

The US Methods and Goals to Destabilize Venezuela

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The qualitatively new roles that China and Russia play in the twenty-first century, as well as the defeats that the United States suffer in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, force the latter to reformat their geopolitical strategies. Their aim is to prevent the development of multipolarity trends in the world and return to the philosophy of the Monroe doctrine. The current situation in Venezuela reflects deep contradictions not only in the region. The main goal of the United States is to end Bolivarian sovereignty. The recolonization of the continent will serve as a platform for further attacks on potential 'enemies'. A parallel government should open a cycle of violence that will allow the United States to end the Latin American 'pink tide' (turn to the left) and regain the lost control of natural wealth. This is one of the pillars of policy of 'Making America Great Again'. Today, the Venezuelan economy is blocked and strangled by sanctions. This is contrary to the model of humanity which is trying to establish itself in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: *hybrid war, PDVSA, socialism of the 21st century, the US sanctions.*

The United States and the 'Industrial Turn' of Venezuela in the Twentieth Century

Venezuela did not participate in the First World War, which created favorable conditions for its socio-economic development. National capital was used to build factories, plants and power stations, which, together with the production of traditional agricultural exports (coffee, cocoa, rawhide, natural rubber) and also provided the basis for a balanced expanded development process. The discovery of oil fields in Maracaibo in 1916 gave a powerful impetus to the process of industrial specialization of the country. Since 1925, the oil production and export began to determine the world orientation and prospects of Venezuela.

The policy of the president-dictator Juan Vicente Gómez (1908–1935), who had transferred oil fields to the concession to foreign capital 'at the disposal' (Law of 1920), caused a wide public protest. Mass student demonstrations and strikes in factories were severely suppressed by the police. The movement, in which most of the bourgeoisie and military were involved, was suppressed with difficulty. The international monopolies Standard Oil (USA) and Royal Dutch Shell (UK/Netherlands), with the help of Venezuelan oil, advanced to the key roles in the world economy, as well as in the social and economic structure and political system of the country, and gained a very important place in public administration of Venezuela.

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World War II contributed to a number of progressive transformations. The introduction of control elements and limitation of the scale of foreign economic expansion contributed to the qualitative growth of national enterprises (Law of 1943). The process of transformation of latifundia into a capitalist economy had started.¹ The practice of creating political parties, primarily of a petty-bourgeois nature, was developed. One of the results of the defeat of fascism was the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR, permission to operate given to the Communist Party of Venezuela (CPV), and the granting of suffrage to women. The Government of Rómulo Gallegos adopted the Constitution (recognized as the most democratic in Venezuela's history) and increased tax deductions on the income of foreign oil companies. However, the inconsistency of government reforms, concessions to the trade and financial bourgeoisie and the US monopolies undermined the prestige of political leaders. At that, the US Embassy played a coordinating role in the swift overthrow of Gallegos (in February – November 1948) and organization of a military coup.

The ensuing twenty-year period of undivided control and dominance of the Americans over the homeland of Simón Bolívar – one of the most authoritative, bright, heroic leaders of the War of Independence of the Spanish colonies in America (1808–1826), reflected the highest degree of oppression, disenfranchisement, humiliation in which a formally independent state may be.²

The attempts to weaken or even overcome the imperial dependence on a loyal neighbor were repeatedly used, especially since the US constantly used Venezuelan oligarchy to provoke political polarization in the state.

In the late 1960s – the first half of the 1970s, another reform of the country's political landscape allowed the leader of the COPEI party Rafael Caldera to mobilize a wide public Alliance. The President granted amnesty to the partisan movement, carried out a number of democratic political reforms, established diplomatic relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union, and lifted the ban on the activities of the CPV. National Business approved its law to increase up to 60 per cent the tax on the income of foreign oil monopolies (1970), nationalization of the gas industry (1971), denunciation of the 1939 Trade Agreement with the United States, the country's entry into an integration association – the Andean Group. Such a policy was described by the United States as a serious challenge to its national interests. The direct and indirect US control over the Venezuelan media allowed pro-

¹ The agriculture of Venezuela used to be of a latifundist character. Three per cent of landowners owned 70 per cent of the agricultural land, while a half of the poorest peasants accounted for one per cent of the land. Millions of peasants were completely deprived of land.

