

The end of the usurpation in Venezuela is just a matter of time

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Sixty-five days have gone since the president of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, assumed the interim presidency of Venezuela and Nicolás Maduro's usurpation.

During this period, Maduro continues with the power of the state apparatus while Guaidó maintains a non-violent resistance. That has caused constant clashes between civil society and the so-called *Colectivos*, paramilitary groups who support Maduro. Besides, Maduro's inner circle tries to defuse Guaidó by withdrawing his parliamentary immunity and imprisoning several of his closest collaborators.

After the sanctions imposed by the United States last Friday on PdVSA's 34 vessels and the two companies that transport thousands of barrels of oil to Cuba from Venezuela -executing the decree that Guaidó issued on March 10, decreeing no more oil to Cuba- Maduro immediately said: "Venezuela asks for support and accompaniment for a great dialogue of peace and understanding. (...) All my will is to seek a way of negotiation for the sake of the future [of Venezuela]".

The following morning, his chancellor reinforced this request in a tweet: "The *Mecanismo de Montevideo*, (Uruguay, Mexico, Caricom, and Bolivia) is the most serious and rigorous initiative that has been proposed. The President @NicolasMaduro called yesterday for its beginning. Dialogue and politics are always the way. War and violence have no place in Venezuela".

The impact of Guaidó's decree "no more shipping of oil to Cuba" is high for the island, because the primary source of electricity in Cuba comes from thermoelectric plants, which use fossil fuels.

The threat of the American sanction is the resurgence of a "special period", similar to the one caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 when the regime of Fidel Castro imposed restrictions on the consumption of gasoline, diesel and other derived fuels to the Cubans. In that "special period", Cuba's GDP contracted 36%.

The chancellor of Maduro affirmed that the usurping regime would seek to deceive "by unconventional ways" the sanctions of the United States to cut the shipment of oil to Cuba, surely by triangulating with countries not aligned with the interim government of Guaidó.

Being an illicit mechanism - "we are experts in guerrilla warfare" - ship-owners are at high risk of being sanctioned by the United States authorities. Just remember the international companies that worked in Iran when Trump imposed the sanctions again, the companies that trade in dollars began to cancel the contracts with the Iranian government to avoid sanctions. A similar case could happen with the ship-owners who transport Venezuelan crude to Cuba.

Revealing the triangulation of the oil supply to the Cienfuegos refinery in Cuba will be an arduous task for the US Department of the Treasury. According to Reuters (Refinitiv Eikon), yesterday, three tankers were waiting to load oil or products destined for Cuba at José's terminal in Venezuela.

The United States application of the decree "No more oil to Cuba" puts the Cuban regime in halt. The tendencies within the political bureau of the Cuban Communist Party must be evaluating the impact of such a measure.

The hard-liner represented by José Machado Ventura and Ramiro Valdez support the thesis of "until victory forever", sacrificing Venezuela as an end that justifies the survival of the Cuban regime. So, they need to continue receiving Venezuelan crude at all costs. They know that living a new "special period" would put at risk the stability of the Cuban structure.

If the United States restricts shipments of oil or products to Cuba, "the Cuban apparatus" will seek to leave Nicolás Maduro and replace him with someone recognized by the international community as a facilitator of a possible change in Venezuela. What happens is that there is no one to "fill the position", because madurism has swallowed its leaders" by strengthening the Mafia State.

For this reason, the island again appeals to the dialogue to see if Maduro holds on to power and avoid another "special period". He will seek the support of Josep Borrell, Federica Mogherini, Sergei Lavrov, Antonio Guterres, Enrique Iglesias and Pope Francis, among others, to convince Donald Trump, Chrystia Freeland, Antonio Tajani, Luis Almagro, Ivan Duque, and Jair Bolsonaro, that the solution is to sit the parties and celebrate a new election.

If Guaidó and the political parties that accompany him maintain unity of purpose in the active civil resistance and the patience required in these difficult times, and the United States accompanies the decrees of the National Assembly with concrete actions, Maduro will end up stopping usurping the presidency.

It is only a matter of time before the cessation of the usurpation happens in Venezuela.