

The Hand of Washington in the “Election Coups” in Venezuela

By [Arnold August](#)

Global Research, December 26, 2015

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

On December 7, 2015, after the December 6 elections, the White House indicated in a press briefing:

“What is clear is that the people of Venezuela have expressed their overwhelming desire for a change in direction. And what is necessary is for all of the parties involved to engage in a dialogue about the future of that country mindful of the election results. So that’s a process that we’ll certainly continue to [watch closely from here.](#)” (Emphasis added)

This is a clear interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela. Who is the United States to tell the Venezuelan people how to interpret the new situation? The White House promotes the same narrative that the opposition in Venezuela is pushing.

In a December 7 press statement issued by Secretary of State John Kerry, he declares:

“Venezuelan voters expressed their overwhelming desire for a change in the direction of their country. Dialogue among all parties in Venezuela is necessary to address the social and economic challenges facing the country, and the United States stands ready to support such a dialogue together with others in [the international community.](#)”

What right does the United States have to impose themselves, along with their few allies in Latin America and an international organization, as a mediator in Venezuela?

The outstanding Argentine journalist, Stella Calloni, wrote an article published on December 17 in CubaDebate:

“We are witnessing a new pattern of intervention in our countries, that we can [call ‘election coups....’](#)”

Her full article provides us with an excellent orientation for analyzing events. As far as Venezuela is concerned, the U.S. and its allies in that country have been waging a relentless economic war combined with media terrorism against the Bolivarian Revolution and President Nicolás Maduro. In addition, the collapse of international oil prices on which Venezuela depends but beyond its control, fed into the economic war. The goal of the U.S. in the last year or so was to clear the path for the opposition to win the legislative elections on December 6, 2015. Yes, there are weaknesses in the Bolivarian Revolution, everyone recognizes it, including the Maduro government. It is striving to take action in conjunction

with the people at the base. However, the combined economic and media war orchestrated by Washington was the main reason for the December 6 defeat.

The hand of Washington is exposed if one takes into account the interference by the U.S. in Venezuelan elections before the December 6, 2015 and in the context of its Latin American policy.

[Click here](#) to see the book cover. The December 6, 2015 election is not the first time that Latin American and Caribbean countries have been the target of the Obama administration. In 2009, right after Obama's coming to power, the Honduras coup took place with Washington's full involvement. The role of the Honduran military, armed and trained by the U.S., became notorious for its violent suppression of the Hondurans, who struggled for months on end against [what the grass roots called a dictatorship](#).

The February 2014 U.S. interference in Venezuela was initiated in Washington by the Obama administration the day after the April 14, 2013, presidential election victory by the Bolivarian Revolution's candidate, Nicolás Maduro. From April 15, 2013 to date Washington has tried everything to provoke incidents in Venezuela in order to usher in a coup d'état. This amounts to a slow-motion coup attempt based on a series of "election coups". The goal was and is to draw Venezuela into its orbit once again, as was the case before Hugo Chávez won the presidential elections in December 1998. On April 15, 2013, White House press secretary Jay Carney gave the green light to the pro-U.S. opposition to violently protest the election results by declaring:

"...given the tightness of the result — around 1 percent of the votes cast separate the candidates — the opposition candidate and at least one member of the electoral council have called for a 100 percent audit of the results. And this appears an important, prudent and necessary step to ensure that all Venezuelans [have confidence in these results](#)."

That same day, the opposition organized violent riots and killed eight Chavistas who were defending health centers and other public places from the bands. On April 16, Patrick Ventrell, Acting Deputy Spokesperson for the U.S. State Department, appeared in a press briefing. The following interaction with a journalist indicated the desire of the U.S. to refrain from recognizing the election results and call into question the legitimacy of the Maduro government:

MR. VENTRELL: ...And we said yesterday, a full recount would be important, prudent, and necessary in ensuring that an evenly divided Venezuelan electorate is confident that the election meets their democratic aspirations....

QUESTION [from a journalist]: Well, okay. So are you prepared to congratulate Mr. Maduro on his victory?

MR. VENTRELL: We're not there.

QUESTION: Why? The vote has been certified. He has been elected. So either you say, "Okay, and we'll work with you," or, "try to work with you," or you say, "We don't think that you're the real winner", or, "We think that there is no winner because the vote hasn't been certified," so — I mean, are you prepared to work with President Maduro, President-Elect Maduro?

