

# Putin's Petroleum Paradise

*Adrianna Lagorio*

*Adrianna M. Lagorio is pursuing a M.A. in Security Policy Studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs with specializations in Latin American security and counterterrorism. She attended the University of San Diego for her undergraduate degree where she studied International Relations and Spanish. She started her professional career working in public policy for the Orange County Board of Supervisors and served as the diplomatic liaison to the Mexican Consulate of Santa Ana. She studied at the Universidad de Belgrano in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has conducted field research in Medellin, Colombia in partnership with the organization InSight Crime. She has held internships at Justice in Mexico, the House Committee on Homeland Security, and the United States Institute of Peace.*

ABSTRACT

---

In Latin America, Russia has allied with authoritarian regimes and expanded its influence to counter the United States – a strategy that is evident in Venezuela. While policymakers have focused on China's economic expansion in Venezuela, Russia's use of energy diplomacy in Venezuela has garnered less attention. Russian leadership capitalized on Venezuela's economic vulnerability to gain access to its oil reserves (which are the largest in the world), while gaining a strategic base close to the U.S. and transforming Venezuela into a satellite state for Russian hybrid warfare. Russia's energy investments in Venezuela have political, economic, diplomatic, and military ramifications that will directly impact U.S. foreign policy for years to come.

---

## INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Russia has expanded its presence in the Venezuelan energy industry as part of a larger strategy to counter U.S. influence in the Southern Cone. President Vladimir Putin has used “energy diplomacy” to build strong ties with the Nicolás Maduro regime, while simultaneously making it more dependent on Russian financing. Russia continues to stand by the fundamental belief that energy diplomacy is a key factor in strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations on the global stage. The recent political crisis in Venezuela threatens Russia's investment in and control over Venezuelan energy projects. This article will examine the political, economic, diplomatic, and military strategies Russia has employed to facilitate its expansion into Venezuela's

energy industry. Russia's multifaceted energy expansion strategy in Venezuela underscores a larger effort to undermine U.S. policy in Latin America.

## **RUSSIA'S QUEST FOR PROFITS**

Venezuela is home to the world's largest proven oil reserves and is ranked as having the ninth largest proven natural gas reserves.<sup>1</sup> The Venezuelan economy is heavily dependent on oil exports, which account for ninety-five percent of the country's total export revenue.<sup>2</sup> The international plunge in oil prices, in combination with U.S. sanctions, have caused President Maduro to seek financial assistance from creditors like Russia and China.

Russia has exploited Venezuela's economic vulnerability to gain access to its prized heavy crude oil reserves in the Orinoco Belt and in Lake Maracaibo. International sanctions against Russia's ability to access financing and technology from international markets forced it to explore international energy projects to avoid a reduction in its production capabilities.<sup>3</sup> Venezuela was an ideal partner through which to expand Russian influence in international energy markets, due to the country's economic vulnerability, large oil reserves, and history of anti-U.S. rhetoric. As seen in the case of BP, Chevron, and ExxonMobil, smart investments can lead to billions of dollars in profits when oil prices increase.<sup>4</sup>

President Putin and his allies continue to prop up the Maduro regime to ensure that the Venezuelan government does not default on Russia's billion-dollar investments. In 2017, Russia restructured \$3 billion dollars of Venezuela's outstanding debt, to be paid over a ten-year period.<sup>5</sup> Over the past four years, Russia has also provided Venezuela with more than \$10 billion dollars in financial assistance, designed to be repaid in the form of oil exports.<sup>6</sup>

For Putin, the Venezuelan oil market presents significant "potential for profitability," as it offers the opportunity to gain access to the largest oil reserves in the world as well as increase Russia's control over oil that is exported to the United States and other countries in Latin America.<sup>7</sup>