² In 1948: Dissolution of the national congress, the first repeal of the Constitution of 1947, abolition of democratic freedoms, prohibition of leftist and petty-bourgeois parties; 1950: severe suppression of the oil workers' strike, transfer of concessions for the development of railway fields to American monopolies; 1952: initiating the breakdown of diplomatic relations with the USSR. The government of Marcos Peres Jimenez isolates regimes in prisons and concentration camps of 1,000 opponents, suppresses the mass organizations of workers, paralyzes the work of opposition bourgeois parties, supports the US actions against the government of Juan Jacobo Arbens Guzman (Guatemala), transfers to the US monopolies one million hectares of the richest oil fields (1956–1957). The American investments, which account for 2/3 of all foreign investment, guide Venezuela's foreign and domestic policies. The levers of governmental pressure over the public sector enterprises that were created in the 1950s (metallurgy, petrochemicals, and aluminum production) are managed by American capital. Anti-Cuban policy becomes the key element of Caracas's external initiatives. American consultants level the law on agrarian reform, supporting the law on reducing wages for workers and employees.

American organizations to concentrate election rhetoric in Venezuela on the pressing problems of the local population. As a result, the elections (in March 1974) were won by the *Acción Democrática*, candidate Carlos Andrés Pérez.

Two stages of the global oil crisis (in 1973/1974 and 1980) rapidly increased not only the regional significance of the state, but also the place of Venezuela's oil industry in the world economy. In greenhouse economic conditions, the influence of a bipartisan political structure was actively developing here, which was largely formed and directed by the US geopolitical and economic institutions.

Large scale socio-economic injustice gave rise to a deep apathy of Venezuelan society. Ever-pervasive and divisive corruption helped the political community to control legislative institutions, government institutions and executive authorities. The upper part of the middle-class pyramid actively bought up real estate in Miami (Florida, USA).

The acute socio-economic and political crisis of the 1980s contributed to the growth of self-consciousness of the population. Political parties and social movements continued to emerge, merge, disintegrate and rearrange as the time of the next elections or the provocation of political and economic cataclysms began. Against this background, the electoral promises of two national groups of political leaders become ephemeral even before the election of parliamentarians and various levels of heads of administrative territories, including ministers and the presidential administration. Thus, with the help of American PR technologists, it was easy for a candidate for President of the Republic to ensure an unprecedented pre-election turnout – 97 per cent of the number of elected bodies registered in the country.

In 1989, inflation broke another record, reaching 84 per cent. President Carlos Andrés Pérez, meeting with the IMF emissaries, seemed to fail in successful reorganizing the country's foreign debt. But the population did not start to live better. Moreover, ordinary demonstrations of 1989 and 1992 Venezuela turned into a bloody fight. Therefore, it is logical that the workers' speeches were followed by two failed coup attempts, as well as the impeachment of Carlos Andrés Pérez – for embezzlement of state funds. The ex-president of Venezuela, with a great practice of law, despite the international documents formalized by the state and the requirements for his forced extradition to the country, lived his century in Florida.

The Genesis of Hugo Chávez's 'Bolivarian Project'

A fundamentally different situation began to take shape in Venezuela following the 1998 presidential elections (and re-election in 2000) of Hugo Chávez, the Hizmatic military leader, who, back in 1992, attracted attention with a failed military coup attempt against Carlos Andrés Pérez. The program provisions of the 'Movement for the Fifth Republic' (MVR), co-created by paratrooper officer Hugo Chávez, to replace the corrupt, rotten regime of the so-called 'Fourth Republic' called for constitutional reform, a tough fight against the exploitation and abuse of political and economic elites, the construction of a society of social justice, and also included plans for the transition of the country to the construction of socialism. The practice of involving a Venezuelan citizen in the management of the state began with the creation of 'Bolivarian committees' of supporters of Hugo Chávez (Sapozhnikov 2011).