MR. VENTRELL: Well, we said we're prepared to work with whichever government comes out of this electoral process. Having said that, given what happened yesterday, we're consulting with key partners, the OAS [the Washington-based Organization of American States], the EU [European Union], other [regional neighbors as we examine this.](#)"

The next day on April 17, the White House issued the following statement:

"The United States congratulates the Venezuelan people for their participation in the April 14 presidential elections in a peaceful and orderly manner. We call on the Venezuelan government to respect the rights of Venezuelan citizens to peaceful assembly and free speech. We also urge everyone to refrain from violence and other measure [sic] that could raise tensions at this difficult moment. The United States notes the acceptance by both candidates for an audit of the ballots and supports calls for a credible and transparent process to reassure the Venezuelan people regarding the results. Such a process would contribute to political dialogue and [help advance the country's democracy.](#)"

On April 19, 2013, regarding the elections in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a communiqué from the 33 countries — that is, the entire hemisphere, excluding the U.S. and Canada — composing the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), read in part: "...CELAC congratulates President Nicolás Maduro on the election results and for his election as President of the [Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.](#)"

Despite, and perhaps in response to this, Obama himself stepped up to the plate and said in a May 4 interview to an important and widely accessed Spanish-language media, Univision.com:

"...**María Elena Salinas:** I have two more questions. One is does the U.S. recognize Nicolás Maduro as the legitimate President of Venezuela?"

President Barack Obama: Well, you know, I think it's not what the U.S. alone is concerned about. But I think that the entire hemisphere has been watching the violence, the protests, the crackdowns on the opposition. I think our general view has been that it's up to the people of Venezuela to [choose their leaders in legitimate elections....](#)" (Emphasis added)

Obama went even further than his own administration by implicitly proclaiming the Venezuelan election as being illegitimate. In addition, by completely ignoring the CELAC position taken only a few days earlier, Obama de facto claimed that the "entire hemisphere" is composed of only the U.S. and Canada!

By Googling for the repercussions from this interview right after it was made public, it was immediately found in over 50 entries in Spanish "Obama habló de Venezuela: 'El hemisferio completo está viendo la violencia y los ataques a la oposición'" (the entire hemisphere has been watching the violence, the protests, the crackdowns on the opposition).

In February 2014, a wave of violence occurred in Venezuela. It was carried out by the opposition, this time led by another figure (Leopoldo López rather than Capriles). What did the Deputy U.S. State Department spokesperson Marie Harf say in a Washington, D.C. press briefing held on February 13, 2014? She left the door wide open for Washington to switch

loyalties from Capriles to the more openly violent López, if it was not already done:

“...**QUESTION [from a journalist]:** I'd like to ask if you have any comment about the violent protest that took place yesterday there and the lack of coverage provided by the local TV. And also, this morning the Venezuelan foreign minister in an interview blamed an opposition politician, Leopoldo López, for violence that took place yesterday and said that López and his acolytes have been financed by the U.S. Government for a long time. If you please have a comment on those two points, I would appreciate it.

MS. HARF: Yeah. Well, let me see if I can get some specifics on what's happened in the last few days. In general, when it comes to Venezuela, we've made clear that we're open to having a constructive relationship with the Government of Venezuela. Quite frankly, we haven't seen that — we have not seen that reciprocated, to be clear. So we also, I think, see a lot of conspiracy theories or rumors out there in the press about how the U.S. is interested in influencing the domestic political situation in Venezuela, which is absolutely not true. It's not up to us to comment on internal Venezuelan politics. So I'm happy to check with our team to see if there is more specifics about the protest specifically that I'm not as familiar with, and see if [we can get you something on that....](#)” (Emphasis added)

The very next day, on February 14, in another regular press briefing by Harf, notice how Washington walks the tightrope. It continues with the claim that the U.S. is not involved in the internal affairs of Venezuela, while at the same time taking sides with the violent opposition leader against the constitutionally elected Maduro government:

“...**QUESTION [from a journalist]:** So the government accused Washington of being involved in these — the [Venezuelan] protests.

MS. HARF: It's not true. It's not true.

QUESTION: They didn't accuse you?

