

Global Research News Hour: The Legacy of Hugo Chavez and The Korean Powder Keg

By [Michael Welch](#), [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#), and [Gregory Elich](#)

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Theme: [GLOBAL RESEARCH NEWS HOUR](#)

In-depth Report: [NORTH KOREA](#)

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"I swear before my people that upon this moribund constitution I will drive forth the necessary democratic transformations so that the new republic will have a Magna Carta befitting these new times."



-President Hugo Chavez, from his February 2, 1999 inauguration speech. [1]

Hugo Chavez (28 July 1954 - 5 March 2013)

One of the most beloved and inspirational leftist figures on the world stage passed away on March 5.

During his four terms and fourteen years as president of Venezuela, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías distinguished himself as a Latin American leader in the tradition of Simon Bolivar.

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After nationalizing oil fields run by US based oil giants ConocoPhillips and Exxon Mobil Corp, Chavez was able to utilize the proceeds to subsidize primary health clinics and food markets in poor neighbourhoods. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, poverty in the country dropped from 48.6 percent in 2002 to 29.5 percent in 2011. [2] Amendments to the Venezuelan constitution included 116 articles focusing on the protection of human rights, including protections of women and indigenous peoples, and the right of the public to education, health care and food. [3]

Chavez's personal popularity with the Venezuelan people helped him frustrate a coup attempt in April 2002 and then a management lock-out of the oil industry several months later. In addition, he formulated critical ties with the President of Cuba, Fidel Castro, as well as with the socialist governments of Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua.

More than that, Chavez proved himself to be a consistent thorn in the side of US hegemony in the region. The US has a long history of supporting Latin American governments that rule in the interest of US-backed oil, agri-business and other industrial enterprises. Governing in the interests of the people is not usually good for business.

With Chavez's recent passing, the Global Research News Hour contacted Michel Chossudovsky to help assess his legacy. Professor Chossudovsky conducted research in Venezuela during the early part of his career. In this interview he comments on the changes brought about in Venezuela since those days, the advice he conveyed to the government at the time and how he met personally with President Chavez.

Chossudovsky also comments on speculation around Chavez as having been targeted for assassination under the Obama administration.

North Korea

The Western media has reported frequently in recent weeks on the behaviour of the North Korean government and has portrayed leader Kim Jung-un as being 'bellicose' and aggressive'. The impoverished country has in recent months launched a satellite into orbit and conducted a third nuclear test. They have even threatened in recent days to launch a pre-emptive nuclear attack against the US.

Greg Elich is a long time observer of Korean geo-politics. In this interview with the Global Research News Hour, Elich puts North Korea's recent actions within a historical context and addresses recent US-South Korean military drills as well as the so-called Asia-Pivot as integral to understanding the larger picture.

References

1 JONES, BART (2007). Hugo! The Hugo Chávez Story from Mud Hut to Perpetual Revolution. Hanover, New Hampshire: Steerforth Press. ISBN 978-1-58642-135-9.

2 Charlie Devereux & Raymond Colitt. March 7, 2013. Venezuelans' Quality of Life Improved in UN Index Under Chavez. Bloomberg.

3 "Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela". Embassy of Venezuela in the US. 2000.

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