

## **Nuevo Chicanismo as a Path to the Twilight of the American Empire**

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If within a few decades a majority of Americans are African- and Hispanic-Americans, will it still be the same America?, asked in 2003 a German historian and publicist (Bender 216), anticipating thus the questions Americans would be soon asking themselves. Some of them were soon posed in the now (in)famous *Who Are We?* (2004) by the already established author and advocate of the clash of civilizations theory, Samuel Huntington, who saw in the influx of Latinos, especially Mexicans, the undoing of the traditional 'American values' (see Huntington, *Who Are We?*). The same year the American chorus of concerned voices was joined by a French writer and publicist, Guy Sorman, who concluded that the USA may still be remaining a part of Western civilization but at the same time it was no longer part of European civilization (Sorman 8). Are we then really witnessing the beginning of the twilight of the (Anglo)American empire as we know it and the dawning of, as it were, a neo-Mesoamerica?

Until the 1960s a majority of immigrants to the USA was of Western European descent, or at least were born in countries rooted in Western Christian civilization, so even when they came from Central, Southern, or even Eastern Europe it was still justified to speak of their common civilizational heritage that they would also share, once in America, with the Angloprotestant mainstream of its society. In 1960, for instance, the five most numerous nationalities among those who chose to make the United States their new homeland that year were: Italian (1 256 999 people), German (989 815), Canadian (952 500), British (833 055) and Polish (747 750) (U.S. Census Bureau, "Region and Country"). The very next decade, however, witnessed the surfacing of entirely different, though not new, sources of immigration. By the end of the '70s inflows of migrants from Europe had been superseded by those from Latin America and, to a lesser extent, Asia, and within just a few next decades the two managed to restructure entirely the ethnic profile of the American society, and especially its first generation component. While in 1970 immigrants from Latin America amounted to a mere 1.8 million the number – growing within just thirty years by as much as eight times –

reached in 2000 14.5 million. The similar was true about migrants from Asia, whose number also increased several times, growing during the same period from 800 thousand to 7.2 million ("Coming to America"). Moreover, the latest data point to a reinvigorated growth after a short period of relative subsidence in 2004 and 2005, as the wave of Latin Americans coming to the USA has by now reached 1.3 million per year and is expected to grow further in the nearest future. What further adds fuel to the already soaring fire of ethnic redefinition of the structure of the American society, the influx of immigrants from Europe has drastically diminished at the same time, hastening thus the ever more feared and bemoaned 'de-europeization' of America's ethnic composition (Passel and Suro 4).

But are today's fears justified, bearing in mind that very similar and, as it would later transpire, largely unsubstantiated qualms already filled once the minds and hearts of Angloprotestant Americans fearing the loss of the 'true American Ways' when 'those hordes' – to quote the contemporaneous poet Thomas Bailey Aldrich – of "wild motley throng men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes, featureless figures of the Hoang-Ho, Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, and Slav" were storming America through the "wide open and unguarded ... gates" of the Ellis Island at the beginning of the turning of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Aldrich)?

As Robert McNamara remarked once – realizing that a nation as diverse as his own can only be kept together by a common system of values – the greatest strength of a nation lies not in its military prowess, but in its unity (qtd. in Bender 165). If the United States of America is an (Angloprotestant) idea, then, built upon a social contract (whose precepts are rooted in the philosophical and religious canons of Western Christianity) and a mutual understanding of and agreement about what it connotes; if being an American is, as it has always been proudly claimed by Americans themselves, less a matter of birth and much more a matter of choice, and a conscious and informed one; if what America stands for is not rooted as much in common ethnic, racial, historical, national, or cultural heritage as is the case with other modern states; in other words, if the patchwork of America's peoples is stitched together not by the commonality of what their country's Past is (since there is no such thing as a single Past for all of Americans) but rather of what its Future should be, then what will happen when the biggest single non-Angloprotestant building block of that ethnic *mélange*, which Latinos had become by 2000, chooses – as Huntington and a growing number of other analysts warn – to break with the once cherished tradition of the 'melting pot'? What will happen if it chooses neither to assimilate nor acculturate? In other words, if it chooses not to Americanize, or at

least not in the way it has been always defined by the Angloprotestant mainstream, which is simply by assimilating in it? Could what happened recently in Germany or in France, where ethnic minorities – which practically never assimilate, not even in the third and plus generations – kept the country burning for weeks, be an omen of the racial and ethnic turmoil that could end with the twilight of the American empire, of this Winthrop's 'city upon a hill' meant to be watched by other nations and learned by the example of?

