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US Actions Against Venezuela in the Context of Power Politics and Neocolonialism

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Abstract

This article analyzes United States actions against Venezuela through the lenses of power politics, hegemonism, and neocolonialism. The study situates the Venezuelan case within the broader context of the Global South, emphasizing the issue of political voicelessness in the contemporary international system. Using qualitative political analysis, the article examines official policy documents, international statements, and scholarly literature to assess the structural dynamics shaping US-Venezuela relations. The findings suggest that US actions reflect persistent asymmetries of power and contribute to the marginalization of Venezuela's political agency at the global level. At the same time, the article highlights South-South cooperation as a potential, though limited, response to hegemonic pressure. The study argues that the Venezuelan case illustrates deeper structural inequalities within international politics and underscores the challenges faced by Global South states in asserting autonomy.

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Keywords

US Actions Against Venezuela, Global South, Political Voicelessness, Power Politics, Neocolonialism, Hegemonism, South-South Cooperation.

Introduction

The contemporary international system continues to be shaped by profound asymmetries of power that affect the ability of states to participate equally in global political processes. Despite the formal principles of sovereignty and legal equality, international politics remains structured by hierarchies in which dominant actors exercise disproportionate influence over political, economic, and normative outcomes. Within this context, the concept of political voicelessness has gained relevance as a way to

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describe the limited capacity of many Global South states to shape international agendas and defend their interests.

United States actions against Venezuela provide a particularly illustrative case for examining these dynamics. Over the past decades, US policy toward Venezuela has included economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and political pressure aimed at influencing domestic political developments. These measures have been justified through discourses of democracy, human rights, and regional security. However, they also reflect broader patterns of power politics in which coercive instruments are employed to preserve hegemonic influence in strategically important regions.

For the Global South, the Venezuelan case highlights the persistence of neocolonial practices within contemporary international relations. External intervention, economic coercion, and narrative dominance limit the political agency of states that pursue alternative development models or challenge established power structures. As a result, political voicelessness is not merely a situational condition but a structural feature of the current international order.

At the same time, the growing emphasis on South–South cooperation suggests the emergence of alternative strategies aimed at reducing dependency on hegemonic powers. While such cooperation does not eliminate global power asymmetries, it offers new avenues for political coordination, economic exchange, and diplomatic support among Global South states. This article examines US actions against Venezuela as an expression of power politics and neocolonialism, situating the case within broader debates on political voicelessness and the evolving role of South–South cooperation in international relations.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in political analysis and critical interpretation. The research focuses on United States actions against Venezuela as a case illustrating broader patterns of power politics, hegemonism, and neocolonial practices in contemporary international relations. The empirical basis of the study consists of official policy documents, public statements, and strategic reports issued by United States governmental institutions, as well as international materials related to Venezuela's political and economic situation. These sources are analyzed to identify the key instruments, narratives, and objectives underlying US actions. In addition, the article draws on scholarly literature addressing the concepts of political voicelessness, the Global South, and South–South cooperation. Conceptual analysis is used to link the Venezuelan case to wider theoretical debates on structural inequality and power asymmetries in the international system. This methodological approach makes it possible to move beyond event-based analysis and to identify systemic features shaping the interaction between hegemonic powers and states of the Global South.

Results

The empirical evidence indicates that United States actions against Venezuela have produced significant and measurable economic effects. Venezuela remains structurally dependent on oil exports, which historically accounted for more than 90 % of total export revenues and the majority of foreign currency earnings [OPEC, 2021]. This dependence has increased the country's vulnerability to external pressure targeting the energy sector.

Oil production has experienced a sharp and sustained decline over the past decade. According to data from OPEC, Venezuela's crude oil production fell from approximately 2.5 million barrels per day in 2012 to about 734 thousand barrels per day in 2020, coinciding with the intensification of U.S. sanctions and financial restrictions [OPEC, 2020]. Although production partially recovered to around

800–900 thousand barrels per day in 2023–2024 following limited sanctions relief, output remains far below historical levels [U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023].

Macroeconomic indicators further reflect the scale of economic disruption. Estimates by international financial institutions indicate that Venezuela's gross domestic product contracted by more than 75 % between 2012 and 2020, representing one of the deepest peacetime economic collapses in modern history [International Monetary Fund, 2021]. Despite modest growth in subsequent years, economic output remains significantly constrained by limited access to international finance and trade mechanisms.

The humanitarian consequences of economic contraction are also evident. United Nations agencies report that more than 7 million Venezuelans have migrated abroad since 2015, largely as a result of economic deterioration and declining living standards [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023]. Inflation reached extreme levels, exceeding 130 000 % in 2018, severely eroding household incomes and access to basic goods [World Bank, 2022]. Although inflation has decreased in recent years, price instability continues to affect economic recovery.

