

Imperialist Aggression and What We Can Learn from the Attempted Coup Against Venezuela

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*On January 23, 2019 **Juan Guaidó** declared himself to be the “acting President” of Venezuela. He was immediately recognized as the interim President of Venezuela by the United States government, followed in quick succession by the government of Canada, and right-wing governments in Latin America.*

In order to achieve his new-found executive status, Guaidó didn't need to win the support of the majority of the people in Venezuela, let alone even run in any election. In order to get this appointment, all that he had to do was pledge allegiance to his bosses at the U.S. capital, Washington, DC.

The day before Guaidó's self-declaration, U.S. **Vice-President Mike Pence** was so excited at the prospect of overthrowing the democratically elected President of Venezuela **Nicolas Maduro** that he could barely contain himself. He recorded a video message of support to the Venezuelan opposition:

“As the good people of Venezuela make your voices heard tomorrow, on behalf of the American people, we say: estamos con ustedes. We are with you. We stand with you, and we will stay with you until Democracy is restored and you reclaim your birthright of Libertad.”

But, what exactly does Pence mean when he claims support for Libertad (“Freedom” in Spanish)?

In the new era of war and occupation, which began with the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, “human rights,” “democracy,” “freedom,” have all become euphemisms in the deadly song of the U.S. war machine. Millions of people from Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Libya and across the Middle East and North Africa have been murdered by U.S. led wars, occupations, and covert and overt military operations in their countries. Millions of other people suffer needlessly under brutal imperialist sanction regimes imposed on people in North Korea, Iran and Venezuela.

For over the last 17 years, the United States government and their allies, including the government of Canada, have been on a mad path of destruction to regain hegemony in the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America. As the U.S. government and other imperialist countries face increasing financial crisis, they will stop at nothing to find new markets, people and resources to exploit.

In order to retake complete control for their own economic gain, the U.S. government must destroy the independent and sovereign peoples and governments that stand in their way.

This is how the democratically elected government of President Nicolas Maduro and the revolutionary people of Venezuela came squarely into their cross-hairs.

The U.S.-Led War on Venezuela

Without there being a single firefight, the U.S. government is at war with the people of Venezuela and their Bolivarian revolutionary process. It is an imperialist war of aggression imposed on the people of Venezuela through a coordinated campaign of political, economic and military threats and attacks. When the U.S. government and their allies recognized Juan Guaido as the “interim President” of Venezuela – it was nothing short of an attempted coup d’état against the democratically elected President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro. It was an escalation in their anti-democratic and illegal intervention in Venezuela, which has included imposing brutal sanctions, threatening military attack, and giving financial and political support to Venezuela’s violent opposition.

It is especially relevant to the recent U.S.-led aggression against Venezuela to understand that just as President Trump refuses to recognize the 2018 electoral victory of President Maduro, so did President Obama refuse to recognize President Maduro’s first term victory in 2013. For the U.S. government and their allies – “democracy” is only “democracy” when their selected candidates take office.

Canada’s Vicious Role Against the People of Venezuela

The government of Canada is complicit in the imperialist war against the people of Venezuela and their democracy. Armed with their own set of interests in Venezuela’s natural resources, the government of Canada has effectively served as a proxy for the U.S. government in the international arena where the U.S.’s own history in Latin America would be an obstacle to their imperialist project to overthrow the government of Venezuela.

The government of Canada does so consciously and willingly. Chrystia Freeland, the Foreign Minister of Canada, exposed the government when she said,

“We have a very direct interest in what happens in our hemisphere, that’s why we have been so active and will consider to be so active,” during a Press Conference on Venezuela on January 28.

It is with this same reasoning that Minister Freeland has taken up her role as a leader in the illegitimate Lima Group, which was formed by the U.S. government in order to pursue further intervention against Venezuela, when their efforts in the Organization of American States failed.