It is a fairly indisputable fact that by now the Latino, or Hispanic minority – this long disenfranchised and ostracized pariah of American society that comprises both immigrants and US-born Americans with ties to Latin America; this 'sleeping giant', as it has been called (somewhat evermore apprehensively) for years now – has woken up and come to realize that the solution to this 21<sup>st</sup> century dilemma that bothers the rest of the society is largely in their hands. That the 'Latino giant' has been sleeping for so long is due to a variety of reasons but two seem most important. First, since the Latino minority comprises hyphenated Americans with roots in many different countries of Latin America, those belonging to the category 'Latino' or 'Hispanic' – which terms in themselves are practically a creation of the federal administration, largely the U.S. census Bureau – did not until recently seem to be able to speak with one voice. Now with the recent rise of pan-Latino identity and the idea of their common roots in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica (not to mention that over 60 percent of Latinos today are actually of one, Mexican origin) the Latino voice has become much more cohesive (Lebiecki, *The American Dream*).

If one major reason was of an introspective nature, pertaining to the question of Latino self-identity, then the other is related to different perspectives of the nature of the relationship between Anglo-Americans and Latinos themselves as well as of their place within the framework of the existing social and ethnic relations. What has always distinguished one viewpoint from another is the degree to which Latinos believe the question of their (lack of) assimilation is relevant to the problem of America's civilizational identity and to the response with which it should be met. For decades now there has existed practically a whole spectrum of possible answers – from indifference to extremism, but one that can be practically brought down to a division into three distinctive approaches.

The first of them is what could be called an integrationist, or 'assimilationist' approach, whose adherents – as the very term suggests – advocate full integration and assimilation in the American mainstream society of all immigrants, not only Latinos, who – if they want their share in the American Dream – should accept as their own the traditional

system of 'American values' and simply 'blend in' (Lebiecki, The American Dream). The second one, for years the most popular among Latinos, is a 'pluralist' approach. Its followers believe in multiculturalism, vastly popular in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and would like to see both goals realized – a successful functioning of the Latino minority within the existing framework of the Angloprotestant-dominated society and at the same time securing for themselves a niche, in which their distinct cultural and ethnic identity could be cultivated unbothered. Finally, there is the so called *Nuevo Chicanismo*, whose largely nationalist agenda is based on the alleged incompatibility of the cultures of American (including Latino) native peoples and that of the 'European invaders' (Lebiecki, *Esta Tierra Es Nuestra*); an approach that shall be discuss here in detail since it will provide us with answers to the questions posed at the beginning.

The supporters of the assimilationist approach are similar in their worries to 'white' America, highlighting on the one hand the dangers of the widely becried 'latinization' of America, such as racial, ethnic, national, and political conflicts, and on the other hand the advantages that can result from a successful assimilation. First of all, as it is claimed, extensive integration is the only path in America to the equality of chances, of treatment, and before the law – all of which are going to stay out of reach for Latinos as long as they choose to remain within the largely hermetic boundaries of Latino culture, stick to the Spanish language, and – often out of spite for the *gringo* – refrain from 'bandwagoning' upon the Angloprotestant-designed and well tested means and ways of achieving the American Dream. Because even though multiculturalism, the current social policy in vogue that cherishes 'political correctness', 'positive discrimination', and other such minorities-friendly methods may seem friendly towards conspicuous ethnicity in reality only their joining the mainstream America will open a path to all the opportunities enjoyed in 'white' America and empower 'ethnic' Americans enough to be finally able to realize both their dreams and their potentials since life in the United States, regardless of its long cherished and beloved ideals, is in everyday reality far from the Constitution-guaranteed promises of egalitarianism, multiculturalism, and meritocracy (Lebiecki, The American Dream). The Angloprotestant culture remains the *de facto* dominant culture of America and along with its ways, traditions, customs, and language it constitutes what has been known for centuries as 'the American Way', and all that Latinos can do about it is to accept it (see Gann and Duigan; Chavez). This perspective, typical for all assimilationists, has found one of its most stalwart defenders and propagandists in Richard Rodriguez, who in his autobiography highlighted the feelings of

alienation and ‘otherness’ that accompanied his childhood, during which, as a non English speaking son of immigrant parents, he was painfully deprived of what would otherwise have been a comforting feeling of belonging:

Only when I was able to think of myself as an American, no longer an alien in *gringo* society, could I seek the rights and opportunities necessary for full public individuality. The social and political advantages I enjoy as a man result from the day that I came to believe that my name, indeed, is *Rich-heard Road-ree-guess*. ... I celebrate the day I acquired my new name. Those middle-class ethnics who scorn assimilation seem to me filled with decadent self-pity, obsessed by the burden of public life. Dangerously, they romanticize public separateness and they trivialize the dilemma of the socially disadvantaged. (Rodriguez 19-27)

In other words, assimilationists argue that children born to parents coming from ethnic minorities will not feel they are treated on the same basis as their Anglo-American friends as long as they continue to bear the stigmata of their ethnicity and of their ‘otherness’, and that crippling feeling will diminish the chances they would otherwise have of joining the mainstream and thus achieving the Angloprotestant-defined American Dream. Only once they have accepted as their own the mainstream Anglo-American culture of ‘the land of opportunities’ – and that will not happen until they consciously sever the umbilical cord anchoring them to their ethnic culture – will they have a full access to the ‘opportunities of the land’.

That does not mean, however, that Latinos should altogether deny the culture of their ancestors and bring their children up believing they themselves are what they are not, that is Anglo-Americans. That, first of all, would be futile and, second, result only in some kind of an ‘ethnic schizophrenia’. Latinos can and should preserve their cultural heritage if they like but only, as it were, on a ‘private’ basis. Just like in the case of religion, there should be a Jeffersonian ‘wall of separation’ between the participation of Latinos in public life, which should conform to the standardized American Way, and that of their private life, in which they would be free to cultivate the folklore and language of their ancestors’ or their homelands. This is exactly, as Linda Chavez argues, what other minorities living in the USA are doing and Latinos should be learning by their example:

If Hispanic parents want their children to be able to speak Spanish and know about their distinctive culture, they must take the responsibility to teach their children these things. ... The best way for Hispanics to learn about their native culture is in their own communities. Chinese, Jewish, Greek, and other ethnic communities have long established after-school and weekend programs to teach language and culture to children from these groups. Nothing stops Hispanic organizations from doing the same (Chavez 164).

The arguments of Rodriguez, Chavez, and other assimilationists – popular as they might be among the academic circles – have not, however, gained much popularity among the Latino minority as a whole. Instead, until recently it has been remaining much more receptive to the arguments of those who advocate the vision of a pluralist and multicultural American society in the belief that the most natural form of organization of a modern nation is that of a pluralist, multiethnic, multicultural, and multilanguage society (Wardhaugh). Their argument is based on the claim that borders between contemporary states seldom coincide with those between communities belonging to different ethnic, cultural, and language families, no to mention that the latter themselves often overlap one another. Departing from this viewpoint, ‘pluralists’ argue that the culture and the (Spanish) language of Latin America are equally – if not more – deeply rooted in the United States (at least in its southern and western regions) as those of Anglo-America. After all, Spanish *conquistadores* had established their native language as America’s *lingua franca* long before English-speaking pioneers and settlers set their feet there. Moreover, the Spanish culture and language that had been assimilated by peoples native to the then New Spain has never left those regions – not even when as a result of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 (known to Mexicans as *la intervención norteamericana*, by the way) northern half of Mexico became Southwest US... As it was succinctly put by José Cárdenas, „my ethnic culture is part of this American culture” (Cárdenas 77). Other non-Western European cultures might have appeared there much later but it does not change the fact that today the American society is *de facto* a multicultural one and its multiethnicity and the resulting multiculturalism must be recognized and accepted by the society’s traditionally dominant Angloprotestant mainstream if it aspires to being truly meritocratic and egalitarian, while the government should not only allow the minorities, who have every right to their ‘cultural reproduction’, cultivate their native customs, traditions, and languages, but take itself an active part in the process of cultural preservation (Schmidt 350).