The broad political bloc established on the basis of the DPR – the Patriotic Pole dynamically strengthened the position of the Socialist President. Hundreds of thousands of

indigenous people (Indians) for the first time received 'the right to the land of their traditional residence'. The landslide victory of Hugo Chávez in the presidential election, and his supporters in the parliamentary elections, paved the way for the continuation of deep socio-economic reforms. Their resource basis since the beginning of 2002 became the proclaimed principle of redistribution of oil revenues, formally produced by the state-owned *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)*. The state control would allow for the adjustment of prices for 400 commodities, including food, countering a rising inflation and administrative sabotage by some enterprises and public sector managers, who used different loopholes to gain personal profit.

The active opposition of part of the former political and economic elite to the proclaimed course towards the renewal of society grew into an attempt at a coup (in April 2002). Two days of confusion, resulting in the seizure of power by the Provisional Government, the arrest of President Hugo Chávez, the dissolution of the national Parliament, the Supreme Court, the Electoral Committee, the suspension of the country's Constitution, *etc.* supported and officially recognized only the United States and Chile. Moreover, it is known for certain that authorized representatives of the Ad-Ministry of the US President George W. Bush (2001–2009) on the eve of the putsch met with a delegation of the Venezuelan opposition in Washington. In this regard, the lawyer Eva Golinger (USA, Venezuela), made public documents according to which the United States only through the Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Agency for the Development of Democracy invested more than US\$ 20 million in maintaining permanent instability in Venezuela.

The liberated President refused to apply extreme measures to the putschists. Therefore, in 2004 the right-wing opposition, again conducted by Washington, tried to remove President Hugo Chávez, peacefully, through a national referendum. Its results were staggering: about 2/3 voted against holding new presidential elections. Millions of people in poor urban areas, as well as in rural areas of the country, queued for hours at polling stations. As the previous day, the broadcasts of the country's main radio stations and private television channels were filled with numerous results of 'mass polls' that predicted the imminent displacement of the socialist president.

Thus, Hugo Chávez's opponents, using two illegal attempts to overthrow the government (a coup d'état and a nationwide strike organized by business structures) still failed to use an article of the Constitution (initiated by Hugo Chávez himself) to remove him from office for three years.

This forced the Comandante's opponents to go on to find qualitatively different ways to fight their powerful opponent. In an interview in the Venezuelan newspaper *El Nacional*, Carlos Andrés Pérez emphasized: 'I am striving to eliminate Chávez. We'll get rid of him with violence. That's the only way... Chávez will die like a dog because he deserves such death'.

Nevertheless, the widespread support of the population of Hugo Chávez made it possible to make fundamental changes to the Constitution of the country, transfer the Central Bank of Venezuela to the control of the President, create new administrative provinces (controlled by the central government), reduce working hours by 1/4, *etc.* As a result of the approval of new constitutional amendments at the referendum (in February 2009) Hugo

Chávez announced the logical need to move to the construction of the ‘third phase of the Bolivarian Revolution’.³

The third stage, designed for ten years, involved the deepening of social and socialist revolution, the intensification of the fight against poverty, corruption, unemployment and crime, and the elimination of illiteracy. The state sector of the economy was proclaimed the economic base of reforms, which was actively expanded due to nationalization (2007–2008) of the oil industry, as well as the steel industry, cement industry and mobile communications. The relatively stable volume of foreign exchange revenues that the country received until the mid-2010s ensured the stability of the national currency – bolívar, which contributed to the implementation of important social programs. One of the President's initiatives took the form of an ‘economic war’ on the retail trade sector (due to the current shortage of consumer goods until 2010), which Hugo Chávez carried out very efficiently.

There is reason to argue that Hugo Chávez, with wide reliance on the masses of the population, was able to defeat ideological opponents, both inside and outside the country. The social programs implemented by him put faith in him, affirmed the cult of personality. This was possible in the context of acts of widespread sabotage, which markedly worsened the social situation in the country.

The reaction of the northern neighbor was predictable. And totally untidy. Nevertheless, the practice of applying broad economic sanctions to Venezuela by other states had not been seriously developed at that stage. This is not only due to the fact that the US energy needs were built on production facilities that were ‘sharpened’ for Venezuelan oil products. The share of Venezuelan oil that entered the US market at that time reached 80 per cent. In other words, the United States were dependent on oil supplies from Venezuela.