The government of Canada has also imposed three rounds of sanctions against Venezuela and given support and an ear on Parliament Hill to Venezuela’s violent right-wing opposition.

Following the appointment by the U.S. government of Guaido as interim President of Venezuela, the Prime Minister of Canada **Justin Trudeau** released a statement that “commended Juan Guaido for his courage and leadership in helping to return democracy to Venezuela and offered Canada’s continued support.” With more or less nuance, this is the same sentiment expressed in official statements by leaders of the Conservative party and the NDP as well – as if somehow the government of Canada has the right to tell the people of Venezuela who their President is, and if their elections are free and fair.

Maduro Elected by People, Guaido Selected by the U.S. Government On January 15, 2019 appointed “interim President’ Juan Guaido was given an editorial in the Washington Post. Heavy on rhetoric and devoid of facts, Guaido claimed in this editorial that President Maduro was an “usurper” when he took office for his second Presidential term on January 10, 2019 “because we didn’t have an election.”

No election? Then, what was it when over 9.3 million Venezuelans voted in the Presidential election on May 20, 2018, choosing from four candidates representing 16 political parties? What did 14 electoral commissions from eight countries observe on the election day in Venezuela, if not a Presidential election?

On May 20, 2018 President Maduro was elected to a second term in office with nearly 68%, or over 6.2 million votes. The opposition candidate who won the greatest votes was Henri Falcón who received almost 21%, or 1.9 million votes. This election was a resounding victory for the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

If, according to Guaido, there was no election, it is because not only did he not run in the election, neither did his pro-U.S. political party. Voluntad Popular was one of three opposition political parties that boycotted the election. However, as Pasqualina Curcio, a Venezuelan economist, researcher and academic wrote in an article “The Maduro government: why illegitimate?”, “The fact that three parties (AD [Accion Democratica], VP [Voluntad Popular] and PJ [Primera Justicia]) freely decided not to participate does not make the electoral process illegitimate.”

In fact, based on the election results, President Maduro has a stronger claim to Presidential legitimacy than most of the heads of state that are now attempting to force his overthrow. 31.7% of eligible voters in Venezuela cast their votes for Maduro, compared to only 27.3% for U.S. President Trump and an even lower 26.8% for Prime Minister of Canada Trudeau.

It is also important to note that in the eight months since the Presidential election, none of the candidates or political parties that ran in the election have made any claims of fraud. They haven’t contested the results.

In the weeks leading up to the attempted coup and Juan Guaido’s Washington DC appointment as “interim President” of Venezuela, he was in frequent communication with leaders in Venezuela’s violent counter-revolutionary opposition, as well as the U.S. government and the government of Canada. The architects of the coup attempt, Maria Corina Machado, Leopoldo Lopez, Antonio Ledezma and Julio Borges all have close ties to the United States, and a direct-line to the Oval Office through right-wing U.S. Senator Marco Rubio.

Juan Guaido was assigned by the government of the United States as the “interim President” of Venezuela as he promised to deliver them exactly the kind of government in Venezuela that they desired.

Who is Guaido Anyhow?

Juan Guaido had not been a significant or well-known politician in Venezuela. In 2015 he was elected to Parliament with only 26% of the vote. The only reason that he became President of Venezuela’s National Assembly was because the opposition parties have decided to rotate the leadership as a way of dealing with their differences. Guaido became President of

the National Assembly when it was the turn for his party, Voluntad Popular or Popular Will, in English, to take the position.

Voluntad Popular is a violent counter-revolutionary political party in Venezuela. Their methods of their leaders, like Leopoldo Lopez, range from participation in a coup against President Chavez in 2002 (which was overturned by the mass action of people in Venezuela in less than 48 hours), to violent street riots known as the “Guarimbas” that killed 43 people in 2014 and over 125 people in 2017.

Today, Guaido and the opposition controlled National Assembly, are claiming Constitutional authority. However, since 2016 Venezuela’s National Assembly has been held in contempt of court after refusing to correct electrical irregularities in the 2015 National Assembly elections. Even prior to this declaration, the National Assembly had been incapable of passing any legislation that complied with Venezuela’s Constitution.

Sanctions and Humanitarian Aid - Which One is It?

The crocodile tears of imperialist governments and their mainstream media minions are the most bitter when they describe the suffering of the people of Venezuela, who they claim are being denied food, medicines and basic goods by a corrupt and callous government that is unable and uninterested to manage its own affairs, and care for its people.

Never a word is spoken about the devastating effects of U.S. sanctions on the lives of every day people in Venezuela.

For example, the attempted coup against Venezuela was enforced with another round of sanctions, this time targeting Venezuela’s state-run oil company Petr leos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA). Trump administration officials reported that the sanctions “are expected to block \$7 billion in assets and result in \$11 billion in export losses over the next year for Venezuela’s government,” as reported by the New York Times. (Of course, these same officials also reported “Purchases of Venezuelan oil by American companies would be released once PDVSA is controlled by a government led by Mr. Guaido.”)

Mainstream media isn’t condemning sanctions on Venezuela because they still are working exactly how their imperialist government bosses intended. Sanctions are an attempt to strangle the economy of Venezuela. With this, imperialist governments are betting that the people of Venezuela will be brought to such misery that they support the overthrow of their democratically elected government.

Imposing crippling sanctions on Venezuela has also opened the possibility for the U.S. government and their allies to make the claim that Venezuelans need “humanitarian aid.” This claim is not only a good way to try to win over the hearts and minds of people living in the U.S. to their campaign for increased intervention in Venezuela, it also serves as a way for the U.S. government to bolster the “human rights defender” image of their appointed puppet Guaido.

In a January 24, 2019 Editorial, the Washington Post even suggests,

“The administration’s best approach would be to join with its allies in initiatives that would help Venezuelans while bolstering Mr. Guaido. A multilateral operation to deliver humanitarian supplies to Venezuela or to its borders, in cooperation with the National Assembly, is one possibility.”

If that isn't turning humanitarian aid into a political tool, then what is it?

In all, U.S. sanctions are reported to have cost Venezuela at least \$6 billion. So, how is it a humanitarian gesture of any shade that the U.S. government has pledged only \$20 million for aid? That is barely 3% of what the sanctions have denied people of Venezuela. The people of Venezuela don't need handouts – they need an end to the war and sanctions against their economy. So-called humanitarian aid is nothing, but an empty gesture meant to confuse people, both in Venezuela and back in the United States and around the world.

Why the U.S and Other Imperialists Hate the Maduro Government

In an interview on January 28, 2019 on Fox News U.S. National Security Advisor and war-monger **John Bolton** exposed one reason why the U.S. government is so determined to overthrow the government of President Maduro,

“It will make a big difference to the United States economically if we could have American oil companies invest in and produce the oil capabilities in Venezuela.”

One of the gains of the Bolivarian revolutionary process is that the oil wealth of Venezuela has been taken out of the pockets of transnational companies, and redirected to funding social programs for poor, working and oppressed people in Venezuela. Yes, it is in the interests of the government of U.S. to have their hands on the Venezuela's natural resources, including oil, once again.

Exactly how the revolutionary government of Venezuela poses a threat to U.S. control of Latin America deserves an even closer look.

Once again, the words of John Bolton are an important view into the strategic thinking of the U.S. government and their imperialist allies. On November 1, 2018 Bolton made a speech at the Freedom Tower in Miami, where he first coined the term “Troika of Tyranny,” in reference to the governments of Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba. His speech continued,

“Yet today, in this Hemisphere, we are also confronted once again with the destructive forces of oppression, socialism, and totalitarianism. In Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, we see the perils of poisonous ideologies left unchecked, and the dangers of domination and suppression.”