At the same time, however, ‘pluralists’ realize that the United States has been built – and functioning ever since – upon the foundations of Western Europe, Western Christianity, and Western civilization in general with all the resulting consequences, from the existing system of values, to social structure, to private life, to public institutions, to mechanisms of government. That is why the only path for any minority to the heralded equality of opportunity, rights, liberties, and treatment in the USA is through partial Americanization, that is assimilation and acculturation – naturally, as long as it does not threaten their “cultural, social, political, and economic integrity” (Hernández-Chavez 1984, 170) – including the ability to speak the contemporary *lingua franca*, that is English:

For language minority children in the United States, strong English proficiency in all domains is essential. English proficiency is indispensable in today’s world ...

Participating adequately in business, commerce, or the occupational market without a full command of English would be extremely difficult for an individual. And the use of English for interethnic relations in most situations is natural and appropriate and thus very important (Hernández-Chavez 1984, 171).

To sum up the pluralist approach, its advocates intend to transform the USA into such a state in which the degree of its friendliness towards multiethnic plurality and multiculturalism of the American society would be generally understood to reflect the degree of the country’s democratization and meritocratization. Because only then its ‘ethnic’ members would be guaranteed equal access to the mechanisms of power, the decision process, the democratic institutions and all rights, liberties and privileges that are enjoyed by other American citizens without having, at the same time, to renounce one’s ethnic roots and accept as one’s own the identity of the ruling Angloprotestant class (see Fox).

The arguments of both ‘assimilationists’ and ‘pluralists’ – concurrent to a degree as both parties stress the necessity of assimilation and acculturation and where they differ is mostly the extent of the very process – are in turn altogether rejected by the advocates of the third option under discussion here, that is *Nuevo Chicanismo*, which is a form of Latino nationalism. One of their chief arguments against assimilation and acculturation is what they claim to be the abstractness and unreality of assimilation of ethnic minorities in a society governed practically solely by a dominant majority of Anglo-Americans who deep in their hearts and minds remain – regardless of the official and ‘politically correct’ rhetoric – racist

and exclusivist. It is futile to believe, they argue, that even a full assimilation – let alone a partial one – would ever result in a corresponding full inclusion and acceptance of Americanized ‘ethnics’ by ‘white’ America, which remains traditionally hostile, or at least indifferent, towards ‘the Other’. Those of the Latinos who – lured by the empty promises of acculturation – will endeavor upon ‘whitewashing’ themselves will only be made social outcasts by their own doing since neither will they be accepted by the ruling Anglo-American elite, effectively retaining thus the stigma of lesser Americans, nor will they be regarded by their native community as their own any more, remaining thus, as it were, in a cultural limbo, or a no man’s land. Not being ‘true’ Americans yet (and – practically – not ever) and not being ‘ethnic’ Americans any more will only result in their torn identity, and a sense of alienation and isolation (see Flores and Benmayor; “Latino Social Movements”).

The relevance of the argument, interestingly, has been acknowledged by the already quoted pluralist, Eduardo Hernández-Chavez, who observed the existence of the phenomenon among those Latinos, who were making the effort of joining the predominantly white middle class and trying to assimilate into the mainstream and live their lives according to the ‘American Way’. As he wrote, they would be then ostracized by the rest of their ethnic community as “assimilated *agringados* who, having rejected the values of the ethnic community, accept Anglo-American ways” (Hernández-Chavez 1978, 547). And little wonder. Breaking away from the underclass, to which most members of the Latino minority belong, and climbing the social ladder up to the levels traditionally occupied by the white middle class still requires in the American reality a high degree of what can be termed deculturation – that is shedding any characteristics typical for ‘ethnic’ civilizational roots and donning in their stead those that characterize the dominant society – on the part of any ‘ethnic’ American aspiring to a status that would at least make the promise of fulfillment of the American Dream seem feasible in his case (Schmidt 358).

