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## The Organization of American States & the Summit of the Americas

### What is the Organization of American States (OAS)?

- A multilateral institution created during the Cold War. It has historically been used by the United States to impose its agenda on the rest of the hemisphere.
- It was meant to include every country in the Western Hemisphere, but on U.S. orders, Cuba was kicked out in 1962. Venezuela withdrew in 2019 and Nicaragua announced its intention to withdraw in 2021 following repeated OAS involvement in regime change efforts.
- The OAS has played a direct role in overthrowing governments (Bolivia, 2019) and overturning elections (Haiti, 2010). It has been virtually silent on U.S. invasions of Guatemala (1954), Cuba (Bay of Pigs, 1961), Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989), and U.S. backed coups in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and Guatemala, among others.
- Fidel Castro famously called it the U.S. Ministry of Colonies.

### How is the OAS organized?

- It is comprised of three main bodies:
  - The General Assembly is the principal decision-making organ and meets roughly every year.
  - The Permanent Council is made of representatives from member states and manages day-to-day affairs.
  - The General Secretariat carries out the programs and policies decided upon by the General Assembly and the Permanent Council, and is led by a Secretary General.
- There are several institutions linked to the OAS, like the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. These are supposed to defend human rights in the region, but often use human rights discourse to implement the U.S. agenda. The U.S. has never ratified the treaties that underpin these institutions, including the American Convention on Human Rights.

### What is the Summit of the Americas?

- The Summit of the Americas is a meeting organized by the OAS of the countries that compose the body to discuss first and foremost the issues of democracy and free trade
- The first Summit of the Americas was held in Miami, Florida in December 1994. According to the OAS, the goal was “to promote economic growth and prosperity throughout the Americas based



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on shared democratic values and the promise of increased trade and commerce to improve the quality of life for all peoples and preserve the hemisphere's natural resources for future generations".

- Subsequent summits were held in Santiago, Chile (1998), Quebec City, Canada (2001), Mar del Plata, Argentina (2005), Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (2009), Cartagena, Colombia (2012), Panama City, Panama (2015), and Lima, Peru (2018). The most notable Summits were Mar del Plata and Quebec City due to the strong anti-free trade mobilizations. During the Mar del Plata Summit, due to opposition by regional governments and massive mobilization, the unpopular Free Trade Area of the Americas was defeated.
- Cuba has been consistently excluded from the Summit due to its non-member status in the OAS. The exclusionary nature of the Summit has been widely criticized and US authorities have already stated that Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua will not be invited to the upcoming summit, which has already provoked a strong backlash.

#### **How is the OAS financed?**

- The U.S. funds over half of the OAS budget and 80% of the budget for the Inter-American Human Rights System (the same one that has never been ratified by the U.S.).
- Other member states, individuals and private institutions provide the rest of the funds.

#### **Who is Secretary General Luis Almagro and what has he done for the region?**

- Almagro is a Uruguayan politician elected to the post on a progressive platform. He betrayed the region and was expelled from his political party for leading the charge for U.S. imperialism.
- Almagro and the OAS lit the fuse for the 2019 coup in Bolivia.
- He helped legitimize the JOH dictatorship in Honduras.
- He continued the OAS's long tradition of interfering in Haiti.
- He embraced the 2016 coup in Brazil.
- He ignored human rights abuses committed by security forces during massive protests in Haiti, Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia & Chile (governments the U.S. is friendly with).
- He's fully behind U.S. sanctions and regime change attempts in Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba (governments the U.S. hates).
- In the middle of a wave of global rallies in solidarity with Palestine, Almagro tweeted his support of Israel.
- Almagro, who's supposed to represent us in the U.S. as well, has been quiet on U.S. police violence, abuses of immigrants and attacks on environmentalists.



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### **What do regional leaders think of Almagro?**

- "The performance of the current OAS secretary general, Mr Almagro, has been one of the worst in history. He has acted, repeatedly, without consulting the member states... He acts as if he were autonomous." - Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard
- "It is clear that the regional leadership of the OAS Secretary General, Luis Almagro, is seriously questioned. The role he played in the democratic destabilization of Bolivia and the exclusionary relations he maintains with other countries in the area disqualify him from continuing to exercise the role of democratic mediation and facilitation, which he should play at the head of such an important position." - Statement by the Puebla Group, an organization made up of Latin American political figures

### **What are the alternatives?**

- There is a growing movement within Latin America and the Caribbean to replace the OAS with a multilateral institution that will actually respect sovereignty, self-determination and equal rights for all states, and is free of U.S. domination.
- Many alternatives already exist such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.