is certainly paranoid when he talks about the U.S. invading Venezuela in the foreseeable future (he does not understand that it takes time for the US to prepare public opinion for a war) but all the other stuff he says about the U.S. destabilizing and trying to topple his government is true. The State Department acknowledges spending hundreds of millions of dollars for groups there; the U.S. refuses to disclose the recipients, but they are certainly all opposition groups. This is still ongoing. And this does not include covert actions that we cannot, by definition, find out about. Btw, as of recently, the Brazilian military still trains for guerilla warfare against a US invasion; and the Brazilians were even more eager than Correa to get rid of the US base at Manta.

to see the complexity of the regional panorama and to foresee consequences. And lacking coherence, policy directions are obscured, manipulated, easily derailed by interested secondary actors within and without and become inefficient. As a result, we have had in Honduras the consolidation of a regime that --despite its control of the media, the backing of a minority (because dictatorship also has a social base) and despite its repression-- the US knows has also the determined opposition of a majority and of a radical minority, which will be justified --shortly- in violence after all attempts have failed, not to mediate but, to restore legitimate authority.

Violence, crime and instability in the region today are direct descendants of crazed Cold War policies of the recent past, although I suppose people like Mr. Negroponte would not be able to see it. What the US does or neglects to do will unfortunately have its own similar results in the future. In Honduras, the Coup has provoked a Revolution. The system broke. All the king's soldiers and all his ambassadors won't put it together again. No matter what happens, the Resistance Movement will in the end achieve the goal of convening a Constituent Assembly. But Revolutions can be peaceful if one deals intelligently with them. Violent if not. Mr. Lanny Davis, the lobbyist formerly employed by Secretary Clinton has confidently declared "A new President will be sworn into office in Honduras on the 27th of January". That might very well be but if elected under the de facto regime that President will not be able to govern peacefully.

In Tegucigalpa, US Ambassador Hugo Llorens sounds simply ridiculous when he "pleads for elections" and declares that "it would be a crime to deny people the right to vote", as if someone --in the Resistance- was in a position to effectively deny anything. Despite the fact that candidates that represent opposition to the coup have been systematically harassed, physically abused, extorted and have declared they will not participate, so that hundreds of Liberal party candidates and several from other two parties have renounced their place in ballots. And despite the fact that the states of the region have declared they will neither observe nor recognize results of those elections. An American journalist asked Mr. Ian Kelly, US spokesman last Thursday: "What does the U.S. think about the human rights situation in Honduras right now? There have been mass arrests, curfews, an emergency decree, and a ban on protests and media closures for three weeks during the presidential campaign. Does that undermine the electoral process, in the view of the U.S.?" Mr. Kelly had no answer.

What we are saying is what the song says: “Estas elecciones no son nuestras”, these elections are not ours... “son del patron”. Elections won’t solve any problem, nor much less give us a democracy. And if elections are held under any other than elected legitimate authority, some people will vote (both private entrepreneurs and public officials have warned employees if they do not prove they have voted, they will be fired and The Attorney General has already announced criminal investigations of Resistance members who have declared that they will boycott elections) but the results cannot be legitimate to a majority of the citizenry and there will be chaos and violence of various origins. Already there are reports of military plans to stage feigned Resistance attacks which would justify more repression.

It is not that there will be fraud, but that these elections are a fraud. And if there is no peaceful solution, there will be war. Not an outright war of an unarmed populace against 30 thousand brutal military and police who do not feel obligated to abide by international conventions, but war nevertheless, bloody war, which will get the aid and fall into the logic and rhetoric of the international left. Those complicit will have blood on their hands. And this scenario could replicate itself. The U.S will determine in the next few hours which way we go. I have aimed here to convince you that Smart Power Diplomacy has been dreadfully stupid in dealing with the Honduran Crisis. That it is defending the purported owners of a system that is a belied fiction of democracy and that its incredible clumsiness will be counterproductive for American National interests in the region. Maybe Utopia is dead and the future belongs to the local “pragmatists” the US hails as saviors.

I don’t know how it can be done, but the real challenge would seem to transcend formalist cynical conceptions so that you may formulate substantive international policies: to guarantee basic human rights within a democratic framework, whereby majority rights are assured against the police state or oligarchic oppression. At least here. How could we breathe life again into the moribund ideal that the Americas are destined to be homes of genuinely free and democratic societies? Is that not the only thing that could bring us together and facilitate the peaceful integration we all need?

(November 2009)