Equally unrealistic to the eyes of Latino nationalists as the promises of full assimilation is the pluralist belief that bilingual education and institutions could pave the way to equality and better life opportunities for Spanish-speaking Latinos. Because such measures, even if officially sanctioned under the pressure of various Latino interest groups, will be always perceived by the rest of the society as crutches or prosthetics necessary for those who are otherwise incapable of functioning successfully in the everyday reality of English-speaking America. It can also be mentioned here on the margin that this skeptical approach has recently proven well-grounded. Bilingual education – meant to help Latinos join the



nation-wide race to the fulfillment of all the promises of the modern Promised Land, has not proved to be the springboard it was supposed to be but a dead-end trap instead because all it did was lull its non-English speaking beneficiaries into a false sense of self-sufficiency that would last only as long as the educational process itself. Not only would the true nature of this fallacy be most painfully revealed once they were supposed to function without the help of the educational system or bilingual officials, but by the time they have realized this they would also be past their best learning years when they still had a chance to master the language so that they could speak it at a native-like level (Huntington, "The Hispanic Challenge").

It must be also admitted here that the distrust displayed by Latino nationalists towards government-controlled preservation of their culture and their conviction in the impossibility of achieving equality in a multicultural society is equally well grounded in their own experience as it is in political theory. The very definition of the state as a political entity justifies their stand to a point. Since on the one hand one of the main responsibilities of the government is to homogenize the society so as it could be truly described as a nation, which in turn would justify the very existence of the nation-state itself, and on the other hand it must also reflect the nation's culture and system of values according to which it functions in order to be legitimate (Gobel 2), it will be tempted by definition to represent the interests of the dominant culture and display a tendency to coerce the margins of the society to accept the ways of its mainstream. Thus the only effective method for ethnic minorities to preserve their ethnic and cultural legacy is to actively oppose and counteract the natural tendencies of the state to make them assimilate and thus succeed in homogenizing the nation (Bonilla, Meléndez and Morales).

Bearing in mind the three main approaches towards the place and responsibilities of minorities (both to themselves and to the nation-state) displayed during the last decades by Latino political activists there is one more question that needs to be answered before we try to determine the future prospects that are opening today before the Latino minority, this pariah of yesterday, who at the break of the 21<sup>st</sup> century became the largest (and fastest growing) minority in the USA. Namely, which of those approaches seem to be gaining most support within the 'rank and file' of the Latino community.

What can be induced from the Latino National Political Survey carried out in 1992, a mere decade ago most members of the ethnic minority supported the pluralist claim, believing that their successful functioning within the framework of the Anglo-American society could be achieved without losing at the same time much of their cultural identity. They would thus

reject the pessimism of assimilationists along with their call for total immersion in Anglo-American culture as both an unnecessary prerequisite for the fulfillment of the American Dream and as obviously – and unnecessarily – destructive to their own native culture. The nationalist approach, on the other hand, still seemed too radical and – equally unnecessarily – antagonizing the two communities that should be learning how to coexist, Anglo-Americans and Latinos (see de la Garza, De Sipio and Garcia). As recently as in 1993 Ronald Schmidt would write:

What is the future of politics ... for the Latino community? In regard to preferences there is little reason to expect Latinos to turn away from their support for a bilingual, pluralistic ... policy in the near future ... the on-going development and expansion of Spanish language and bilingual institutions ... provide structural support for possible long-term bilingualism [and biculturalism] for Latinos. ... The fact that Latinos overwhelmingly support a pluralist, rather than a nationalist approach to ... policy could help to allay the fears of those who perceive these groups to be rejecting assimilation in favor of a nationalist policy of “separatism” (Schmidt 360).

At the same time Schmidt also realized that too strong a push towards extensive assimilation and the consequential deculturation would turn the so far moderate Latino public away not only from assimilationists, but also pluralists and – in a natural desire for counteraction – towards nationalists (Schmidt 361). As the anthropologist George Scott has demonstrated, the intensity with which members of a given ethnic group would defend its cultural identity remains in a direct proportion to actions taken to deprive them of it; and vice versa – the less pressure for assimilation the government exerts upon the minorities and the weaker its integrationist policy the less likely they are to adhere to their ethnic cultural roots (see Scott). The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its growing concern among the mainstream American public about Latinos not displaying any encouraging symptoms of integration any time in the foreseeable future was only to prove the theory right...