## **IGOR SECHIN AND ROSNEFT'S EXPANSION IN VENEZUELA**

Natural gas and oil revenues account for one-third of Russia's federal budget, meaning that the Russian economy is heavily dependent on steady and profitable energy production, and dynamic energy companies.<sup>8</sup> Rosneft, Russia's state-owned energy company, is one of the world's largest publicly traded oil companies.<sup>9</sup> In 2016, Rosneft was responsible for six percent of the world's crude oil output, which was valued at \$65 billion in revenue. Of this, \$53 billion was transferred to the Russian state that same year, which indicates

the economic importance of the company to the Kremlin.<sup>10</sup>

Russian energy companies are dominated by politics, self-interest, and oligarchs close to the Kremlin. Igor Sechin, CEO of Rosneft, is a longtime ally of Vladimir Putin and served as the deputy minister for energy during Putin's tenure as prime minister.<sup>11</sup> The influence that Sechin holds in conjunction with his relationship to Putin have led many to believe that he is the second most powerful man in Russia and setting the stage for a presidential run in 2023.<sup>12</sup> Sechin took advantage of the exodus of Western and Russian companies from Venezuela to achieve his goal of turning Rosneft into the next oil supermajor, like BP or ExxonMobil.<sup>13</sup> Under his leadership, Rosneft has expanded presence on the international stage, increased competition with other energy companies, and become a political instrument for Sechin to challenge traditional energy politics in Russia.

Despite the highly competitive and political environment, in 2008, five Russian energy companies – Gazprom, Rosneft, Lukoil, TNK-BP, and Surgutneftegaz – formed a National Energy Consortium to consolidate their interests and begin exploring Venezuelan fields.<sup>14</sup> By 2013, Venezuela's oil minister stated that Rosneft and other Russian oil producers planned to invest \$17 billion in Venezuela to quadruple their combined output.<sup>15</sup> The 2014 western sanctions that threatened Russia's domestic production capabilities<sup>16</sup> made Sechin more aggressive in undermining Russian competitors and expanding Rosneft's projects to Asia, the Middle East, and most importantly, Venezuela.

Venezuela's economic troubles gave Sechin the leverage he needed to negotiate oil deals at low prices, thus expanding Rosneft's presence into a market dominated by U.S. companies. In 2016, PDVSA, Venezuela's cash strapped state oil company, put up a forty-nine percent stake of the U.S.-based company Citgo as collateral in exchange for a loan from Rosneft.<sup>17</sup> The deal gave Rosneft direct access to U.S.-based oil refineries and gas stations, which could hypothetically be seized as collateral were Venezuela to default on the loan. In 2017, Rosneft negotiated a contract for gas field exploration over a period of thirty years, with the company maintaining the right to sell and export all of the production.<sup>18</sup> Rosneft's expansion into natural gas projects was a direct challenge to the traditional energy order in Russia, where Rosneft focused solely on oil and Gazprom dominated the gas industry.<sup>19</sup>

To this day, Sechin continues to take advantage of Venezuela's vulnerability with the hope of bringing the Western Hemisphere's largest oil reserves under Russian control. Expansion into Venezuela is part of Rosneft's strategy to meet its 2022 goal of annually producing thirty million tons of oil equivalent.<sup>20</sup> Also, Rosneft's operations in Venezuela helped ensure that the company's image as an international player in energy markets is solidified.

Sechin also seeks to ensure that Venezuela follows through on its

production commitments to Russia. This is highly challenging because of Venezuela's lack of investment in its oil infrastructure, the current economic crisis, and widespread corruption in PDVSA.<sup>21</sup> Yet, such risky investments have proven necessary due to Russia's over-reliance on hydrocarbon revenue to fund its budget.<sup>22</sup>

However, Rosneft's continued presence in Venezuela's crumbling energy industry demonstrates that Russia is motivated by both economic and political factors. Rosneft's aggressive expansion and production goals are representative of Putin's strategy to reassert Russia's role in international oil negotiations with OPEC. By controlling more of the world's oil supply, Russia seeks to stabilize international oil prices, while hedging against the increase in the United States domestic energy production. The increasing investment of Rosneft in Venezuelan oil (and, to a lesser extent, gas) markets demonstrates that Rosneft has long-term policy objectives in Venezuela.<sup>23</sup>

## FROM OPEC TO ROPEC

Russia's interests in Venezuelan energy are part of a calculated effort to circumvent sanctions, increase Russia's power in energy negotiations and balance against powers like China, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) continued push to cut oil production to mitigate the impact of low oil prices constitutes a threat to Russian energy companies, who desire to continue producing and selling oil on the global market. While Russia is comfortable with oil prices between \$43-\$60 a barrel, other countries require high oil prices to fund their budget.<sup>24</sup> Saudi Arabian officials, for example, would prefer higher oil prices to balance government budgets and maintain economic growth, which explains their efforts to limit production.<sup>25</sup> The fact that Russia has a lower baseline price allows it to continue high levels of production despite oil price fluctuations, and provides it with increased leverage in international oil negotiations.

Despite some scholars' projections that Russia's energy industry is at risk of crumbling, Russia continues to maintain its influence in OPEC.<sup>26</sup> Although Russia lacks the technology necessary for shale extraction, it remains a significant player in the global energy markets as a result of Putin's aggressive expansion into markets in Africa, Iraq, and Venezuela. This makes Russian cooperation necessary when OPEC desires to make production cuts.<sup>27</sup> The continued cooperation between Russia and OPEC nations has led some scholars to forecast that OPEC is morphing into a Russian-OPEC Alliance (ROPEC).<sup>28</sup>

Russia's increasing influence within global energy markets can be seen through high profile visits and continued cooperation with U.S.-allies such as Saudi Arabia. In 2017, the King of Saudi Arabia traveled to meet Vladimir

Putin in Moscow for the first time in history.<sup>29</sup> Historically, Russia and Saudi Arabia have clashed over the level of oil production in the international market. Saudi Arabia has a reputation as an oil “price setter,” while Russia has historically been considered a “price taker.”<sup>30</sup> While some may view cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Russia as contrary to Russia’s pro-production price taker attitude, it signals that, despite sanctions, Russia continues to remain a prominent player in international oil markets.

Russia’s expansion into Venezuelan oil markets is relevant to the Russian-Saudi relationship as Venezuela is a vulnerable OPEC country over which Russia now has considerable influence. Venezuela holds the largest oil reserves in the world, meaning that Russian investment in the oil sector could significantly increase the supply of oil in the international market, which could threaten Saudi Arabia’s dominance over global oil supply. In addition, Rosneft is continuing to expand globally with the hope of gaining key alliances, which would allow Russia to combat OPEC production cuts and resist Western sanctions. By transforming Venezuela into a new “satellite” state, Russia gains direct access to the internal workings of OPEC. This clearly demonstrates that Rosneft’s investment in Latin America, and Venezuela in particular, cannot be separated from Putin’s foreign policy goals.<sup>31</sup>

## **RUSSIA’S DIPLOMATIC INTERESTS IN VENEZUELA**

It is too simplistic to assume that Russia’s interests in Venezuela solely relate to funding its state budget or to gain an upper hand in ROPEC. Rather, Venezuela is part of Putin’s foreign policy strategy of restoring Russia to the great power status and challenging American unilateralism. Putin’s desire to increase Russia’s global influence is what motivated him to re-engage old Soviet allies and seek out new ones in Latin America.<sup>32</sup> Since the time of Hugo Chávez, Venezuela and Russia have worked together to undermine U.S. efforts in the region. Ultimately, Putin’s policy objectives in Venezuela are part of a long-term strategy to disrupt U.S. diplomatic efforts while simultaneously profiting from cheap energy deals.<sup>33</sup>

Russia’s maneuvers in the Venezuelan energy sector are closely tied to its foreign policy. Putin continues to use the control of energy markets as one of many diplomatic tools to pressure the United States, all the while reasserting Russia’s ability to act in the “far-abroad”. Indeed, authors like Andrei Tsygankov argue that Russia uses foreign policy tools to build pragmatic alliances that reassert Russia’s global reach.<sup>34</sup> For example, Putin uses arms sales, energy deals, and large-scale investments to garner favor in Venezuela and the region.<sup>35</sup>

Hugo Chávez helped create anti-U.S. cooperation blocs, like Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), to oppose U.S.

economic and political dominance in Latin America. Russia focused on integrating into these organizations as an observer, which created stronger diplomatic relations between Moscow and Venezuela's allies.<sup>36</sup> Russia's success owes a lot to Putin's ability to present Russia as an alternative partner to the "imperialist" United States. In Latin America, he has achieved this by creating partnerships with authoritarian democracies.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Russia's increasing influence over Venezuela manifests itself in regional and global institutions such as the United Nations.

