

The United States' Disregard for International Law Is a Menace to Venezuela and Latin America

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International community principles

At the 25th U.N. session of October 1970 the General Assembly adopted a Resolution titled "Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations." [1] Not too many people would know that, therefore I think it is important to remember what those principles are (emphasis added):

- The principle that States shall refrain in their international relations from the *threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State* or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.
- The principle that *States shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means* in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered.
- The principle concerning the *duty not to intervene in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of any State*, in accordance with the Charter.
- The duty of States to co-operate with one another in accordance with the Charter.
- The principle of *equal rights and self-determination of peoples*.
- The principle of *sovereign equality of States*.
- The principle that States shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the Charter.

The OAS Charter has similar principles.

I have often criticized the U.N. for being ineffective and I still stand by it. I am going out on a limb by saying that the more "principles" and "resolutions" the U.N. issues, the more military interventions, invasions, terrorist actions, incitation to violence, wars, and of course punitive economic sanctions have occurred in the last 40 or more years.

However, I must clarify that a world organization like the U.N. is necessary, albeit one that should be radically modified to really live up to its promise stated in the principles listed above. At least one principle should be essential: The principle of sovereign equality of States.

But I don't think I am going out on a limb when I say that only one country, among the 193 U.N. member States, stands out as having committed consistently and relentlessly the large

majority of international infractions: The United States of America.

Many of its infractions are clearly apparent. Many others occur behind the cover of “diplomacy”, such as incitement to rebellion and coups, bribery and corruption. Often, the U.N. and other international bodies, including embassies, are the preferred venues for fomenting subversion. It is not unusual that this type of unlawful activity would also be “delegated” to some so-called civil society organization or NGO.

Today we are seeing blatant examples of U.S. unlawful behavior to the point that it is a serious menace to Venezuela and the rest of Latin America.

Overcoming sanctions

I have already referred to the U.S. sanctions and their connection to the U.S.-centered financial system in the context of the recent monetary conversion in Venezuela. [2] But unilateral U.S. sanctions have become the economic version of an epidemic. Cuba, Russia, Iran, Syria, and the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea are current targets.

It is to be noted that the U.S. and other countries have consistently issued sanctions against Venezuela every time the Maduro government has undertaken important policy measures, the last one being issued on May 21 a day after Nicolas Maduro was reelected president.

What is striking this time is that after the major monetary revolution, initiated by the Maduro government last August 21, not a single new sanction has been issued. Surprisingly, one can say that U.S. sanctions stand out for its absence. This can have two possible interpretations.

The immediate one is that the Venezuelan monetary conversion, with pegging of the currency to the largest Venezuelan oil resources through the crypto currency Petro, is successfully rendering sanctions avoidable to a certain extent, and therefore less effective economic weapons. The U.S. may be losing the thunder of the dollar as the world reserve currency with the consequent weakening of the U.S. financial system that is at the core of economic sanctions.

Other countries threatened by U.S. sanctions like Iran and Iraq are taking notice and are considering similar monetary policies dropping the dollar in their bilateral trade transactions. China and U.S.-sanctioned Russia are also increasing their financial interaction away from the dollar. [3] The president of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was more adamant declaring,

“Now we have to gradually end the domination of the dollar once and for all by using national money among us”. [4]

Even some opposition economists foresee that a more independent Venezuelan economy will free itself of the crippling foreign-induced inflation. [5] And this can only lead to a healthy recovery in terms of availability of essential products. The prospect of economic recovery is quite real as suggested by the positive response of the Venezuelan private sector. But, a more encouraging sign is the willingness of many Venezuelans, who had left, to return home and are now receiving logistical support from the Maduro government to come back. We are seeing a “migration crisis” myth destroyed.

This scenario will not only be a “bad example” for other nations, but it will also destroy other myths to justify a regime change in Venezuela such as “humanitarian crisis”. No such thing has any real foundation as recently reported by the U.N. independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred de Zayas, to the 39th session of the U.N. Human Rights Council. [6]

Military intervention and proxy war

So, given that sanctions are being overcome and are not anymore, at least for now, the weapon of choice of the U.S. for regime change in Venezuela, we are left with a second possible scenario that the U.S. is preparing for another course of action: military intervention or, equivalently, a proxy war. This would be a tragic decision and should sound an alarm to all Venezuela observers and governments of the region. There has never been a U.S. military intervention that has brought any positive outcome to the population anywhere. All “gains” are only assured for U.S. corporations.

The latest report that the U.S. is somehow involved in building a Venezuelan military rebellion comes from the New York Times:

“The Trump administration held secret meetings with rebellious military officers from Venezuela over the last year to discuss their plans to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro.” [7]

How is the military intervention to take place and what would the reaction be?

If we are to learn from past U.S. interventions in other conflict zones, the U.S. may not put its own troops on the ground in Venezuela, at least initially, but more likely will provide full logistic, intelligence and weaponry support to “rebels”. This requires a “rebel force” that is so far non-existent, despite attempts to manufacture one that gives the impression of “hundreds” of Venezuelan military “disaffected” with the Maduro administration.