“Will that power, now held disproportionately by whites, be shared in the new America?,” asked *Washington Post* in 1998, when Americans were only beginning to realize that the once ‘sleeping giant’ was slowly waking up, and “what will happen when Hispanics overtake blacks as the nation's single largest minority?” (Booth). The answer was soon to come. During the 2004 Latino Civil Rights Summit in Kansas City José Angel Gutiérrez, a

professor at the University of California and a co-founder of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), Mexican American Unity Council (MAUC) and the La Raza Unida, a nationalist Latino party, drew his audience's attention to the fact that the present Latino generation, "unlike any prior generation, now have the critical mass" (qtd. in Wall, "Memo from Mexico"):

We are millions. We just have to survive. We have an aging white America. They are not making babies. They are dying. It's a matter of time. The explosion is in our population. (...) We are the future of America and we are going to Latinize this country (qtd. in Wall, "Mexican Racist Prof Calls for Reconquista").

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Chicano irredentism was popular mostly among the disenfranchised, among the underclass, making it seem as if the threatening revisionist ideology could be easily remedied and erased from the minds of the more disgruntled of the Latino minority simply with better educational, social and work programs, all aimed at their assimilation into the mainstream of the American society. Today it has become obvious that regardless of the relative easiness with which Latinos can integrate with the rest of the society they ever more openly choose not to, including those who supposedly have joined the nation in the pursuit of its various kinds of the American Dream, has become members of the middle class, and are relatively well off, like Latino academics, for instance (Lebiecki, *Esta Tierra Es Nuestra*). In his vision of Latino irredentism professor Gutiérrez, one of the most outspoken radicals, is by no means alone. There are dozens more whose voice is heard – and heeded – by the average Latino. Like for example Charles Truxillo, professor of Chicano Studies at the University of New Mexico, who already in 2000 not only predicted what we could term here, by analogy to the (in)famous federal policy, a 'reverse assimilation', but envisioned (most probably far-fetchedly) no less than a secession of the Latino-dominated Southwest U.S. and the birth of a new Chicano state of El Norte. One that would consist of today's California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and south Colorado, all once Mexican territories, and northern Mexican states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas (see fig. 1). What makes his visions less far-fetched, though is that, unlike some of the most radical Latino irredentists, Truxillo did not believe the emergence of the *Republica del Norte* could be an outcome of some sort of an America-wide, pan-Latino uprising but of perfectly democratic transformations brought about by the already quickly

changing demographics of the region – “there is a growing fusion, a reviving of connections. Southwest Chicanos and Norteno Mexicanos are becoming one people again” (qtd. in Zoretich).

Fig. 1

## Charles Truxillo's Republica del Norte

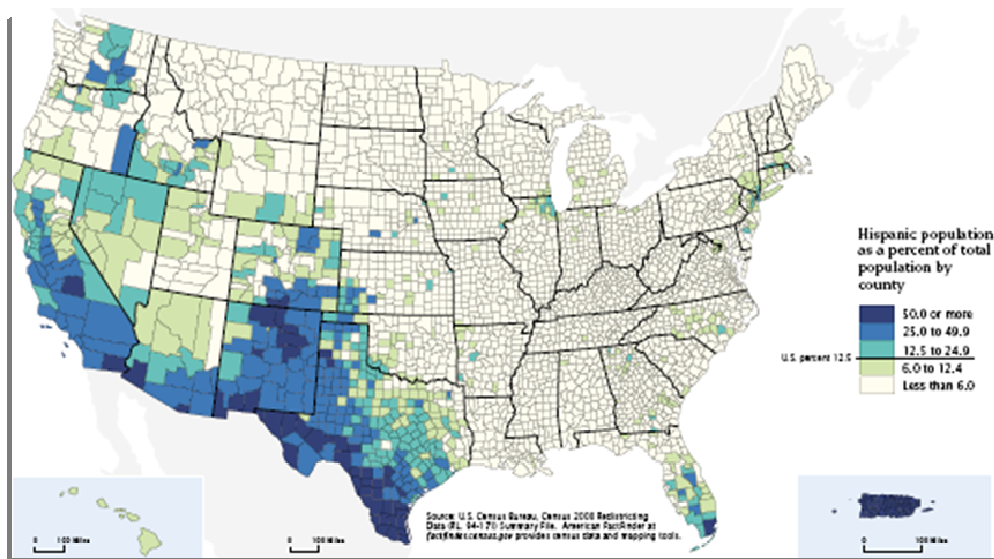


source: [www.mnforsustain.org](http://www.mnforsustain.org)