The start of warming of relations between the United States and Cuba became a more significant factor deterring the large-scale imposition of anti-Venezuelan sanctions. At the same time, anti-American sentiment in the Western Hemisphere was growing. Washington was not ready for the opening of the ‘second Latin American front’. Moreover, acts of intimidation by stubborn countries (bombing of Belgrad in 1999, the occupation of Iraq and the execution of Saddam Hussein in 2006, the cleansing of Libya and the death of Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011) required the appropriate mobilization of world public opinion.

The measures taken by the United States during this period are primarily propagandist, preparatory in nature, and the sources of obtaining ‘Venezuelan compromising evidence’ did not belong to the list of ‘credible’ agents, although, at the same time, statesmen and propaganda institutions of the United States actively and unfoundedly referred to them. Among some types of duty, perpetual problems are drug trafficking and the accusation of cooperation with illegal armed groups in Latin America or other regions of the world. An example, from Venezuela's point of view, was the regular ‘concern of the United States about drug trafficking’ and the imposition of George W. Bush sanctions (2008) on 22 Venezuelan governments of officials who ‘assisted’ the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the illegal drug trade. Such accusatory rhetoric was later used almost literally by Nobel International Peace Prize laureate, US President Barack Obama when he imposed sanctions (2011) on other four Venezuelan politicians and intelligence officers ‘for helping’ FARC to obtain weapons and smuggle drugs.

³ The previous, as it was officially announced, ‘successfully completed stages of the ‘Bolivarian revolution’ had time parameters: –the 1st (1999–2006), the 2nd (2007–2009)’.

Hugo Chávez, in the memoirs of supporters and opponents, was preserved as a bright, consistent Venezuelan leader at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, who advocated the fundamental restructuring of the old world order and the construction of a new public world. Therefore, his image, formed in the West, corresponds to the typical Anglo-Saxon stereotype – dictator and tyrant. Hugo Chávez is accused not only of drug trafficking, but also of having links with Arab terrorists, ultra-leftist groups around the world. Having, like Fidel Castro, the ability to reach the hearts and minds of a Venezuelan worker, he had the magical gift of persuading ‘a man from the street’, logically building ideas and plans, as well as ways to achieve social justice, national independence, and not only in Venezuela but also in Latin America.

His death gave rise to a stream of rumors and guesses about the causes of the disease of Comandante, who did not live to 59 years old. In Venezuela, as in Latin America as a whole, the versions of the ‘cancer virus’ and the ‘oncologist conspiracy’ of the United States are widespread. At their core, they represent (constitute) one of the conspiracy platforms of the so-called ‘presidential illness’ in Latin America (Shornix 2013).⁴

Ideological Basis of Anti-Venezuelan Sanctions

The current contradictions between the United States and Venezuela were based on antagonistic ideas about the moral foundations and interpretation of the principles of the national and international interests of those two diametrically opposed countries.

The subordination of US world economic relations is based mainly on the principles of mercantilism. Dialectics of Monroe Doctrine (1823) rested solely on the dominant American interest and strength, which, as the international auto-credibility of the US strengthened (Tarasov, Zubenko 1987) (as the United States strengthened its international auto-credibility), had acquired qualitatively new economic, financial, political, military, technological and other forms of affirmation. The combination of such components allowed the United States of America to become the world's leading political and economic center in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Some US failures and defeats have been blamed on the mistakes of certain administrators. The world hegemon tried to cure catastrophic damage from economically weak Vietnam (the 1970s) with the help of a military walk to Grenada (1983). The imperialist essence of the world gendarme, which showed its complete failure already in the time of Richard Nixon (1969–1974), transformed into a system of liberal American values. They were proposed and imposed on their partners in the territories of those states where more than 800 US military bases were located.