Russia has successfully exploited its diplomatic relations with Venezuela to challenge the United States at the United Nations. For example, in 2014, the U.N. General Assembly Resolution "Territorial Integrity of Ukraine" failed to gain significant support from Latin American countries, which demonstrated a rejection of U.S. foreign policy priorities.<sup>38</sup> Fourteen Latin American countries abstained, while four voted against the resolution. The countries that opposed the measure included Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.<sup>39</sup> In 2016, Venezuela also voted with China and Russia to veto the Aleppo Truce before the U.N. Security Council.<sup>40</sup> Finally, Venezuela has shown its diplomatic solidarity with Russia through its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, signaling Russia's diplomatic success in shaping Venezuelan foreign policy.<sup>41</sup>

Russia continues to work with Venezuela to promote the two countries' shared vision of a multipolar world. Ever since the presidency of Hugo Chávez, Russia and Venezuela have promoted the idea of a multipolar order in which the United States no longer dominates. For this purpose, Russia has promoted itself as "... [becoming] a center for all [countries] who feel discontented and aggrieved [by the U.S.]".<sup>42</sup> Putin has focused on dominating diplomatic relations and creating a strong alliance with Venezuela to build an anti-U.S. coalition on the global stage.

## COMPETITION IN CHINA

While China has provided significant economic assistance to Venezuela, it has not taken an aggressive approach towards diplomatic relations, as seen in the case of Russia. Putin has been much more strategic in his relations with Maduro. For example, one study found that while on the U.N. Security Council, Venezuela's voting history has aligned more closely with Russia's than with China's.<sup>43</sup> Victor Mijares argues that Venezuela's voting patterns demonstrate Putin's success in fostering strong diplomatic relations by reaffirming Russia and Venezuela's shared geopolitical visions and regime characteristics.<sup>44</sup> Putin's strong focus on diplomacy has allowed him to gain the "trust" of Maduro through an emphasis on shared grievances related to U.S. interventionism.

China's diplomatic model in the Western Hemisphere is primarily focused on "making business, not war," while Russia seeks to "make friends and

undermine the United States.”<sup>45</sup> The fact that China has reduced its investment in Venezuela gave Rosneft the opportunity to secure an increased number of energy deals in exchange for loans. By becoming Venezuela’s economic lifeline, Russia has solidified its influence over the country’s energy markets in a way that China has not.

## **U.S. AND RUSSIAN RELATIONS OVER VENEZUELA**

Nicolás Maduro’s continued use of anti-U.S. sentiment – for example when blaming the United States for the economic chaos in Venezuela – serves to further Russian efforts to frame the United States as an aggressor.<sup>46</sup> Venezuela remains a profound foreign policy challenge for the United States, as the humanitarian crisis within the country has led to increased migrant flows and spread of anti-American sentiment in the region. U.S. policy towards Latin America has largely focused on development and counter-narcotics, with little attention paid to building trust within countries that fear U.S. regional interventionism. The focus of the Bush Administration on the War on Terror and the Obama Administration’s emphasis on Asia overshadowed the need for increased U.S. attention in the region, at a time when Russian and Chinese investments were increasing.

Tit-for-tat diplomacy in Latin America by Russia is payback for U.S. interventions in Russia’s traditional spheres of influence, such as the former Soviet states including Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>47</sup> As Julia Gurganus explains, “Moscow may view its gains in Central and South America as payback for what it has viewed as U.S. interference in Russia’s backyard.”<sup>48</sup> While Russia will not go to war over Venezuela, its increased presence in the region seeks to frustrate U.S. diplomatic efforts. For example, Putin’s support of the Maduro regime directly counters the United States’ recognition of Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela. Russia even went as far as sending in aids to increase the protection of Maduro.<sup>49</sup> As such, Russia’s involvement in Venezuela feeds into a strategy of creating a multipolar world, with the hope of reducing the scope of U.S. influence in countries like Venezuela.<sup>50</sup>

Russia’s entrenchment in Venezuela also forces the United States to engage with Russia, which helps Putin bolster Russia’s reputation as a global power.<sup>51</sup> This is not unique to Venezuela: Russia has inserted itself into some of the biggest humanitarian disasters of the 21st century. The conflict in Syria is another example of Russian intervention in a conflict of strategic importance to the United States and its allies. Russia’s involvement in conflicts pertinent to U.S. interests provides it with increased leverage in talks with the West on other issues of strategic importance, such as Ukraine. Venezuela continues to constitute a unique opportunity for Russia to undermine U.S. policy influence in the region while also waging hybrid war in the Western Hemisphere.

