



# INFORMATION WARFARE

**Jorge Marinho, Júlio Ventura and Lourenço Ribeiro provide a geopolitical analysis of Venezuela, considering China, Iran and Russia's defiance of the United States**

**H**ugo Chávez's first victory in the 1999 presidential elections amounted to the growing prominence of the left, not only in Venezuela but also in Latin America, which triggered what became known as a 'Pink Tide'. Within this political context in the region, the neo-liberalism and hegemony of the United States are disputed. This gives a few countries' governments competing with the US the chance

to heighten their influence in Latin America and the Caribbean. During Chávez's presidency, Venezuela developed its relations with China, Cuba and Iran. At the time, on the one hand, these three countries were regarded as Venezuela's allies and, on the other they were deemed to be adversaries of the US. Strategic rivalry, vis-à-vis the United States, led China, Iran and Russia to back various Latin American

and Caribbean nations, most notably Venezuela. This opposition to the United States somehow continued with Venezuela's next President, Nicolás Maduro (from 2013 to 2026).

From a geopolitical standpoint, Latin America is important due to its energy resources, especially Venezuela for its natural gas and among the largest petroleum reserves in the world. The country also has a variety of minerals such as bauxite, diamonds, iron and gold. In the last few years, the Chinese, Iranians and Russians have been given a warmer welcome than Americans in Latin America. Though this part of the world is often referred to as the United States' backyard, following the end of the Monroe Doctrine it started carefully turning its gaze toward Asia, particularly China, while disregarding Latin America. Still, this does not mean that the United States showed a complete indifference or utter lack of monitoring of what was going on in the region.

Since the start of the 21st century, Russia's interest in Latin America has grown, taking advantage of the left's political triumph in the region, as is the case with Venezuela. This country is involved in several anti-American diplomatic initiatives in the regional organisations to which it belongs. The Russian-Venezuelan cooperation includes spheres of intelligence, counter-espionage and energy among others. President Putin is currently seeking to weaken the United States' global influence, including in the Americas.

The Primakov Doctrine applies to Russia's relations with Latin American and Caribbean countries, to the extent that Russia needs to be present in the United States' neighbour countries, by reacting to American interference in countries under Moscow's sphere of influence. This Russian presence is also felt in the military domain, but Russia's ability to project its forces is undermined by its current war with Ukraine.

One of the characteristic features of Chavism, in order to diminish the influence of the United States in Latin America and the Caribbean, is the creation of regional organisations such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Union of the South American Nations (UNASUR). China's success in this part of the world also goes by way of its ability to forge relations with said regional organisations. This has happened with Venezuela's contribution during the presidencies of both Chávez and Maduro. Also with regard to Chinese projects, it should be underscored that the Belt and Road Initiative covers a number of regions in the world, as is the case with Latin America.

In the military sphere, China has ties with several countries in Latin America, including Venezuela. Nevertheless, in military terms, China is unable to operate with ease in the Western Hemisphere, even during a limited period of time, due to a lack of resources.

With President Chávez, Iran has developed its diplomatic and trade relations with Latin America. There is a strategic relationship between Venezuela and Iran, insofar as the two countries have interests and enemies that are common to both. In this context, Iran supplies arms to Venezuela. This most certainly warrants being closely monitored by the United States, first and foremost owing to the geographic

proximity between the two nations. Currently, the topic of transnational communication takes on growing importance in international relations. Among various aspects, that which is at issue here is the possibility of foreign powers influencing vast swaths of the populace of another country or even a single individual; to this end, both traditional and social media could be used. This is a subject matter that has also generated interest from Venezuelan rulers. Generally speaking, the vast majority of the population of a specific country might not have enough technical and political knowledge in order to be aware that it is the target of an information war. On the one hand, we have those who allegedly seek to influence certain targets, while on the other there are others who politically decide to domestically and internationally denounce and stand up to those influencing attempts. The ability to, both in the

## BRASILIA REFUSED TO RECOGNISE THE RESULTS POINTING TO NICOLÁS MADURO AS PRESIDENT

domestic and international spheres, create and disseminate narratives and counter-narratives is a pivotal aspect in information warfare. In this domain, intelligence is highly relevant.

During the presidencies of Chávez and Maduro, on various occasions the Venezuelan government considered that its nation was the target of psychological warfare operations, through both local and transnational media directly or indirectly being conducted by the United States. All of this, within the sphere of a hybrid war, would be aimed at creating political instability in Venezuela.

In an exclusive interview for this article, Professor Esther Mobilia, Director of the Central University of Venezuela's International Relations Department, asserted that, under President Joe Biden, the US administration sought to resume ties with Latin America, without ceasing to disseminate democratic values or antagonising Venezuela. In this regard, Professor Mobilia added that relations between the US and Venezuela were guided by a sort of coexistence without significantly escalating tensions but under prevailing rhetorical pressure.

Professor Mobilia highlighted the following Venezuelan foreign policy interests: in the economic sphere, closer relations with China; in the geopolitical domain, cooperation with Russia; furthering the anti-American agenda. However, these keystones may vary. This is because, according to the Professor, Venezuela's foreign policy is influenced by its need to seek international backing, following the 28 July, 2024 elections and to obtain international recognition of President Nicolás Maduro's victory.

Professor Mobilia stated that, in October 2024, Venezuela made a heavy-handed attempt to join BRICS (Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates) as it aimed to gain support from one of the fastest-growing economies in recent

**President Nicolás Maduro and his wife were captured by US forces in Operation Absolute Resolve on 3 January 2026**

years. The Professor explained that Brazil was against Venezuela joining BRICS because Brasilia refused to recognise the results pointing to Nicolás Maduro as President.

## SINCE THE START OF THE 21ST CENTURY, RUSSIA'S INTEREST IN LATINA AMERICA HAS GROWN

From Professor Mobilia's standpoint, Venezuela's territorial aspirations/claims regarding Essequibo (Guyana) serve to draw the community's attention away from the issue of presidential elections, including disqualifying certain significant opposition candidates. They consider that, with said aspirations/claims, the idea is also to promote the national sentiment of Venezuelans: that which has always been regarded as being at issue is the loss of a territory that historically belonged to Venezuela. Mobilia pointed out that Guyana chooses a narrative in which it appears as the weaker side, whereas Venezuela is portrayed as the interventionist State.

In November 2024, Professor Mobilia correctly predicted that, in 2025, with the presidency of Donald Trump, the topic of Taiwan and rivalries with China would become increasingly present in US foreign policy. Venezuela will continue to warrant the attention of the United States and the US will use public diplomacy instruments to keep constraining Venezuela. Of course, the interests of US oil companies requires careful management of the situation.

Venezuelan public diplomacy mechanisms tried to portray the government as being dynamic, inclusive and democratic and showing an alternative face relative to that considered traditional Chavism while in power until 2013. Mobilia noted that, within the context of public diplomacy, Venezuela not only uses television networks (for instance, Telesur), but also hired personalities to bolster a certain image, through paid advertising and social networks. At media level, while this amounts to strategies that various governments put into practice, its effectiveness, as concerns Venezuela, according to Mobilia, is not as great as Caracas would like. As per Professor Esther Mobilia, this discrepancy is due to disseminating news and reports from reputable international organisations that paint a different picture of the Venezuelan administration ●

**Jorge Marinho** has a PhD in Communication Sciences and BA in International Journalism. **Júlio Ventura** has an MA in Political Science and International Relations, BA in Law and is an accredited parliamentary assistant for the European Parliament (Brussels). **Lourenço Ribeiro** has a BA in Sociology and is an MA student in Public Policy at Iscte – Lisbon.

**Venezuelan forces march to commemorate the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013**