⁴ In the fatal year for Latin America 2011, oncology struck not only Chávez. Thyroid carcinoma was discovered in Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the widow and successor of Néstor Kirchner. President Kirchner himself, a friend of Chávez, died a year earlier from bowel cancer at the age of 60. Another close friend and ally of Chávez, the 66-year-old former President of Brazil Lula da Silva, was diagnosed with throat cancer. In 2011, Silva was replaced by Dilma Russef. She was diagnosed with breast cancer. 59-year-old President of Paraguay Fernando Lugo was diagnosed with lymphoma. Bolivian President Evo Morales at the age of 54 had nose cancer; Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón at the age of 62, has prostate cancer. Oral cancer was also found in the ex-president of Peru, Alberto Fujimori. The list of sick Latin American leaders was headed by Fidel Castro, who warned Chávez's friend about ‘cancer’. The Cuban leader was diagnosed with bowel cancer, and later with a malignant prostate tumor (see URL: <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26045.3/2958764/>).

Such categories as the democracy, human rights, liberal values began to be used by the Anglo-Saxons as an instrument of the enforcement and punishment for those countries that do not share the same interpretation as the US does for these categories. The entire arsenal of colonial policies from the distant past is still being applied to weak US partners (Pape 1996). On that basis, North Atlantic politicians were trying to justify the state of the 'indispensable nation', and a group of Western experts and leaders was trying to create a vision of the United States. In other words, we mean a logical justification for the new role of the United States in a globalizing world. In the 2010s, such a policy was put into practice as a 'state of hybrid warfare', in which, the United States confronts all the states of the world. The leaders of the countries that try to defend their national interests and clearly do not fit into the world economic pyramid are declared flawed and dangerous 'in the free world'.

Thus, at the turn of the twentieth– twenty-first centuries, the ideology of liberalism was reformed into the ideology of ultraliberalism. Its emergence was the result of profound geo-economic and geopolitical changes. One of them was not only the loss of the previous economic dynamism of the United States, but also a noticeable reduction in the country's importance in the modern system of international coordinates and a decrease in the key macroeconomic indicators of the state, reflecting the role and place of the world leader.

At the same time, by imposing on all other states its vision of the civilization of the coordinated system, the United States completely disregards the interests of not only the developing, but also the developed countries of the world. Thus, the international policy of the United States shows the entrenched a practice of fiercely defending its right to ignore and insult other countries, regions, including the states with civilizational values. Thus, the ultraliberalism of the United States is increasingly in tune with the methodology, policies and practice of mocking other countries and peoples.

Hugo Chávez was a typical national leader of a medium-developed state with a single-industry economy, the economic basis of which was oil production. At the same time, as we know, 'the top ten countries with the highest level of development include both advanced states and oil-exporting countries which with small populations receive large revenues from energy ex-ports'. Venezuela is not included in this list.

Coordination with interested partners is the only way to maximize the role of their country in such a market. This is one of the arguments that the President of Venezuela sought to implement in an alliance with OPEC countries. Due to the highly controversial nature of the various states representing this authoritative organization, Comandante was interested in allies with whom joint projects could be purposefully implemented, for example Russia, China, Iran, Libya, *etc.* This also explains the fact that Hugo Chávez became the leader of the first state to visit Iraq on an official visit (2000) after the Gulf War.

One of Hugo Chávez's powerful international achievements was the creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) created on the initiative of Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro (2004). The alliance was aimed at 'the economic integration of a large group of Latin American countries on the basis of the principles of socialism and the collective protection of independence'. The member states (Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Honduras, Ecuador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis) formed a currency union, which allowed them to implement a system of mutual settlements of the ALBA member

countries. The trade policy of the integrating states was focused, among other things, on countries that are not members of the Alliance. With this in mind, Haiti, Paraguay, Uruguay, Iran, Syria received the status of invited members of the ALBA commonwealth.

Not surprisingly, the United States organized an open war against ALBA. The military coup in Honduras (2009), Washington's interference in the presidential election in Ecuador (2018), the campaign of harassment and the de facto removal of Bolivian President Evo Morales significantly reduced the scope of the integration association. Another important factor in the decline in ALBA activity was the growing convergence between Brazil and Argentina within the framework of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) (Zubenko V. V., Zubenko, V. A. 2021).