Such opinions as Gutiérrez's, Truxillo's, and many other irredentists' are naturally ridden with political rhetoric and seem (at least so far) little more than hardly realistic visioning. What they do seem to have (increasingly) on their side is the quickly changing demographics and other statistics that can hardly be disregarded, though – enough to mention the quickly growing size of the Latino population – there are already over 35 million Hispanics, which amounts to circa 12.5 per cent of America's population, or more than a half of its foreign born population and, as projections run, by the year 2050 this ethnic minority will virtually double and rise to a full quarter of the whole American population ("The Hispanic Population"), or the fertility rate, which in the case of Latinos (in 2000) was the highest among all ethnic groups and reached as much as 2,91, while that for white Americans was in turn the lowest among all ethnic groups and amounted to mere 2,01 (Statistical Abstract of the United States 62), or – finally – the ethnic structure of the population in the 'disputed area' itself (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2

Hispanic Population as a percent of total population by county as of the year 2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (P.L. 94-171) Summary File.

Taking into consideration the as yet unprecedented in the history of the USA concurrence of the three factors deemed most crucial for the sustenance of a separate identity of any ethnic minority – the size (both relative and absolute) of its population, its concentration, and proximity of (and the related easiness of maintaining contact with) the country of origin, there is little wonder that the so far (effectively?) stifled frustration on the part of Latinos of being a pariah minority in the USA practically since the very beginning of the territorial acquisition of 1848 has eventually found its release in the form of nationalism, revisionism, and irredentism – all articulated ever more expressively now that their population has reached a truly gigantic proportions. The American Dream, craved by them for so long and for so long remaining out of reach, has by now transformed into a Mesoamerican Dream, a dream of Aztlán. That legendary land of Aztecs that began barely as a myth about common Latino roots and which has already acquired real territorial and political dimensions, because the Aztlán of today...

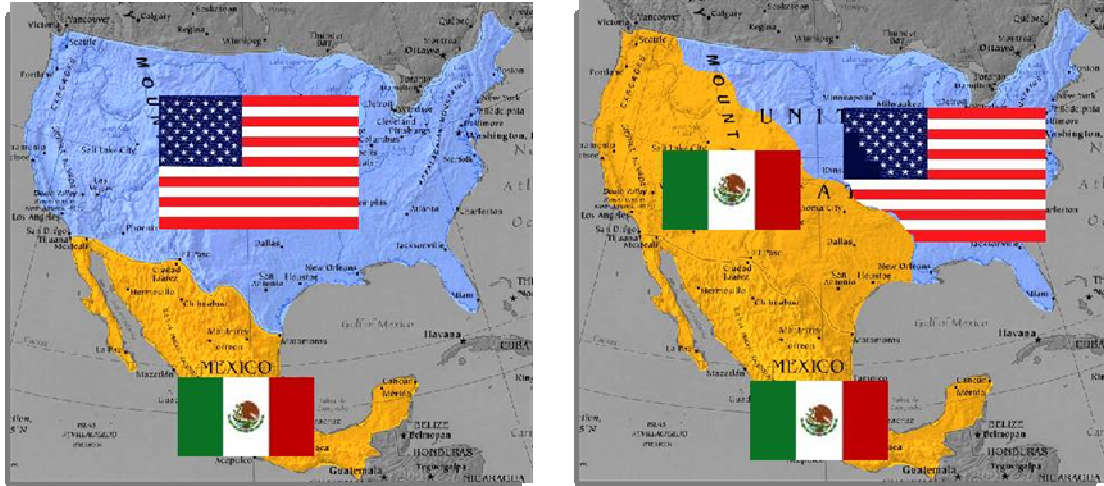
...is the Mexico on the other side, north of the Rio Grande, El Rio Bravo... the mission of Aztlán is to put back together the original land where our ancestors came from. So our movement, then, has everything to do with the Mexico that exists. And that is, to make it bigger, to return it to its original homeland size ("Interview with José Angel Gutiérrez").

Fig. 3

America as feared by Anglo-Americans

today...