## **RUSSIAN HYBRIDWARFARE**

Putin is using the increased economic dependence of Venezuela on Russian financing to wage hybrid warfare against the United States. Russian military thinkers see the nature of war changing into “long contactless actions against the enemy [as]... the main means of achieving combat and operational goals.”<sup>52</sup> Part of this contactless strategy manifests itself in disinformation campaigns against the United States and democratic principles. Russia does not desire to confront the United States with hard power in Venezuela, but rather to use hybrid warfare techniques to exploit historical tensions, discourage democracy, and ultimately achieve its strategic objectives.

Hybrid warfare is increasingly reaching South America in the form of propaganda and information operations, with Venezuela serving as the base of operations. In 2014, General John Kelly commented that Russia’s new military presence in Latin America was greater than anything the United States had seen in the past three decades.<sup>53</sup> Russian Television (RT) and Sputnik “Mundo” have an active presence in Venezuela through their Spanish-speaking platforms.<sup>54</sup> Russia’s propaganda strategy in Latin America “erode[s] confidence in western institutions such as democracy and free trade, as well as western-dominated sources of information.”<sup>55</sup> Indeed, one study found that Latin Americans’ confidence in democracy declined from sixty-one to fifty-three percent in 2017.<sup>56</sup> Russian propaganda seeks to strengthen these sentiments by exploiting historical suspicion of the United States. Not unlike Putin, Maduro uses national media outlets such as Telesur, to control the narrative about the causes of the Venezuelan crisis, in a way that promotes anti-U.S. sentiment.<sup>57</sup> News coverage concerning the Maduro Administration is solely positive, and journalists use anti-capitalist narratives as a means of propaganda. Russian media expansion in Latin America and support of anti-capitalist news stations are part of Putin’s strategy to continue waging contactless war on the global stage.

## **POLICY OPTIONS FOR REDUCING RUSSIA'S INTERFERENCE**

Russia’s expanding influence in Venezuela’s energy sector is part of a larger multi-dimensional strategy to challenge U.S. hegemony and gain a physical foothold in Latin America. Russia’s political influence and economic interests in Venezuela and efforts to undermine the United States have led to the current stalemate between President Maduro and Juan Guaidó. Russia’s increased ability to exploit U.S. policy failures suggests that the Trump Administration needs to reconsider its current policy towards Latin America. The lack of focus

on Latin America combined with the Venezuelan economic crisis have given Putin a strategic position to gain more power in the region, while undermining the hope for democracy in Venezuela.

Congress should reduce and/or eliminate sanctions on Russian energy companies. The strategy to counter Russian aggression with sanctions has done little to stop Putin's increased belligerence around the world. Sanctions in combination with Putin's low approval ratings, have only strengthened his narrative of victimization.<sup>58</sup> In addition, sanctions have hurt Western energy companies that have exploration agreements with Russia. Former Ambassador Daniel Fried stated that coercive policies under the Congress-approved Counter America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATAS) would hurt American interests and have potentially damaging consequences.<sup>59</sup> European energy companies have also lobbied heavily against new sanctions, which demonstrates rising tension between the United States and Europe with regards to the Russian question.<sup>60</sup>

Relieving Russia of economic sanctions is not a sign of weakness, but rather a strategic shift in policy. Russian public opinion of the United States has fallen to an all-time low, which demonstrates that sanctions are hurting the Russian people and the United States' reputation abroad.<sup>61</sup> The unfavorable view of the United States is helping fuel Putin's belligerence. The United States may be trying to protect its energy interests at home, but this will ultimately result in greater security threats abroad.

The United States can reduce Russian aggression through sanctions relief, which will benefit U.S. companies that seek to pursue energy exploration projects with Russian companies. Russia's energy expansion abroad was a result of Western economic sanctions threatening the country's long-term oil projects that require the financial investment, management, and technology of international companies.<sup>62</sup> However, U.S. sanctions have not slowed down Russia's domestic production, but rather made Russia replace long-term domestic projects with aggressive foreign expansion.<sup>63</sup> Despite the United States' attempt to isolate Russia, the latter's energy companies have found countries that are willing to work with them to continue producing oil, gas, and renewable energy.<sup>64</sup> Removing coercive policies against Russian energy companies will shift Putin's attention away from expansion in countries like Venezuela, and back to domestic Russian energy production projects, since the expansion occurred primarily in response to U.S. sanctions.