The severity of the situation around OPEC and ALBA shows the extent nature and parameters of the struggle against countries that follow the path of Washington's hegemony. As during the confrontation with Vietnam, Yugoslavia, Belarus (Russia Today, RT in Spanish. 2014), as well as in the interventions and events in other hot spots of the Earth or territories blossomed by color revolutions, the United States has become the epicenter of creating tension and the organizer of provocative actions. And the example of Venezuela is not the last in this series. At the same time, the countries associated with Washington or military-political treaties or economically dependent are recruited under the banner of the United States.

In the late 2010s, the United States was able to draw a significant number of reputable Latin American and European leaders into the orbit of its aggressive continental policies. This is not only about political support for the anti-Venezuelan campaign, coordinated by the US State Department. Under President Nicolás Maduro, the extremely tense interstate relations between the United States and Venezuela have acquired a systemic economic character. The United States had appropriated the right to adjust the external policies of a large number of states. However, through representation in key international organizations, the US is able to control the economic, financial and military resources of many countries in the world. This allows it to exert pressure on decisions taken by business entities at almost any level.

Economic aggression against Venezuela has been part of permanent US government planning for more than two decades. Its goal is to overthrow the legitimate, democratically elected constitutional government of the country through economic and political destabilization. The organizers of the political and economic chaos make no secret of the fact that their system of measures should lead to a split in the Bolivarian National Armed Forces. This landmark event should be followed by a coup d'état to depose the regime and destroy its internal political structure. The main prize of the putschists should be the country's natural resources. Huge investments in support of Venezuelan opposition forces should help them come to power and, thereby, open access to fabulous oil reserves.

Economy as a Tool of Hybrid War

Participants in the hybrid war are characterized by the use of a large number of tools: economic, psychological, technological, military, cyber power, as well as propaganda's reliance on all kinds of phobias due to which at the national and international levels, conflicts are provoked with economic, political, administrative, judicial security, trade union, as well as other representatives of the authorities and organizations serving as the framework of the system of state institutions. A well-structured policy with carefully selected subjects

for attack can guarantee future victory. Selected personalities (for the purpose of compromising), key industries and sectors of the economy (to be weakened or blocked), as well as the practice of using possible types of international sanctions, are usually known in advance and do not form the basis of state secrecy. Through sanctions imposed with complete disregard for international norms and rules of the UN system, the United States and its allies openly wage a hybrid war against Venezuela.

In the world of modern challenges and threats, its humanitarian and moral component is replete with all kinds of false accusations against iconic Venezuelan citizens who are accused of various illegal actions, for example, drug trafficking or aiding regional rebel groups. Today, there is a special dynamic in this media area. Among the main defendants in the Venezuelan indictment list are almost all the top officials of the country's armed forces, the national guard, the Ministry of the Interior and other law enforcement agencies, which allows experts to conclude that splitting the armed forces of this state for a united union of internal and external opposition has become an unrealistic task.

Such far-fetched campaigns and court decisions are also carried out against ministers, governors, directors and managers of mining enterprises, transport companies, the Central Bank of the country, presidents and representatives of the National Electoral Council, the National Assembly, the Tax Authority, the Moral Council, including their close and distant relatives. The former national treasurer of the country was sentenced (November 2018) by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida to 10 years in prison for receiving more than US\$ 1 billion as a bribe. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has periodically been included in fabricated lists since 2017. At the same time, according to US court documents (March 2020) he 'led the drug cartel even when he rose to the top of state power'. The absurdity of such trials and charges is already little commented on even by the US press. In terms of the proportion of 'individual sanctions' officially imposed by the United States, Venezuela is ranked the first in the world.

The economic war unleashed by seemingly unacceptable measures in international legal practice is manifested primarily in the field of finance and trade. The blockade organized by the United States in the monetary and financial sphere aims at the economic strangulation of Venezuela. Such sanctions against modern Venezuela resemble the Anacanda Plan, which was successfully applied 150 years ago during the Civil War between the North and South of the United States.

The United States applied something similar during the Cold War to the Soviet Union, China, and other socialist countries. This kind of aggressive policy towards the states around which the Iron Curtain was erected has become multifactorial in nature and has led to severe socio-economic consequences (Pape 1997). First of all, it included tools and the possibility of interrupting financing, technological supply and resource support for plants under construction, hydraulic stations, oil and gas complexes, infrastructure facilities, *etc.* Such phenomena were observed even if international and intergovernmental agreements were concluded for trade supplies.