MS. HARF: No. We are not involved in them.

QUESTION: Oh, okay.

MS. HARF: They may have accused us; we're not involved in them.

QUESTION: And they're also accusing an opposition leader. Do you think this is a step up in the regime's —

MS. HARF: Are you talking about Mr. López?

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. HARF: Yes. So we are deeply concerned by rising tensions, by the violence surrounding these February 12th protests, and by the issuance of a warrant for the arrest of opposition leader Leopoldo López. We join the Secretary General of the OAS [the Washington-based Organization of American States] in condemning the violence and calling on authorities to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for the deaths of peaceful protestors. We also call on the Venezuelan Government to release the 19 detained protestors and urge all parties to work to restore calm [and refrain from violence....](#)” (Emphasis added)

This interference in the internal affairs of Venezuela was solidified even more through a press statement by John Kerry, Secretary of State, on February 15, 2014, which reads in full:

“Recent Violence in Venezuela

The United States is deeply concerned by rising tensions and violence surrounding this week’s protests in Venezuela. Our condolences go to the families of those killed as a result of this tragic violence.

We are particularly alarmed by reports that the Venezuelan government has arrested or detained scores of anti-government protestors and issued an arrest warrant for opposition leader Leopoldo López. These actions have a chilling effect on citizens’ rights to express their grievances peacefully.

We join the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, and others in condemning this senseless violence. We call on the Venezuelan government to provide the political space necessary for meaningful dialogue with the Venezuelan people and to release detained protestors. We urge all parties to work to restore calm and refrain from violence.

Freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly are universal human rights. They are essential to a functioning democracy, and the Venezuelan government has an obligation to protect these fundamental freedoms [and the safety of its citizens.](#)” (Emphasis added)

On February 17, the then Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elías Jaua disclosed in a press conference in Caracas that the Venezuelan ambassador to the OAS, Roy Chaderton, had received a telephone call from a State Department official. According to the Venezuelans, the U.S. is “asking” the Maduro government for “a series of conditions” and threatened Venezuela with “international consequences” if opposition leader Leopoldo López were to be arrested. Elías Jaua also revealed proof indicating that Washington has been directly [involved in training the violent groups.](#)

On February 19, 2014, at a Press Conference by President Obama, President Peña Nieto (Mexico) and then Prime Minister Harper (Canada), in Toluca, Mexico, Obama stated:

“In Venezuela, rather than trying to distract from its own failings by making up false accusations against diplomats from the United States, the government ought to focus on addressing the legitimate grievances of the Venezuelan people. So, along with the Organization of American States, we call on the Venezuelan government to release protestors that it’s detained and engage in real dialogue. And all parties have an obligation to work together to [restrain violence and restore calm.](#)”

How can Obama say that the accusations against U.S. diplomats for interfering in the internal affairs of Venezuela are false? The above three-sentence statement exclusively on Venezuela uttered by the U.S. president consists in itself an arrogant attempt to interfere in Venezuela’s internal affairs. The “legitimate grievances” of the Venezuelan people were addressed by the Bolivarian Revolution in numerous ballot box contests since December 1998. These electoral gains precisely target the U.S.-dominated economic and political system existing from 1958 to 1998. The voting included at that time the April 14, 2013, presidential election won by Nicolás Maduro and which the U.S. refused to recognize; by

negating the results recognized by the whole continent, Washington had planted the seeds of the current violence carried out by the pro-U.S. elements in the country. The candidates of the Bolivarian Revolution's Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV) also won the majority of municipalities, mayoralties and the popular vote in the December 8, 2013, municipal elections.

Furthermore, who is Obama to declare that the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States (OAS) is the reference point for Venezuela, while the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) is not considered? CELAC excludes two of the three countries represented at the above-cited press conference in Mexico: Canada and the U.S. They are omitted because of the historical role in the south played especially by the U.S., but also Canada, as gendarmes and plunderers of natural resources. Moreover, by what right does the U.S. define the vandals and their leader Leopoldo López as "protesters" and representatives of the "Venezuelan people," as if they have no history of U.S.-driven violent coup attempts against the Hugo Chávez and Maduro legitimate governments? Does Venezuela not have the right to arrest and put on trial individuals who have been responsible for the violence? Obama urges "all parties" to "restrain violence." He thus places the perpetrators of violence on the same footing as those who are trying to calm the situation, restore order and protect public and private property as well as lives from the vandals. Furthermore, by calling for "real dialogue," he thus condemns the government for failing to consider grievances while painting a picture of the "protesters" as innocent victims of the Maduro government. However, despite the provocations, Maduro was calling [for dialogue with the opponents](#).