Bolton's comments followed similar rhetoric and fear-mongering from U.S. President Trump at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018, where he condemned the “socialist Maduro regime and its Cuban sponsors, not long-ago Venezuela was one of the richest countries on earth, today socialism has bankrupted the oil-rich nation and driven its people in abject poverty. Virtually everywhere, socialism, or communism has been tried, it has produced suffering, corruption and decay.”

These comments expose that Venezuela is not only a threat to the hegemony of the United States in Latin America, it is also a threat because it challenges capitalist ideology that has proclaimed the death of socialism. The government of President Maduro and the Bolivarian revolutionary process have dared to proclaim that a better world, a world that puts the interests of people before those of profits, is not just necessary, but also possible.

For the last 20 years the Bolivarian revolutionary process has implemented measures in Venezuela that have massively elevated the quality of life for poor, working and oppressed people in Venezuela. The revolutionary government calls these measures anti-capitalist and socialist, and this is exactly how they have managed to create so much fear and anxiety among imperialist powers. Since the election of **President Hugo Chavez** in 1998, these anti-capitalist measures have paved the road for a better life and a socialist future for the people of Venezuela. With sanctions, provocations, inciting violence, and threatening military attacks, the United States is preventing this from happening.

Imperialist countries know full well where the Bolivarian revolutionary process is going if left unchecked. The anti-capitalist measures that are taking place in Venezuela today have the potential to culminate with the people of Venezuela deciding that they do not want capitalism anymore. This is the main reason why the U.S. government and their allies must prevent revolutionaries and the people of Venezuela from succeeding with their social justice projects.

Therefore, President Trump's "military option," has never been taken off the table. Now that Mike Pompeo, an ex-CIA director is Secretary of State, John Bolton, a war-monger and regime change engineer is National Security Advisor, and a war criminal Elliot Abrams is special envoy to Venezuela, the conditions are ripe for increasing war on Venezuela.

People of Venezuela are Resisting in Defense of Their Popular Government

Although millions of people in Venezuela have been mobilized in the streets in defense of the democratically elected government of President Maduro, not one has received even a mention on prime-time news. People from all sectors of life in Venezuela, have been organizing in defense of their sovereignty and self-determination, in schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

There has also been little to no reporting on the opinions of people in Venezuela themselves when it comes to U.S. intervention and sanctions against their country. In a poll conducted in early January by the private firm Hinterlaces, 81% of Venezuelans disagreed with the "US economic and financial sanctions that are currently applied against Venezuela to remove President Maduro from power." When asked, "Would you agree or disagree if there were international intervention in Venezuela to remove President Maduro from power?" 78% replied "I would disagree."

What is the most important sign that the people of Venezuela support their democratically elected government of President Maduro and the Bolivarian revolutionary process? With all of imperialism's tremendous effort and coordination, the U.S.-backed January 23 coup attempt failed.

Venezuela Solidarity - Now More Than Ever Before

"Our solidarity with the Venezuelan people and our brother Nicolás Maduro in these decisive hours in which the claws of imperialism seek again to mortally wound the democracy and self-determination of the peoples of South America." - Evo Morales, President of Bolivia (via Twitter, January 23, 2019)

Although the U.S. government and their allies, including Canada, have not been successful to overthrow President Maduro and reverse the Bolivarian revolutionary process, the

struggle of the people of Venezuela against imperialist intervention is far from over. As President Morales emphasizes, these are decisive times for poor, working and oppressed people around the world.

In the days following Guaido's self-declaration as President of Venezuela, hundreds of actions were organized around the world, from Africa to Asia to Europe and across North and South America. People from many different walks of life came out into the streets in defense of Venezuela's sovereignty and self-determination. These actions do and must continue, especially from within the United States, Canada and Europe where imperialists are preparing for further attacks to bring chaos and destruction to Venezuela's shores.

However, following their failed coup in Venezuela, there is one thing that the US and other imperialists learned very well, Venezuela is not and will not be alone.

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