...and tomorrow

source: [www.ninehundred.com](http://www.ninehundred.com)

Thus what had its beginning in the 1960s in the form of a mere student movement has by now transformed into a fully-fledged political activity, whose clearly delineated purpose, as Huntington has been warning for some time now, is a factual *reconquista*, that is reacquisition of Latinos' native lands that only temporarily remain under U.S. occupation, the *mi tierra* of the 'brown race' ("Interview with Yolanda Broyles-González"). The recently reestablished and ever more popular Partido Nacional La Raza Unida (PNLRU) – which has proclaimed itself the “voice for all those that have been colonized, marginalized, oppressed, and disenfranchised by this corrupt Euro-centric capitalist-consumer nation” (“Chicano: National Identity”) – calls for nothing less than “complete recognition of sovereignty for native nations and all colonized nations [and] land grant restoration and restitution where appropriate” (“Political platform”). As Gutiérrez explains:

We are a captive people, in a sense, a hostage people. It is our political destiny and our right to self-determination to want to have our homeland [back]. Whether they [i.e. Americans] like it or not is immaterial. If they call us radicals or subversives or separatists, that's their problem. This is our home, and this is our homeland, and we are entitled to it. We are the host. Everyone else is a guest (Wall, "Mexican Racist Prof Calls for Reconquista").

One might, naturally, dismiss – as so many analysts are still inclined to, even among some of the Latino nationalists themselves ("National Chicano Summit "Draft" Statement") – if not the entire *Nuevo Chicanismo* movement then at least its irredentist claims as mere figments of imagination of some delusional and thus harmless radicals and revisionists; effects of a mixture of such unhelpful characteristics of the Latino community as the culture of the *macho*, lives spent in crime-ridden *barrios*, and a typical reaction against the pressure for assimilation that is perfectly explainable with the already mentioned theory by George Scott. A mixture that, admittedly, might potentially turn explosive but one that can be easily disarmed with a proper immigration policy on the one hand (see Buchanan) and a more effective integration policy on the part of the government on the other; such that would enable Latinos the realize their versions of the American Dream and thus diffuse the build-up of frustration caused by being permanent residents of the very outmost margins of the American society (see Montejano). Or, in turn, appreciating the weight of the problem and the implications resulting from the recent growth of the Latino population one might realize that the problems the hyphenated Latinos may be having today with their double identity do not result only from the marginalization of their ethnic community living in the USA or its scant access to the privileges enjoyed by the mainstream of American society, but argue at the same time that the United States is too powerful a country and its nation too unified by its commonly shared history and values to succumb to ethnic unrest and social upheaval anywhere within the American borders in the foreseeable future (see Wolfe).

On the other hand one should not forget that separatism and irredentism – though not a new phenomenon in the modern world – has been enjoying for the last half a century a period of renaissance and, as it is claimed, had never as yet been as strong as today, when the prevention of secession has become one of the burning issues for most multicultural states (Rast), to quote only the examples of Great Britain, Spain, Holland, Italy and – yes – the United States, whose ethnic minorities can all be described as ‘sleeping giants’ that have been waking up and voicing ever louder their plans for devolution, separation, or at least internal autonomy. Interestingly, as Anthony D. Smith already predicted almost three decades ago:

These autonomous movements [will] have arisen ... in their political form, in well-established, often ancient states, with clear and recognized national boundaries, and

with a relatively prosperous economy.... All these states are fairly industrialized, and much of the population is literate and even quite well educated (Smith 4).

Of course, probably neither today nor tomorrow Americans should be too concerned with the possibility of a (pan-)Latino revolution that would be able to wipe the United States of America from the map of the continent and establish in its stead something in the like of *Estados Unidos de Mesoamérica*, as the boldest visionaries among Latino irredentists would like to believe. Both the state and the society are still too well structured and functional to allow that to happen. Nevertheless, as Bender claims, history cannot be either fooled or cheated – all empires meet their twilight eventually and so will the USA, just as the Roman or the British empires have, and will be brought down either by an external or an internal enemy (see Bender). And since, As it is predicted, ethnic conflicts will extend far into the future (Rast 35) the fall of the United States as a military and political empire may not necessarily come from the well expected direction, that is from Islamist terrorism, and against which the USA may be relatively well protected, but from within. Possibly such an end is only a matter of time; time that is awaited ever more impatiently by the descendants of the builders and rulers of the Aztec, Mayan, and other Mesoamerican empires of old, which were also once doomed to meet the end of their rule...



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