The United States' current policy toward Russia is only creating a more aggressive adversary. It is not facilitating bilateral, diplomatic engagement to solve pressing issues, such as the crisis in Syria, Ukraine, and now Venezuela.<sup>65</sup> While the fear of Russian aggression is well founded, policymakers must consider the danger of fueling anti-American sentiment and generating a more aggressive adversary in the Western Hemisphere. Russia's increasing support of

Maduro, in opposition to the U.S. endorsement of Juan Guaidó, demonstrates that the United States will have to not only resolve a humanitarian crisis, but also confront a Russian-backed regime in its own hemisphere. Sanction relief could be the first step in countering Russian aggression and energy expansion in Venezuela. In the long term, it could facilitate a dialogue concerning a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

## CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, Russia has expanded its policy of energy diplomacy to Venezuela as part of a long-term strategy to counter the United States in its own hemisphere. Russia's actions in Venezuela are payback for the United States' actions in Georgia and Ukraine. Russia's energy expansion into Venezuela must be understood within the broader framework of Putin's geopolitical strategy, which involves developing close ties with countries in areas of U.S. influence. Policymakers must consider a strategic shift in policy to engage Russia diplomatically and use the possibility of sanctions relief to find a peaceful solution to Venezuela's crisis.

### ENDNOTES

- 1 Antonio Mora, "Venezuela quickly becoming Russia's newest satellite state," *The Hill* (Washington, D.C.) November 20, 2017, <https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/361176-venezuela-becoming-russias-newest-satellite-state>
- 2 Patrick Gillespie, "4 reasons why Venezuela became the world's worst economy," *Money.cnn.com* [CNN Money], October 25, 2016, <https://money.cnn.com/2016/10/25/news/economy/venezuela-breaking-point/index.html>
- 3 Marianna Parrage and Alexandra Ulmer, "Special Report: Vladimir's Venezuela - leveraging loans to Caracas, Moscow snaps up oil assets," *Reuters.com*, August 11, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-russia-oil-specialreport-idUSKBN1AR14U>
- 4 Robert Rapier, "How Venezuela Ruined Its Oil Industry," *Forbes*, May 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rpapier/2017/05/07/how-venezuela-ruined-its-oil-industry/#597c79a57399>
- 5 RFE/RL, "Russia, Venezuela Sign Deal to Restructure More Than \$3 Billion Of Debt," *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, November 15, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-venezuela-sign-debt-restructuring-deal/28855628.html> (Accessed November 4, 2018).6 Golanski, 69-71.
- 6 Marianna Parrage and Alexandra Ulmer.
- 7 Mark N. Katz, "The Putin-Chavez Partnership," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 53, no. 4, (July 2006): 3, DOI: 10.2753/PPC1075-8216530401 (Accessed November 20, 2018).
- 8 US Energy Information Administration.
- 9 Rosneft, "Rosneft at a Glance," Accessed March 09, 2019, [https://www.rosneft.com/about/Rosneft\\_today/](https://www.rosneft.com/about/Rosneft_today/)
- 10 Diana Negroponte, "Russian Interests in Venezuela: A New Cold War?" *Americas Quarterly* (June