However, in this possible scenario infiltration attacks, including sabotage, would come from Colombia and less likely, for now, from Brazil due to the upcoming elections in October. But in the likelihood that Jair Bolsonaro is the winning Brazilian candidate, Venezuela will face two rightwing governments in the two border countries. They would be fully prompted by the U.S. to act and they would comply. The Venezuelan border states to watch are Tachira, Zulia and Bolivar.

Ahead of an overt military intervention or proxy war we will see an increase in the infowar that is already being waged against Venezuela. The current infowar is the overstated “exodus” of Venezuelans. A detailed research clearly shows that there is no “migration crisis”. [8]

Although no conclusion can be drawn at this point about a U.S. military intervention, the history of Latin America shows that it cannot be excluded. It is dependent on three main conditions: the creation of a U.S.-style “plausible reason” to intervene (mostly done), a local real or made up rebel group (still underway), and enough support from a majority of regional and international governments (not quite likely yet). The Venezuelan representative at the U.N., Samuel Moncada has tweeted a few days ago that the “U.S. is pushing Brazil, Chile, Peru and Colombia to war, demanding to take a tough decision to start

the aggression.”

This leads to the question of what the reaction in the Latin American and Caribbean region and beyond would be.

So far, the little over a dozen countries of the so-called Lima Group has hijacked the voice of the OAS inciting to regime change at all cost. But that is still a minority of the 35 OAS member states.

The Trump administration must weigh very carefully its decision. Tilting the balance towards a military intervention could create a serious backlash in the region, not only political, but also social with prolonged conflicts.

Beyond the region, Washington must consider the possible reactions from Moscow and Beijing. Russia and China have developed close economic and business ties in Latin America and Venezuela in particular. China is now the fourth largest destination of Venezuelan oil.

Realistically, the most important point for the U.S. to consider is the reaction of the Venezuelan people. The U.S. government is misinforming the international community about the lack of support for the Maduro government in Venezuela, however, it must have first hand information about the following facts: 1) the large majority of the Venezuelan population is indeed a very cohesive democratic and constitutional society; and 2) Venezuela has a loyal National Bolivarian Militia with about half a million personnel whose main function is *“Establish permanent links between the National Bolivarian Armed Forces and the Venezuelan people, in order to contribute to ensuring the overall defense of Venezuela.”*

Concluding thoughts

In a fair international community of nations truly based on U.N. principles for the sake of peace, the United States would abide to the first principle listed above: *“that States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State”*. But the U.S. has not and will not. Its only principle seems to be that of “exceptionalism”. It is determined to suffer the isolation of a bully state.

Unfortunately, the U.S. reckless actions have consequences not only for the 30 million people of Venezuela but also for the rest of the region.

Venezuela has initiated a process that promises to effectively reduce the impact of unilateral and punitive economic sanctions slapped on the country, and begin an economic recovery process. A possible sign that Venezuela’s monetary reform may have outmaneuvered the U.S. is that there have been no new sanctions against Venezuela since last May from the U.S. or other countries.

However, this is not a complete victory for Venezuela. A more serious danger may lie ahead. Based on a recent report by the NYT the danger has been brewing for some time, and judging by at least one analysis it is fast approaching in the form of a possible military intervention whose final staging is not clear yet. [9]

There have been several threats from the Trump administration in the past so it is clear that today a military action against Venezuela cannot be ruled out. Venezuela has always taken

seriously any threat to its national security and has responded diplomatically and publicly with protests. It has just done so one more time with the intention of informing public opinion that the U.S. is breaking international law on top of U.N. and OAS principles.

A military intervention, direct or through proxies, will not be a guaranteed “success” to the U.S. The claim in the NYT that a “few hundred” Venezuelan troops may be disaffected is neither credible nor sufficient to confront a loyal population as the attempted coup against Hugo Chavez in 2002 proved. Further, it would trigger a chain reaction of events never seen before. In the emerging multipolar world the involvement of Russia and China cannot be excluded; if not armed, at least political.

But this is a situation where Venezuela cannot wait or hope for any immediate help except from its own people, and it has to tip on the side of caution. The price of misjudging the danger may be too high.

There can be no doubt that the Bolivarian Armed Forces and the National Bolivarian Militia are on full alert and ready.

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Notes

[1] <http://www.un-documents.net/a25r2625.htm>

[2]

<https://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/Venezuelas-Monetary-Revolution-Vis-a-Vis-Economic-Sanctions-20180808-0023.html>

[3] <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/287735-expulsar-dolar-mercado-asiatico>

[4] <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/287339-erdogan-acabar-dominio-dolar>

[5]

<http://sakerlatam.es/america-latina-y-el-caribe/analisis-informal-de-las-medidas-economicas-adoptadas-en-venezuela/> and <http://www.simpatizantesfmIn.org/blog/?p=56528>

[6]

<https://chicagoalbasolidarity.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/un-report-on-venezuela-and-ecuador-alfred-d-e-zayas.pdf>

[7] <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/08/world/americas/donald-trump-venezuela-military-coup.html>

[8]

<https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/287848-vecindad-incomoda-dimension-real-migracion-venezuela>

[9]

<http://resumen-english.org/2018/09/the-next-90-days-will-define-the-future-of-venezuela-and-south-america/>

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