

Bolton fired! What gives?



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By Charles McKelvey

Here in Cuba, we are surprised by the news of the firing of National Security Advisor John Bolton by Donald Trump. We ask, what does it mean? Trump has tweeted that he disagreed strongly with many of Bolton's suggestions, but we are not sure which specific suggestions Trump had in mind. We have been aware of Bolton's opposition to the negotiations with the Taliban, as Trump has moved toward fulfillment of a campaign promise to reduce military presence in Afghanistan. But the White House is denying that the rupture between Trump and Bolton was caused by the issue of Afghanistan alone.

Some of the discourses of Trump since 2016 imply an acceptance of the limitations of U.S. power in the global arena. There is, for example, no program of regime change with respect to China, Vietnam, and North Korea, as there is with respect to Venezuela and Cuba. There has been in Trump's discourses at times an implicit recognition of a multi-lateral world in which the USA seeks to preserve full political-economic-military hegemony in Latin America and the Middle East, implicitly accepting China's powerful presence in the world, but seeking to defend U.S. interests on the commercial plane, through a tariff war. Bolton, who has long been an advocate of an expansive military presence throughout the world, has pushed Trump to a more militarist posture in the world arena, as integral to the restoration of U.S. global hegemony.

Bolton has been central to the aggressive policies with respect to Venezuela and Cuba, and his departure could mean a softening of policies toward Latin America. However, given Trump's assumptions with respect to Latin America, it is unlikely that a different policy toward Venezuela, Cuba, and Latin America will emerge. Here in Cuba, as always, we will be observing the policies of our powerful neighbor to the North toward our region and the world with great interest, always insisting that the political stability of the world-system requires respect for the full sovereignty of all nations, with relations built on a foundation of mutual respect.

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