The system of multi-stage (hybrid) sanctions began to be systematically applied to Venezuela, starting in 2014. The financial sector, as the circulatory system of the economy, had taken on the powerful blow of a united coalition. The US media and a number of engaged national sources persistently spread misinformation about the imminent default of the state due to the inability of the country to fulfill its international debt obligations. This kind of 'analytics' was built on the financial obligations issued by the Venezuelan

government under the program to overcome negative trends associated with the fall in oil prices in the period of 2008–2009. As you know, the reason for this was the global crisis.

The interim objective of the propaganda campaign was to undermine confidence in the solvency of the Bolivarian Republic with regard to its international debt obligations. But the main task was to prevent government organizations from accessing external ‘low-cost’ loans through the information control of international financial organizations and transnational banks (TNB). Under these conditions, rating agencies, taking advantage of favorable conditions in their interests, incorrectly calculated upward risk ratios, against the background of which it is possible to be dragged into the default procedure. As reality has shown, the ‘country risk’ (RP), prepared by rating agencies, turned out to be a ‘soap bubble’. Venezuela completely fulfilled its external debt obligations without resorting to force majeure borrowing.

In December, 2014 Barack Obama launched international sanctions against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The President of the United States signed Executive Order S. 2142, approved by Congress (Office of the Press Secretary). Its essence was to freeze assets and ban the issuance of visas to Venezuelan officials, whom the US authorities characterized as ‘allegedly responsible for human rights violations’, during protests and demonstrations that took place in February – May 2014 in Venezuela. They were aimed at overthrowing President Nicolás Maduro (Venezuelan Law for the Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society of 2014).

In March 2015, the confrontation rose to the intergovernmental level. Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13692 declaring Venezuela ‘an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States’. A year later, the US administration extends the effect of Decree 13692 for another year, which was qualified by political scientists as a ‘hereditary will’ to future US President Donald Trump. After that, in the month of March of each subsequent year of the presidency of D. Trump, Decree 13692 was extended for another year.

A qualitatively new stage of hybrid war was the period of 2018–2019. The results of the extraordinary presidential election in Venezuela (May 2018) were predictably negatively perceived by the pro-American coalition. The votes of 2/3 of the country's voters, as well as the recognition of the election results, primarily by Russia, China, Cuba, served as a key element for continuing the policy of the reforms announced in the country.

The assassination attempt on Nicolás Maduro, carried out with the help of explosive drones in August 2018 could not stop the leader of the Bolivarian state from logically and methodologically carrying out verified actions.

In January 2019 Nicolás Maduro took the oath of office at the Supreme Court, after which he officially became President of Venezuela for the second time. The US reaction to the inauguration was immediate. There was made a clearly verified lightning strike on the key company of the country – PDVSA, whose role was decisive not only in the economy of the Venezuelan state, but also in foreign economic relations with the United States.

At the beginning of 2019 almost half of the oil produced in the country entered the US market (approx. 500 thousand barrels/day). At the same time, the PDVSA oil refining complex in the United States also included three large oil refineries. Oil exports and the operation of these refineries provided 95 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. But sanctions banned transfers from the United States to PDVSA accounts. At the

same time, Venezuela was able to reorient the geography of its hydrocarbon supplies. Venezuelan oil went to the markets of India and China. In addition, experts noted the metamorphosis that occurred. Under the announced blockade of Venezuelan hydrocarbons to the American market, Russia was able to quadruple its oil exports to the United States at the same time. According to informed sources, this kind of Russian supply was carried out on the basis of Venezuelan oil, which at certain time intervals was reloaded from one tanker to another, after which it was delivered to the United States.

The process of ‘choking Venezuela in its oil’ did not bring the expected effect. The self-styled ‘president’ Juan Guaido was still unsuccessfully trying to lead the planned coup (April 2019). However, the prepared scenario of the ‘color revolution’ failed. On March 24, 2019, leading world agencies announced the appearance of two Russian aircrafts at the Maiquetía airport (a suburb of Caracas) – a passenger IL-62 and a military transport An-124 with military personnel. A Russian diplomatic source did not refute this information: ‘Arrived to participate in bilateral consultations’ (Gazeta.ru, Venezuela 2019).