- 2018): <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/russian-interests-venezuela-new-cold-war>
- 11 Henry Foy, "We Need to Talk about Igor: The Rise of Russia's Most Powerful Oligarch," *Financial Times* (London), March 01, 2018, Accessed March 09, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/dc7d48f8-1c13-11e8-aaca-4574d7dabfb6>
  - 12 Stratfor, "Russian Rivalries: A Tale of Two Energy Firms," Stratfor Worldview, September 07, 2017, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/russian-rivalries-tale-two-energy-firms>
  - 13 Nina Poussenkova, "The Global Expansion of Russia's Energy Giants," *Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2010): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24384337> (Accessed November 20, 2018), 111.
  - 14 Thomas W. O'Donnell, "Russia is Beating China to Venezuela's Oil Fields," *Americas Quarterly* (2016): <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/russia-beating-china-venezuelas-oil-fields>
  - 15 Diana Villiers Negroponte, "What's Putin's Game in the Western Hemisphere?" *Americas Quarterly* (2015): <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/whats-putins-game-western-hemisphere>
  - 16 US Energy Information Administration, "Country Analysis Brief: Russia," 2017, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.php?iso=RUS>
  - 17 Alexandra Ulmer, "Exclusive: U.S. investors seek to acquire Russia's Rosneft lien in Citgo," *Reuters.com*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-oil-citgo-exclusive-idUSKCN1GA2J4> 18 Gowen, "Can the United Nations United Ukraine?" 17-20.
  - 18 Christian Lowe, "Venezuela Gives Russia's Rosneft Gas Field Concession: Rosneft," *Reuters.com*, December 17, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-venezuela-rosneft-pdvsaidUSKBN1EB0JN>
  - 19 Gazprom International, "Venezuela," <http://gazprom-international.com/en/operations/country/venezuela>
  - 20 Henry Foy, "Rosneft Commits Investment in Kurdistan and Venezuela," *Financial Times* (London), 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/c42aa230-e489-11e7-97e2-916d4fbac0da>
  - 21 Rapier, "How Venezuela Ruined Its Oil Industry."
  - 22 Kenneth Rapoza, "In Venezuela, Russia's Rosneft Quietly Expands Its Reach," *Forbes*, 2013, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2013/07/02/in-venezuela-russias-rosneft-quietly-expands-its-reach/#5ccb416d63a8>
  - 23 Clifford Krauss, "Russia Uses Its Oil Giant, Rosneft, as a Foreign Policy Tool," *New York Times*, October 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/29/business/energy-environment/russia-venezuela-oil-rosneft.html>
  - 24 Tsvetana Paraskova, "Putin: Russia is Fine with \$60 Oil," *Oilprice.com*, November 29, 2018, <https://oilprice.com/Latest-Energy-News/World-News/Putin-Russia-Is-Fine-With-60-Oil.html>
  - 25 Nick Cunningham, "Saudi Arabia's \$100 Oil Dilemma," *Oilprice.com*, April 22, 2018, <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Oil-Prices/Is-Saudi-Arabia-Sowing-The-Seeds-Of-Another-Oil-Price-Crash.html>
  - 26 Tatiana Mitrova, "Western Sanctions on Russia's Oil and Gas Sector: A Damage Assessment," Carnegie Moscow Center, July 25, 2018, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/76909>
  - 27 Edward C Chow and Andrew J. Stanley, "Russia's National Oil Champion Goes Global," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018, [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180627\\_Chow\\_RussiasNationalOilChamp.pdf?A34fyMoqtnsqdF6gl2HF9rayuPiCPx\\_](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180627_Chow_RussiasNationalOilChamp.pdf?A34fyMoqtnsqdF6gl2HF9rayuPiCPx_)
  - 28 John Bowlus, "Can the Russian-OPEC Alliance (ROPEC) Provide Oil-Price Stability?" *Energy Reporters*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.energy-reporters.com/opinion/ropec-oil-price-stability/>