At the international level, U.S. sanctions have restricted Venezuela's participation in global financial and energy markets. Asset freezes and secondary sanctions have limited the ability of the Venezuelan state and its national oil company to engage in commercial transactions, reinforcing Venezuela's political and economic marginalization within the international system [Weisbrot, Sachs, 2019]. These developments illustrate how economic instruments are employed as tools of power politics, directly affecting the political agency of a Global South state.

Discussion

The results obtained confirm that United States actions against Venezuela should be understood not merely as a response to domestic political developments, but as part of a broader pattern of power politics characteristic of hegemonic behavior in the international system. Economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and financial restrictions function as structural instruments that reinforce existing hierarchies between dominant states and the Global South [Weisbrot, Sachs, 2019].

From the perspective of neocolonialism, the Venezuelan case illustrates how formal sovereignty can coexist with limited practical autonomy. While Venezuela retains legal statehood, its ability to pursue independent economic and foreign policies has been significantly constrained by external pressure targeting key sectors of the economy, particularly oil [OPEC, 2021; OPEC, 2020]. This reflects a form of indirect control that does not rely on territorial occupation but instead operates through financial and institutional mechanisms.

The concept of political voicelessness is particularly relevant in this context. Despite the scale of economic and humanitarian consequences, Venezuela has had limited capacity to influence international decision-making processes or reshape dominant narratives within global institutions [International Monetary Fund, 2021; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023]. Multilateral forums have largely failed to provide effective channels for contestation, reinforcing the marginal position of Global South states facing hegemonic pressure.

At the same time, the findings highlight the strategic turn toward South–South cooperation as a response to exclusion from Western-dominated political and economic structures. Venezuela's efforts to deepen relations with non-Western partners demonstrate an attempt to diversify external ties and regain a degree of agency [U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023]. However, the discussion also reveals clear limitations of this approach, as South–South cooperation remains constrained by global financial asymmetries and the continued dominance of Western-controlled markets.

Overall, the Venezuelan case supports the argument that power politics and hegemonism remain central features of contemporary international relations. The persistence of political voicelessness among Global South states suggests that existing international institutions are insufficient for addressing structural inequalities, raising questions about the prospects for a more inclusive global order.

Conclusion

The analysis of United States actions against Venezuela demonstrates that contemporary international politics continues to be structured by asymmetrical power relations. The Venezuelan case illustrates how economic sanctions, financial restrictions, and diplomatic pressure function as instruments of power politics that limit the political and economic agency of Global South states.

The findings confirm that political voicelessness is not an incidental outcome but a structural condition rooted in hegemonism and neocolonial practices. Despite formal sovereignty, Venezuela's capacity to influence international agendas and defend its interests remains constrained by external mechanisms of control embedded in global financial and political institutions.

At the same time, the study highlights South–South cooperation as an important, though limited, strategy for mitigating external pressure. While such cooperation offers opportunities for diversification and alternative partnerships, it does not fundamentally alter the underlying inequalities of the international system.

Overall, the Venezuelan case underscores the persistence of hegemonic power structures and raises broader questions about the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the current international order. Addressing political voicelessness in the Global South requires not only policy adjustments but deeper structural changes in global governance and power distribution.

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Действия США против Венесуэлы в контексте политики силы и неокolonизма

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Аннотация

В данной статье анализируются действия Соединенных Штатов против Венесуэлы через призму политики силы, гегемонизма и неоколониализма. Исследование помещает венесуэльский случай в более широкий контекст Глобального Юга, акцентируя проблему политической «безгласности» в современной международной системе. Используя качественный политический анализ, в статье рассматриваются официальные политические документы, международные заявления и научная литература для оценки структурной динамики, формирующей отношения США и Венесуэлы. Полученные данные свидетельствуют о том, что действия США отражают устойчивую асимметрию силы и способствуют маргинализации политической субъектности Венесуэлы на глобальном уровне. В то же время в статье освещается сотрудничество Юг-Юг как потенциальный, хотя и ограниченный, ответ на гегемонистское давление. Исследование доказывает, что венесуэльский случай иллюстрирует глубинные структурные неравенства в международной политике и подчеркивает проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются государства Глобального Юга при утверждении своей автономии.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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Ключевые слова

Действия США против Венесуэлы, Глобальный Юг, политическая «безгласность», политика силы, неоколониализм, гегемонизм, сотрудничество Юг-Юг.

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