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## China's Presence in Latin America: Strategy of Gradual Squeezing US Out

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The United States keeps on getting mired in the quagmire of Ukraine's crisis. Meanwhile China is intensifying diplomatic efforts in Latin America. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has just wound up his Latin America trip. He has visited Cuba, Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil. China's top leader Xi Jinping is to tour the region in July.

Beijing boasts the relations of strategic partnership with Havana, Caracas, Buenos Aires and Brasilia. That's what Wang Yi talked about while meeting Raul Castro, Nicolas Maduro, Cristina Fernandez and Dilma Rousseff. Without any exaggeration he was greeted with outspread arms. In recent years, China has significantly strengthened its presence in the region. Many of the states situated to the south of Rio Grande see dynamic trade and investments coming from China as an important contribution into reduction of dependence on the United States with its annoying incessant rebukes and off-handed interference telling everybody what to do. Latin Americans want close cooperation with the Celestial Empire, the state which boasts rapid progress and looking confidently into the future to become a world leader in the multipolar world.

According to plans, the Chairman Xi Jinping's visit to Brazil will coincide with the

announcement of establishing the joint ministerial-level forum with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a platform for promoting their comprehensive cooperative partnership, which features equality, mutual benefit and common development, so as to better safeguard their common interests and promote world and regional peace, stability and development. The initiative is unanimously approved by CELAC member-states. The idea of close friendship with China is attractive. The state is nearing a super power status and is involved in hundreds of joint energy, infrastructure, communications, agriculture, science and high-tech projects. The leaders of China, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will be present at the ceremony devoted to the Forum's establishment. By the end of 2014 the first ministerial China-CELAC working meeting is scheduled to take place.

The Wan Yi's visit was mainly focused on practical issues. The special development zone in Mariel, a Cuban port, which is being built with financial support from China, was an issue of special importance. That megaproject under construction 45 km west of Havana is to become a pillar of Cuban development due to the geographic location of the port, remodeled to equip the terminal to receive deeper-draft ships. The project will also attract investment in biotechnology, the pharmaceutical industry, renewable energy, agribusiness, tourism and real estate. Attracting foreign investments is an important contribution into the modernization of the whole country. In Venezuela the parties discussed the diversification of oil and gas sector and the expansion of the welfare program aimed at providing social housing. In Brazil the communications protection of the host country and the states of UNASUR (the Union of South America Nations), especially from interference of US NSA and CIA, was added to the agenda. The Brazil-US relationship has greatly deteriorated following the revelations of Edward Snowden. Washington has never clearly said it was sorry for spying on the country's leadership, including President Dilma Rousseff. The news about the United States activities made many Brazilians see the reality as it is putting an end to fantasies about equal partnership.

Many media reported that during his trip Wan Yi discussed the agenda of the sixth summit of BRICS countries with his Brazilian counterpart Brazilian Foreign Minister Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado. The group leaders' meeting is to take place in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza on July 15-17. An announcement of launching a joint development bank with authorized capital stock of \$50 billion is expected with great hope. But any signs of constructive steps taken by BRICS are an irritant for the United States. President Obama has failed to establish good relations with the group and Washington has no leverage to influence the organization's activities.

The recent example is the United Nations General Assembly's vote on Crimea in March with four out of five BRICS members abstaining. Every BRICS member has its own reasons not to trust the Obama's administration expecting it to resort to pressure instead of engaging in a dialogue of equals.

China has never had any illusions on the account of the North American "partners". The Asia pivot announced by the United States is seen in China as an attempt to cut it off from the world. South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia and some other countries are sided with the USA. The recent news from the "anti-China" front is the planned agreement between the United States and the Philippines on US military installations to be deployed in this country for the initial term

of 10 years. Of course, China takes appropriate measures in response to boost its defensive potential.

China believes in the expediency of BRICS expansion to counter the West's financial dominance implemented with the help of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The group set before itself some strategic goals like gradual distancing for the dollar and creating safe cushions against financial turmoil. China supports the Russia's approach based on the BRICS "transformation from a dialogue forum into a full-fledged mechanism of strategic interaction."

As of December 2013, China was the Latin American third largest trade partner. The trade turnover is on the rise in 2014. China has become the leading consumer of the continent's minerals causing Washington's concern. It imports oil, iron, copper, soya and consumer goods. The China's clout grew significantly as a result of the establishment of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) in 2004. The organization is a brainchild of Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez created to counter the US-led free trade zone concept.

The US has lost its financial might struggling for world leadership and involved in overseas wars. To large extent China has taken its place... In 2013 the total amount of China's investments almost reached \$17 billion. It has become the leading trade partner of many states in the region, including Brazil. Only in the period of 2005-2011 Latin America received over 75 billion dollars from Chinese banks. Mainly the money was spent on transport, telecommunications, mine industry and energy projects.

One of the reasons China gives money to Latin American states is to prevent pro-US politicians coming to power. Beijing is interested in preserving social peace in the countries led by left-wing governments. This issue was constantly kept in focus during the Wang Yi's Latin American tour. Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and some other states are getting more threatened by subversive activities of American special services. The financial support they get from China becomes an important factor of regional stability.