- 29 Patrick Wintour, "Saudi King's visit to Russia heralds shift in global power structures," *Guardian* (London), October 05, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/05/saudi-russia-visit-putin-oil-middle-east>
- 30 Gabriel Collins, "Don't Expect Russia To Cut Oil Production Voluntarily," *Forbes*, October 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/thebakersinstitute/2016/10/19/dont-expect-russia-to-cut-oil-production-voluntarily/>
- 31 Chow and Stanley, 2.
- 32 Andrei Tsygankov, "Preserving Influence in a Changing World: Russia's Grand Strategy," *Problems of Post-Communism*. 58 no. 2, 2011, 31.
- 33 Pablo Telman Sánchez Ramírez, "Is a New Climate of Confrontation Between Russia and the United States Possible in Latin America?" *Latin American Policy* 1 no. 2 (2010): 241.
- 34 Tsygankov, 37
- 35 Stephen Blank and Younkyoo Kim, "Russia and Latin America: The New Frontier for Geopolitics, Arms Sales and Energy," *Problems of Post-Communism* 62 no. 3 (2015): 164.
- 36 Douglas Farah and Liana Eustacia Reyes, "Russia in Latin America: A Strategic Analysis," *Prism* 5 no. 4 (2015): 103, [https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/prism/prism\\_5-4/Russia%20in%20Latin%20America.pdf](https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/prism/prism_5-4/Russia%20in%20Latin%20America.pdf)
- 37 Ibid, 106.
- 38 Elena Pavlova, "A Russian Challenge to Multipolarity?" *Problems of Post-Communism* 65, no. 6 (March 2017), 394.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Michelle Nichols, "Russia, China block U.N. demand for seven-day Aleppo truce," *Reuters.com*, December 05, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un-idUSKBN13U2LX>
- 41 Giovanni Cadioli, "The Bear Beyond the Ocean. Kremlin's Relations with Latin America as a Crucial Step for Russia going back to a Great Power Status," *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali, Nuova Serie* 79 no. 1 (2012): 59.
- 42 Konstantin K. Khudoley, "Russia's Foreign Policy Amid Current International Tensions," *Teorija in Praksa; Ljubljana* 53, no. 2 (2016): 405.
- 43 Victor M. Mijares, "Soft Balancing the Titans: Venezuelan Foreign-Policy Strategy Toward the United States, China, and Russia," *Latin American Policy* 8 no. 2 (2018): 201-231.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid, 223.
- 46 UN News, "Maduro 'brings the truth' about Venezuela to UN Assembly; says he is ready to meet US President Trump," September 26, 2018, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/09/1021002>
- 47 Alejandro W. Sanchez, "The Russian Media in Latin America," *Council on Hemisphere Affairs*, April 21, 2015, <https://lacc.fiu.edu/research/publications/policy-roundtable-paper-sanchez.pdf>
- 48 Julia Gurganus, "Russia: Playing a Geopolitical Game in Latin America," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 03, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/05/03/russia-playing-geopolitical-game-in-latin-america-pub-76228>
- 49 Holly Ellyatt, "The US-Russia Battle for Influence over Venezuela Is Reminding People of Syria,"

- CNBC.com*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/01/30/us-russia-battle-for-venezuela.html>.
- 50 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Russian Federation, "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," 2016.
- 51 Khudoley, 398.
- 52 Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations," *Military Review*. Translation originally published in *Military-Industrial Kurier* in February 2013. *Military Review*: January-February 2016: 24.
- 53 Evan Ellis, "The New Russian Engagement with Latin America: Strategic Position, Commerce, and Dreams of the Past," *Current Politics and Economics in Russia* 30, no. 1-2, (2015): 97.
- 54 Brian Fonseca, "Russian Deceptive Propaganda Growing Fast in Latin America," *Diálogo Digital Military Magazine*, July 2018, <https://dialogo-americas.com/en/articles/russian-deceptive-propaganda-growing-fast-latin-america>
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 AP in Buenos Aires, "Argentina pulls out of Leftist TV Network Telesur," *Guardian* (London), March 28, 2106, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/28/argentina-telesur-tv-network-venezuela-hugo-chavez>
- 58 Adam Taylor, "Is there a link between Putin's approval rating and aggressive Russian foreign policy?" *Washington Post*, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/11/26/is-there-link-between-putins-approval-rating-aggressive-russian-foreign-policy/?utm\\_term=.05cda4764ca7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/11/26/is-there-link-between-putins-approval-rating-aggressive-russian-foreign-policy/?utm_term=.05cda4764ca7)
- 59 Benjamin Haddad and Alina Polyakova, "New Sanctions on Russia are not Enough," Brookings Institution, March 20, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/03/20/new-sanctions-on-russia-are-not-enough/>
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Jacob Poushter, "6 Charts on how Russians and Americans See Each Other," Pew Research Center, October 04, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/04/6-charts-on-how-russians-and-americans-see-each-other/>
- 62 Bud Coote, "Impact of Sanctions on Russia's Energy Industry," Atlantic Council, March 01, 2018, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/impact-of-sanctions-on-russia-s-energy-sector>
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Henry Foy, "Russian Sanctions: Why 'isolation Is Impossible,'" *Financial Times* (London), November 12, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/c51ecf88-e125-11e8-a6e5-792428919cee>.
- 65 James J. Coyle, "Business as Usual with Russia Defeats Sanctions," *The Hill* (Washington, D.C.), April 05 2018, <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/381690-business-as-usual-with-russia-defeats-sanctions>