This "opposition promotion" is part of the U.S. plan to create a pretext for a coup d'état in that oil-rich country. The role of the media in turning truth on its head and thus invent excuses for intervention in Venezuela is pointed out in an article by Professor Steve Ellner (who, since 1977, has taught at the [Universidad de Oriente in Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela](#)). Despite the combined forces of the oligarchy's international and local Venezuelan media, as well as the U.S.-financed and inspired democracy promotion groups, the first battle was won by Venezuela's participatory democracy. On February 18, the Bolivarian Revolution, led by its government and Nicolás Maduro, displayed a show of force. A massive demonstration was held by mainly oil-industry workers in Caracas. This sector has been the source of forces to overthrow the legitimate constitutional regime and open up a path for the re-colonization of Venezuela. This demonstration temporarily put the pro-U.S. forces in Venezuela on the defensive. It is only because the people are empowered and are effectively part of political power that this momentary victory and other subsequent ones are able to take place. These successful inroads into the pro-U.S. imperialist camp came about because of Venezuela's new experiments in participatory democracy under way since Hugo Chávez won the election in December 1998. Thus, on April 19, the day after the Chavista counter-offensive, the situation was relatively calm.

However, to counter the February 18 victory and the ensuing relative order prevailing on February 19, it was no accident that Obama came to the rescue. The above-quoted statement by Obama on February 19 encouraged Washington's allies in Venezuela to restart their violent activities in Venezuela and create a climate of chaos. Thus, the next day, on February 20, violent incidents erupted once again, inflamed by Washington's support, in various parts of Venezuela. On-the-spot reporting by "Venezuelanalysis.com" testifies to the nature of the violent opposition protests and the growing desire at the grass roots [to take the streets back](#) from the perpetrators of violence; others deftly analyze the proponents of

[violent regime change.](#)

The international media, including the liberal CNN, [played their usual role](#). However, it was very refreshing to hear Maduro telling the CNN that, if it does not cease its “war propaganda,” [it “will have to leave Venezuela.”](#)

The U.S. and their Venezuelan powerful media allies are blaming the Venezuelan government for the violence in that country, while it is the so-called “pro-democracy” groups that are in fact causing the rampage and disturbances. The U.S. expansionist goals toward Latin America and the Caribbean go all the way back to the last quarter of the 18th century. U.S. mainstream political parties, now known as Republicans and Democrats, have always been involved in direct and indirect military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean; in fact, the Democrats actually scored better than their Republican [with more — not less — military interventions](#).

In order to increase the U.S. policy of domination over the southern part of the hemisphere, much of which has been in revolt against U.S. control, a new face was needed for U.S. ambitions; this new image was necessary in order to close the international and domestic credibility gap created by the Bush years. This is the role of Obama; his image of “change” was, and is, consciously promoted by Obama himself and the [Chicago marketing specialists](#).

The arrogant interference in Venezuela by Washington and its allies constitutes the latest example from among the long list of U.S. presidents who adopt and actively sponsor the original 17th-century evangelical notion: the Thirteen Colonies and then the U.S. constitute a chosen people, the beacon on the hill for the world to look toward for salvation. Herein lays the pompous nature of Washington. It can only be smashed in Venezuela through the channels of daily participatory democracy fashioned by the Bolivarian Revolution; it is striving to do so at this time in the most difficult circumstances after the December 6, 2015 serious electoral defeat. One must also add that the solidarity of other countries and peoples, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, but also the world, is a key ingredient. The “election coups” make the situation all the more complex and dangerous.

Arnold August, a Canadian journalist and lecturer, is the author of *Democracy in Cuba and the 1997-98 Elections* and, more recently, [Cuba and Its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion](#). Cuba's neighbours under consideration are the US, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. Arnold can be followed on Twitter [@Arnold_August](#).

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Arnold August](#), Global Research, 2015

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Arnold August](#)
<http://Guillaume>

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca