

After 23 Years of Media Warfare Against Venezuela, the US Says it Will Start a Media War

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After 23 years of unremitting media warfare against Venezuela, the United States announces that it will start a media war against Venezuela. It's cynical, it's tragic, it's even comical. Since 1997, when Commander Hugo Chávez Frías began to emerge in the polls as a presidential option, and until today, the United States has led the most violent media initiatives to influence Venezuelan politics and change the course that through elections the (Venezuelan) people have taken. A brief account of the main episodes of this communications war would clarify how old and stubborn this strategy is.

The serial genocide perpetretor Elliott Abrams (mastermind of massacres and attacks in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, let it be known) was in charge of delivering this “news” more than two decades later.


Journalistic reports say that “the United States is preparing a new strategy against Venezuela in which it will use the media as part of its pressure campaign against Maduro.”

Abrams, also instigator of United States’ wars and invasions in this century, explained that Washington plans the launch of media actions on radio, television and internet, in order to penetrate Venezuelan territory.

Abrams spoke at an online conference sponsored by the Hudson Institute, one of Washington’s most influential *think tanks*, entities that, as Canadian professor Rodrigue Tremblay says, “provide political reports on various topics to government officials, usually from a very conservative viewpoint.”

23 years of war

The first movements of the US media war in Venezuela were against the powerful political movement that took the electoral course in 1997. When the then political establishment realized that its lifeboat, the candidacy of the former Miss Universe Irene Sáez, began to deflate, and that Chávez’s popularity grew rapidly, almost the entire media industry in Venezuela lined up behind desperate moves by the right to avoid a debacle.

Washington was a leading part of those alignments, through frequent diplomatic interference and through the unified action of the American media of the time, which was key for news networks such as *CNN* and *Fox News*.  Then, when Chávez was in power, almost all of the media apparatus tried in vain to prevent the convocation of a National Constituent Assembly and, since it was not possible to stop that process either, it directed its efforts to try to get the people to reject the new Magna Carta (constitution).

All against Chávez

By 2000, the few media that had given support to Chávez turned around when they realized that the new president would not be their puppet. The war then turned into all-against-the-government and in that vein, the April 2002 coup d'état arrived, which according to all the evidence, including confessions and confidences of the protagonists, was mainly a media coup, closely coordinated by the State Department. At that moment, the perverse figure of Abrams appeared behind the scenes.

Rabidly mediatic were also the following chapters of the saga, including the “military rebellion” in Plaza Altamira and the oil sabotage and lock-down (Dec, 2002). The poisoned communications of those months led vast sectors of the Venezuelan population into mental breakdowns, from which at this point, 18 years later, many still have not recovered.

Maybe it's something like that Abrams and his minions are considering now. Only, many of the media that were then stellar no longer exist, have modified their editorial lines or are limited to small audiences. To a large extent, the fact of being turned into scrap metal is the consequence of their incursion into a media war in which they emerged as losers.

2004 to 2013: From plot to plot

The use of the media as a weapon of primary importance in the attack against Bolivarian Venezuela continued in 2004 with the backing of the first attempt by the extreme right to overthrow the government through outbreaks of urban disturbances, the wrongly named “guarimbas”.

Also that year, the media, acting in unison in a scenario that they widely dominated, did everything possible to relativize and ridicule the government's complaint about the paramilitary operation of the Daktari estate, dismantled by intelligence agencies. Also in 2004, all the national and foreign media aligned against Chávez in the recall referendum.

The media were the deciding factor in 2005 in the opposition coalition's decision to boycott the parliamentary elections, one of the main party leaders, Henry Ramos Allup, later revealed.

In 2007, the scoundrel media suffered a major loss with the non-renewal of a broadcasting television channel concession of *RCTV*, one of the most bitter enemies of the revolutionary process since 1997. In that year, without the stubborn support of the media, it would not have been possible to create the climate of turmoil that led to the defeat of the Constitutional Reform project and the promotion of a group of young people with far-right ideas, in the style of the fascist movements that carried out the so-called color revolutions in Eastern Europe.

During the following years, until 2011, the media machinery did not rest in its conspiracies, but there was little that it could achieve. The same thing happened to its counterpart, the political opposition, that was in the dark before a Chavez in all his splendor. But that year they found a streak in which they showed their most perverse imprint, by feeding on President Chávez's illness. They went with that until March 2013, when the president died and even later, because they have continued to work systematically against the memory that a good part of the Venezuelan people and many other countries keep about Hugo Chavez.

2013: Casualties on the battlefield

That year, the media battalion also suffered considerable losses, when the owners of several of the most radically anti-Chavista media decided to sell them to business groups that assumed different editorial and news lines. It was a defeat inflicted on the rightwing media with the dented weapons of capitalism, as “Che” Guevara would have said, because the voice of money spoke. Be that as it may, in short, it was a defeat.

It is possible that the media that Abrams intends to create are the one that played the role that the media sold (by their owners) stopped playing at that time.

In that same 2013, while these plays were being completed, the rest of the media machinery, especially the one based in other countries, remained at war, encouraging adventures such as the “calentera” (new guarimbas) after the defeated Henrique Capriles in the Presidential race after Chavez’s death, which caused more than a dozen of deaths, and developed intense and daily smear campaigns against President Nicolás Maduro.

That same year the economic war intensified and the media component was essential for it to take shape.

2014-2017: More and worse violence with media support

In 2014, allied to the most undemocratic sectors of the Venezuelan right, the media encouraged a new attempted insurrection through a focussed tactic using the guarimba model. These were highly localized violent events in enclaves of the middle and upper classes, so the role of the media was crucial to create, on a global scale, the impression that a great anti-government popular rebellion was underway.

Between that year 2015 and 2017, the media were strategic props in the intensification of the war against the people through shortages, hoarding and speculation of essential goods. At this time, a newspaper network in the US, Latin America and Europe dedicated several pages a day to denouncing topics such as long lines to buy bread or toilet paper. Its purpose was to portray Venezuela as hell and blame the government for the evils intentionally caused by the business community and the reactionary political class.

In 2016, after the opposition victory in the legislative elections (in December 2015), the rightwing media went as crazy as the partisans. They launched together from all directions different attempts to put an early end to the Maduro government. The media (local and international) breathed life into suggestions as far-fetched as the removal of the President in six months, the abandonment of office, doubts about his nationality and forced early elections.

In 2017, another episode occurred in which the media is deeply involved. It was the third and bloodiest yet, wave of terrorist violence (guarimbas), which this time lasted four months and included lynchings and barbaric acts as few had been seen in many years in Venezuela. The anti-Chavez communication machinery (now reinforced by new digital native media, many of them openly funded by the US and the European Union) glorified violent protesters; it made martyrs of young people who were put to death by the extreme right-wing political leadership, and it hid or relativized the hate crimes and acts against humanity perpetrated in the opposition coven, including the vile murder of people who were burned alive (just because they “looked” Chavista).

The media manipulation regarding these days reached worldwide levels. On July 30, the date of the elections (for governors), the terrorist opposition tried to impede the elections and the communication apparatus presented the violence to the world as promoted by the government.

2017-2019: Diaspora, assassination and commissioning

Throughout all these years and until 2019, the power of the media was paramount in consolidating the narrative of Venezuela as a nation in humanitarian crisis and on the brink of famine as a result of erroneous policies. It was also key to encouraging hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans, especially young people, to leave the country. The “reports” about the so-called “diaspora” were part of a gigantic psychological operation that has had dire consequences for its victims, due to outbreaks of xenophobia, human trafficking, exploitation of workers and, this year, terrible human dramas.

In 2018, the same media were complicit in the political right that, after negotiating and reaching agreements, kicked over the table in the Dominican Republic on orders from the State Department. They also did their best to delegitimize the May presidential election and sought to discredit and ridicule the frustrated August assassination attempt [on Maduro] using drones. Only months after the events, one of those media decided to make the truth known, with testimonies from the material authors of the terrorist plot. Others have never deigned to admit that they misled their audiences.

Since 2019, the entire media machinery has been essential in sustaining the arbitrary “government in charge” of Juan Guaidó, on express instructions from Washington. The deployment that this character was given as a supposed national leader, has nothing to do with journalism, but is further proof of its role as a weapon in the conspiracy.

Among the highlights of 2019 in which the communication apparatus was - or claimed to be - of great weight in the insurrectional strategy, are Guaidó’s self-proclamation; Cúcuta’s concert and the failed invasion attempt under the guise of humanitarian aid; the blackouts in March, April and July, and the attempted coup d’état on April 30.

In the humanitarian aid episode, all the right-wing media conspired to support the false version that the Venezuelan government had ordered the burning of the trucks with food and medicine (allegedly coming from Cucuta), despite evidence that the fire had been caused by anti-Chavistas from the Colombian side of the border, as verified and recognized, weeks later, by *The New York Times*.

The same media that had demanded that Maduro be tried for crimes against humanity due to that destruction, did not ask for any sanction, not even a reprimand, against the true authors of the crime.

In 2020, the alleged informative bodies were, once again, a cog in the strategy of “regime change” by endeavoring to keep the Guaidó operation alive, hiding or downplaying the enormous cases of corruption that have been perpetrated under cover by his alleged commissioners.

Meanwhile, new media, which for the most part operate from outside the country, try to use the “fight against corruption” argument to destroy the social program of the Local Supply and Production Committees (CLAP), which have been a response to the economic war. In

this way they serve the US strategy of suffocating the Venezuelan population until it rises up against the government.

What else might they try?

After this quick walk through of more than two decades of the media turned into cannons and bombs from the right, one has to wonder what the serial genocide Abrams is thinking now when he talks about “starting” a media offensive.

What are they going to do now, those who follow the instructions of this murderer of towns and recipient of “fees” from USAID, the more or less decent face of the CIA? What can they try that they have not already tried? We will see soon enough.

Featured image: Elliott Abrams, US virtual envoy for Venezuela. File photo.

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