

Sanctions? How About Sanctions Against the United States?

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Region: [USA](#)

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As the United States imposes sanctions on Russia and moves to do likewise to Venezuela, it's essential to keep in mind which country it is that's the most destructive and dangerous in the world today. When such questions have been posed in international polls in recent decades, the answer overwhelmingly is the United States. Not Iran, North Korea, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, Russia or any of the many other nations the ruling class and corporate media here regularly demonize, but the United States.

People in the global South know this all too well from the long and brutal history of US foreign policy. Because we live in such a closed society, however, where critical analysis of imperialism is by definition excluded from discussions in Washington and the national media, people here must search long and hard for such information. Should information of this sort seep into the mainstream, ruling elites invariably vilify it and those imparting it just as they vilify international figures they regard as enemies.

According to Washington, sanctions are being considered against Venezuela because of repressive measures and violence that is attributed almost exclusively to the government. In reality, counterrevolutionaries are responsible for the majority of those killed including at least one death of a motorcyclist decapitated by wire strung across a street. This tactic was suggested by retired General Angel Vivas, who has become a hero of the counterrevolution for his armed defiance of the government's attempt to arrest him for the motorcyclist's death. Simultaneously, the US has imposed sanctions against Russia and is threatening military escalation in response to the incursion into Crimea.

Conveniently left out of the narrative is any connection between Russia's actions and the coup in the Ukraine led by fanatically anti-Russian neo-fascists, an effort supported by the US to the tune of \$5 billion, according to Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland. Also excluded from discussions are the many military stations the US and its allies have close to Russia, as well as the fact that practically every member of the former Eastern bloc now belongs to NATO.

As always, these events are presented in unambiguous black and white, where we are the unquestioned good guys standing up for freedom, democracy and liberty and the other side is evil incarnate. Hillary Clinton, for example, played the always handy Hitler Card in reference to Vladimir Putin, a card that in recent decades has been applied to Noriega, Milosevic, Qaddafi, Chavez, Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Assad and Ahmadinejad, to name just some. The Hitler Card has never been used against Mass Murder Inc, the US's longstanding club of dictators that includes the Somozas, Suharto, Diem, Savimbi, the Duvaliers, Mobutu and others too numerous to list, since they were loyal servants of Western business interests. And it goes without saying that the Hitler Card doesn't apply to

us even though in the world today it is US foreign policy that most closely approximates the Third Reich's.

In fact, the black/white narrative collapses immediately both when today's situations are probed and when history is reviewed. Since documenting acts of direct US aggression and additional crimes committed via financing, armaments and diplomatic support to client states would require several large libraries, let's restrict ourselves to just the 14 years of this century. In 2001, the US invaded Afghanistan, ostensibly in response to the 9/11 attacks even though none of those involved was Afghan and most were Saudi. Invading Saudi Arabia wouldn't do, however, since it's a staunch and very important ally. As Noam Chomsky has documented, the Taliban offered to assist the US in tracking those responsible for 9/11, including bin Laden, on the condition the US present evidence. Because the US was determined to wage war no matter what, the offer was rejected and the invasion of Afghanistan commenced. Thirteen years and trillions of dollars later, the killing goes on, expanded under Obama to include indiscriminate drone strikes, with no end in sight.

In 2002, reactionaries representing Venezuela's Super Rich put tens of millions of dollars of funding from the CIA, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy and undoubtedly other US sources to use by overthrowing the democratically-elected, immensely popular government of the late Hugo Chavez. The Venezuelan people immediately rose up and defeated the coup but the funding, sabotage and subversion have continued. Angry and frustrated at continual losses at the polls and in the streets, the old oligarchs fight on absent any international support other than that of the US and neighboring Colombia. The violence that began last month is the most serious moment in Venezuela since the failed 2002 coup, and despite its complete isolation the US has ramped up its 15-year propaganda war against the Bolivarian Revolution.

In 2003, the US illegally overran Iraq, demolishing the country as well as the argument used to justify the invasion that Hussein was a powerful threat because of weapons of mass destruction. The US knew no such weapons existed and the invasion has resulted in what some international reports say is more than one million Iraqi deaths. Coming on the heels of the 1991 US invasion and the ensuing years of Sanctions of Mass Destruction, Iraq has been largely destroyed and is now plagued by bitter internal fighting. Central to that fighting is Al-Qaeda, which had absolutely no presence in Iraq but is now a formidable force thanks to the invasion.

After hammering Muammar Qaddafi for decades to turn over Libya's weapons, the US illegally invaded that country in 2011 not long after he complied. At least 50,000 people were killed as a result including Qaddafi, and Libya was plunged into chaos that continues to this day. Elsewhere in the Mideast, the US continues to support Israel's ever-expanding occupation of Palestine and again finds itself on the same side as Al-Qaeda and other terrorists in Syria as it attempts to do there what it did in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan.

Since the 1990's, the US has supported mass killer Paul Kagame in Rwanda while presenting him as a hero. In reality, the war in Rwanda began with the 1990 invasion from Uganda by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, an army Kagame soon became head of. Four years later, with peace talks underway, the RPF killed Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana by shooting down a plane on which he was returning from a negotiating session. Thus began the most horrific period in the region, with mass killings on all sides and the US undermining peacekeeping efforts and several potential settlements so the RPF could win a complete

victory.

Former UN Secretary General for one puts the blame on the US for its support of Kagame and the RPF. As reported recently in Counterpunch by Robin Philpot, Boutros-Gali has said that “the Rwandan genocide was 100% American responsibility.” Reports by a number of international organizations, including several by the UN, concluded that the RPF is responsible for more than one million deaths and possibly several million in Rwanda. In addition, UN and other reports have found the RPF responsible for the most serious atrocities during years of warfare in the neighboring Congo. Edward Herman has called Kagame a “double genocidist” while underscoring that the US made the killing possible and business interests benefited most from it.

In Latin America, in addition to supporting counterrevolution in Venezuela, the US continues to lavish millions on Colombia in a decades-long War on Drugs that is, in fact, a war against the people designed to destroy opposition to domination by global capital. And in 2009, the US was virtually alone in the world in recognizing the coup government that came to power in Honduras in 2009 by overthrowing democratically-elected reformer Manuel Zelaya. The coup and two fraudulent elections have restored the oligarchy’s power while opponents are being killed in alarming numbers by the military, paramilitaries and others suspected of ties to the coup regime. The eradication of opposition is necessary to the smooth operation of mining multinationals in particular, and Western investments have increased dramatically since the coup.

US violence is not restricted to other nations. Domestically, that is best illustrated by the massive imprisonment of African-Americans. With the highest incarceration rate in the world and the vast majority of prisoners black as well as ongoing police and vigilante violence aimed almost exclusively at blacks, the US is not so different from apartheid-era South Africa. Perhaps international sanctions are in order to turn the US into a pariah, and diplomatic isolation would help the world’s most dangerous state get a dose of civilization.

The people of the US bear a special responsibility to oppose both its government’s aggression and its funding and arming of subordinates engaged in terror. During the US-financed Central American killing fields of the 1980’s, a campesino at the New York stop of her speaking tour implored people here to “help us by changing your country.” Those words echo louder than ever today and come from every part of the world; it remains to be seen whether our collective reply to those cries is in the affirmative.

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