

Russia-Venezuela Relations

There is a strong bond in the bilateral relations of Russia and Venezuela. Primarily for trading and militaristic purposes. Russia's military includes Ground Forces, Navy, Air Forces, Airborne Troops, Strategic Rocket Troops, and Space Troops which rank at the top in comparison to other European military strength and size. It is estimated that Russia has between 735 and 1,365 metric tons of weapons grade-equivalent highly enriched uranium (HEU) and between 106 and 156 tons of military-use plutonium¹. As the world's largest country, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, regional power in Europe and Asia and the principal successor state of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation wields enormous international clout and consequently hosts a large diplomatic community in its capital city of Moscow². Russian prime minister, Vladimir Putin has maintained a close commercial relationship with the economic powerhouse of South America, Venezuela. The president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez is a frequent visitor and close ally of Putin. The rise to power of both leaders, at the beginning of the century was accompanied by steady commodity price increases. Chavez and Putin benefited from the increased profit produced, as the gross domestic product of both countries is closely tied to the energy market, and

¹ "Russia." *CIA - The World Factbook*. N.p., 11092010. Web. 17 Nov 2010. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>>.

² *Russia-Venezuela Relations: Russian Strategic Threats to the United States Via Latin America, Embassy of Venezuela in Moscow*. Memphis, TN: Books LLC, 2010. 1. Print.

especially to oil. Russia is ranked number six in oil production, and Venezuela is number eleven. PDVSA (Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A.), Venezuela's state-owned petroleum company, oversees the exploration, production, refinement, and export of oil as well as the exploration and production of natural gas. PDVSA is ranked as the world's third largest oil company. Venezuela has an estimated 78 billion barrels of proven conventional crude oil reserves and additional estimated 235 billion barrels of unconventional extra-heavy crude oil in the Orinoco Belt region located southeast of Caracas (capital of Venezuela)³. Although PDVSA has not filed financial statements with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission since 2004, oil production is estimated at 3.3 million barrels a day. Chavez has purchased over four billion dollars of military equipment since 2005. In 2008, the leaders of both countries signed an action plan (46 potential cooperation agreements) on various subjects, including hydrocarbons, armament sales, agriculture, telecommunications, transportation, culture and atomic energy. The first Latin American country to sign an atomic energy agreement with Russia, Venezuela's Chavez recently revealed that Russian nuclear technicians were already at work in Venezuela. Venezuela remains one of Russia's most important trading and military allies in South America.

³ Alvarez, Cesar J. "Venezuela." N.p., 02092009. Web. 17 Nov 2010.
<http://www.cfr.org/publication/12089/venezuelas_oilbased_economy.html

Realism: Coalition, Containing Communism and another Cold War?

To begin, Thomas Hobbes' state of nature or a "war of every man against every man", describes the ongoing struggle of power throughout the world today. In recent years, primarily the shaping the U.S. Hegemonic power after the Cold War, realist adopted philosophies pertaining to economical standards. First, this argument will address the state of nature according to Thomas Hobbes and how it pertains to Russia-Venezuela relations and the U.S hegemonic response. Thereafter, it will explain how a realist interprets Russia Venezuela relations in response to the U.S hegemonic power.

In fact, Thomas Hobbes' state of nature is vital to the realist argument. Since in the state of nature there is no government and everyone enjoys equal status, every individual has a right to everything; that is, there are no constraints on an individual's behavior. Anyone may at any time use force, and all must constantly be ready to counter such force with force. Hence, driven by acquisitiveness, having no moral restraints, and motivated to compete for scarce goods, individuals are apt to "invade" one another for gain. Being suspicious of one another and driven by fear, they are also likely to engage in preemptive actions and invade one another to ensure their own safety⁴. Therefore, it is only natural for Russia and Venezuela to create a reciprocal relationship in response to the U.S Hegemonic power. This helps ensure the safety of each individual state. To a realist, this coalition and its explanation are

⁴ "Political Realism in International Relations." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2010. Web. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/realism-intl-relations/>>.

quite obvious. U.S military spending is greater than the combined spending of the next eight countries, and there are no viable rivals.

Also, the security dilemma is a significant piece of evidence, as a realist looks into the recent moves between Russia and Venezuela. According to realists, there must be a hegemonic state to create and enforce international laws. It forces the other states to cooperate. For the United States to maintain its dominance it must maintain a strong national will, a large and technological superior army and further the spread of free market philosophy⁵. Due to the lack of global governance, Russia and Venezuela are forced to focus on their own needs. The U.S hegemony pushes Venezuela and Russia to expand their power, or they will become marginalized by other states. Still, Venezuela and Russia's own survival is each state's primary concern.

To date, the serious analysis has been centered on arms deals and other agreements resulting from the relationship instead of long term goals of the parties involved. The press and a handful of analysts drew parallels between current U.S.-Venezuela tensions and the era of Kennedy, Khrushchev, Castro, and the actions of September 2008. There may not be a nuclear threat, no Cold War, and no clear-cut, ideological conflict such as existed in 1962, but the arrival of Russian bombers, fleet maneuvers, and the frequent sales of Russian military hardware to Venezuela reflect Moscow's unwelcome readiness to trigger memories of the "Bear in the Backyard" and

⁵ Brooks, David. "Realism and the U.S. Hegemony." *Politablog*. N.p., 01082010. Web. 21 Nov 2010. <<http://www.politablog.com/david-brooks/realism-and-the-us-hegemony/>>.

the decade-long struggle to contain Communism in the Western Hemisphere⁶.

Whether it actually leads to asymmetric warfare, terrorism or yet another cold war, a realist cannot be sure, but it is imperative as they grow to expand their power. Any result, including war is simply an extension of foreign policy. Although the recent actions are described as routine exercises, the U.S must keep a close watch on both countries.

Feminism : A Response to Realism, and Russia-Venezuela Relations

Man Vs. Nature

Realists have offered an instrumental version of states' security seeking behavior which depends on a partial representation of human behavior associated with a stereotypical hegemonic masculinity⁷. This does not provide the consensus necessary to create a truly realistic representation of "human" behavior. Realists use state of nature stories as metaphors to describe the insecurity of states in an anarchical international system. This state of nature is actually "man vs. nature." In the case of

⁶ Walser, Ray. "Chávez, Venezuela, and Russia: A New Cuban Missile Crisis?." *Heritage Foundation: Leadership for America* (2008): 1. Web. 19 Nov 2010. <<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2008/09/chaacutevez-venezuela-and-russia-a-new-cuban-missile-crisis>>.

⁷ Tickner, J. Ann. *Man, The State, and War: Gendered Perspectives On National Security*. Third Edition. New York, N.Y.: W W Norton & Company, 2008. 122-123. Print.

dominate and often hegemonic states and the Caribbean, the masculine states are exploiting the inferior state. Beginning with the Cold War era, these brut forces have fought for control over this economic hotbed. As Venezuela seeks support, Russia victimizes Venezuela for economical and militaristic purposes. Although they contribute to Venezuela's prosperity, Russia's role is determined by a long history of tension with the U.S. The primary goal of the dominant state is to control the economic resources of the inferior state, and strengthen its own force against the hegemonic oppression of the U.S. It is a form of coercion. Similar to views of world affairs, nature is viewed as existing for human benefit, seen by this expansionism. To a feminist, it is also non productive labor. In contrast to realists view, these actions are careless and the ends do not justify the means. They attempt to influence, and further their own causes through the use of the weaker states resources, geographical location and population. The Caribbean and most notably Venezuela, contain vast amounts of natural resources in its fertile ground.

To emphasis the impact masculine states such as Russia have made in Caribbean states, past experiences must be researched. The centuries dominant masculine forces have been fighting over the Caribbean's economic resources since the early 1960s. To compare and contrast the current situation(Russia-Venezuela relations), Cynthia Weber originates the feminist dispute to U.S Caribbean relations. Arguing this began with the deterioration of a U.S and Russia relationship which escalated into the Cold War. The Cuban-Soviet relationship was quite turbulent during the 1960s, improved during the 1970s and 1980s only to rupture under Mikhail Gorbachev. It was the naive yet manly Castro whom the Soviets seemed to desire more

than the ironically feminine Cuba⁸. The Soviet Union (and Russian Federation) has a history of supporting Caribbean states. The United States was not ready to accept that Cuba was lost to the Soviets. Distorting its own power and force through the guise of machismo, the U.S caused its self "castration" from Castro, as Weber explains. At that time, the Soviets were properly engaged and Russia has been consistent with its support for these states. Similar to the liberal view of the use of diplomacy and peace, feminist believe compromise would further relations between the U.S, Russia and Venezuela. In other words, where the U.S went wrong was its approach. Internally, the U.S was changing drastically, but did not seek compromise with Cuba. The U.S desired a relationship on its own terms whereas the Soviets were more willing to play along. "Castro's Cuba", and the Cuban missile crisis proved Cuba could never be fully aligned with either superpower. The "on again, off again" relationship of the U.S and Venezuela, courtship of Venezuela by the Russian Federation and the tension of power relations amongst the U.S and Russia help explain Venezuela's preference and obligation to its counterpart, Russia.

A feminist would also argue that realist overvalue the role of the state in defining the above mentioned information. Russia and Venezuela's structure, politically and socially are the primary causes that affect their relations with foreign states. These actions are strategically executed to increase Russia's dominance over Venezuela's economic resources, and they demonstrate the masculine rule of both states. In the long run, this power seeking behavior poses danger for the security of the natural

⁸ Weber, Cynthia. *Faking It: U.S Hegemony in a "Post Phallic" Era*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. 26-33. Print.

environment and its inhabitants, women and men alike⁹. Although Russia and Venezuela's relationship might be seen as reciprocal, Putin's influence over Chavez gives him the upper hand. As with Castro and Cuba, masculine leaders ruling over states subjugate the environment and dramatically increase the number of unnecessary casualties. To illustrate, Putin not only suppresses his own people under an oppressive rule of cult personality and censorship, but highly influences Chavez's power over the people of Venezuela. The emphasis is on how this effects the citizens of Russia and Venezuela, and the environment. Also, given Russia's history as a communist state, oppression is embedded in their national identity. Consequently, the oppressive hand of elected dictators does not offer consensus, but merely a struggle for power. The current administration in Russia creates propaganda displaying opponents in woman's clothing. Their message is directed at the youth of the Russian population, and sends mixed signals concerning gender and schemas. Constructed to target the opposition, these images of transvestites, degrading the value of women by comparing queer images to what they perceive as rhetoric, Russian leaders further the negative impact of power dynamic between genders.

The view of a feminist would also pose many new questions that realists, radicals and even liberals may not ponder. They perceive the IGOs, NGOs and International Law to play a rather significant role in the influence of Russia-Venezuela relations. They would want to know how much of an impact IGOs, NGOs, and various companies have on the states and people. For instance, how does PDVSA impact

⁹ Tickner, J. Ann. *Gender In International Relations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. 99. Print.

Venezuela socially and culturally? They would emphasize the role of the Nations Security Council. For example, feminists argue that these institutions have a reciprocal relationship with the entire population of their country. These institutions are believed to severely impact the cultures of each nation within the borders of the two states. They interact on a daily basis and these interactions are significant to the role of their state itself. Do Venezuelans see themselves as part of a democratic nation-state, socialist movement or do they have an unbalanced opinion mixed between the two? How does this impact their ability to cooperate and reach a consensus? Finally, if Venezuela is heading towards socialism, is this going to further the oppression of women? Many would argue that socialism is fundamental to oppression, but others see this movement in Venezuela as a democratic front with populist ideals. If so, Venezuela could be taking steps in a completely new direction. Nevertheless, Russia- Venezuela relations play an extremely vital role in the direction of our world today and in the future.