At the same time, the statement by Minister of Communication and Information Jorge Rodríguez indicated that on June 23–24, 2019 the opposition, with the support of the United States, Colombia and Chile, planned the overthrow and assassination of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Silia Flores, as well as the head of the National Constituent Assembly of Venezuela Diosdado Cabello. Practical assistance from military consultants from Russia arrived in Caracas on time.

The United States needed serious administrative mobilization to develop a new algorithm for extraordinary actions, to make them systemic. Moreover, Donald Trump (closer to the US national elections) needed real foreign policy victories. Venezuela seemed an easy way for Washington to achieve such a victory.

Executive Decree of Donald Trump (August 2019) established the absolute blocking of the property of the Bolivarian government in American jurisdiction: ‘All property and interests in property that are in the United States, that hereafter come within the United States, or that are or hereafter come within the possession or control of any United States person of the following persons are blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in.’

Of particular interest are some of the wordings of the document. Their ambiguity, vagueness, lack of clarifying criteria can raise doubts about the possibility of obtaining an objective assessment of their enforcement. According to the decree, sanctions apply to all ‘persons who are subordinate or under control, both directly and indirectly, listed above [departments and organizations]’, as well as anyone ‘who acts or intends to act directly or indirectly in the interests or on behalf of the above [departments and organizations]’.

Moreover, the ‘above’ persons, as well as those who ‘financially assisted, sponsored or provided financial, material or technological assistance, as well as provided goods and services’, are prohibited from entering the United States. There is also a ban on the ‘transfer of any contributions, provision of funds, goods or services’ to those covered by the decree. An exception is made only for officials of the American federal government who fulfill their official instructions. In addition, ‘transactions related to the provision of allowances, clothing and medicines that should be used to alleviate the suffering of the population’ were allowed. In this regard, how one should understand the ban on entry into the United States, when Washington, in violation of international treaties, openly hunts around

the world and detains persons of other states who are accused of violating US domestic law, convicted in US courts on charges of unlawful acts committed in the territory of a third state?

Thus, making an interim result, one can agree with the opinion of a correspondent for *The Washington Post* that Trump's decree actually means 'imposing a complete economic embargo' against Venezuela (TASS 2019). Earlier, the US president 'affirmatively' answered a question from journalists about whether the US authorities were considering imposing a blockade and isolation against the Bolivarian Republic, given the amount of foreign assistance that Caracas received from Moscow, Tehran and Beijing.

The United States methodology for applying modern hybrid warfare tools differs little from one country to another. One of its principles is the periodicity of decisions. Their temporary duration is usually different, in the expectation that the world community will see how the hegemon continues to methodically execute decisions made earlier. Over time, a country subject to punitive measures could change the system of its foreign economic preferences provided that its new foreign economic partners have an appropriate margin of safety and can correctly assess the possibility of developing negative trends. In this case, international experience as well as expert assessments show that sanctions do not give the expected effect.

Undoubtedly, they are detrimental to the country in relation to which they are applied. But even the economic losses from the 60-year blockade of Cuba are not able to undo the political effect that the world has gained over the past decades. Not to mention the effect of solidarity and those supporters that the Island of Freedom and the Soviet Union found in this confrontation. Indeed, if Cuban Revolution of January 1st 1959 had not taken place, then today's world would be different.

The Yankees were never able to understand the dialectics of changes in a rapidly changing world, much less to grasp the trends, the development of which allows developing peoples and Latin American states to look into the future with hope. There is every reason to agree with the assessment given in a fundamental work containing a comprehensive analysis of the war that the United States has been waging against Latin America in recent decades: 'In alliance with local reactionary forces, the United States pursues a policy aimed at preventing Latin American countries from achieving economic and genuine political independence. Ultimately, the secret war of US imperialism in the region pursues the same goal'.

On the other hand, a specific situation requires an adequate calculation of the resources that can be mobilized to resist this kind of aggressors.

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