

Venezuela: A Unique Experience in Protagonist Democracy?

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The issue for us all is: No to military intervention in Venezuela and full support for the right of Venezuela to defend itself.

“Maduro declared in his February 4 Caracas speech: ‘Not one Yaqui soldier will enter Venezuela.’”

Is Trump contributing to a unique experience in protagonist democracy in Venezuela? If so, his administration and the Democratic Party supporting the U.S. elite’s Venezuela policy are in for a big surprise. On February 25, 2014 – five years ago! – BAR published my article titled [“Obama’s Arrogant Interference in Venezuela and Resistance by a Participatory Democracy.”](#) Over the five years of tampering, obstruction and suffocating sanctions, the Obama and Trump administrations have not been able to conquer Venezuela. Why?

The U.S.-centric mindset has been steeped in the white supremacist notion of the “chosen people” from the time of the Pilgrims. It consists, among other features, of the racist outlook that peoples in the “Third World,” such as Latin America, cannot take their destiny in their own hands. Since the publication of that piece five years ago, history — along with my experience during other short visits to Caracas and my close following of TeleSUR in both English and Spanish — has forced me to revise my appreciation of Venezuela’s unique experience in democracy. It has certainly gone up more than just a notch. As a result of U.S. policies, democracy in Venezuela has been crossing the Rubicon from participatory democracy to a protagonist one. While the two are similar, especially in comparison with the experience of the Diktat in the capitalist North, there is a qualitative difference. Any hesitation at this time to qualify Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution’s democracy as being [“above all” – as Chávez predicted and desired – “protagonist and not only participatory”](#) vanished on February 4, 2019 in Caracas.

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Many valuable articles have already been published in [BAR](#) concerning the legitimate election of Maduro in the last elections of May 2018 on the one hand and, on the other, regarding the violation of Venezuelan and international law, including the United Nations in “recognizing” its man in Caracas. Furthermore, the main issue now is the right of Venezuela to its sovereignty and to choosing its own path without foreign interference, irrespective of any other considerations. Moreover, within this optic, the principal reality – ignored by the international media – is the civilian military union as a key component of Venezuelan democracy. It is not recognized either by ignorance or by mere wishful thinking, as those

who want to eliminate the Bolivarian Revolution know very well it is this union that blocks their plan.

Although it was not the first time that I had heard Maduro speak, his February 4 talk in that semi-private meeting with Venezuelans and foreign guests was a clincher. Among other points, he outlined in detail how he and the other leaders (whom I also met briefly in that meeting) have been and are today still working to organize and inspire — and in turn are being inspired by — all the sections of the armed forces all over the country, from pilots, navy to the army to the people's militia. He pointed out that this civilian military union has been developing in the country over several decades.

“The principal reality is the civilian military union as a key component of Venezuelan democracy.”

To flesh this out, I would add that more recently in the 1990s Chávez spent considerable time and effort to build a civilian military union. The goal was to overthrow the U.S.- backed de facto dictatorship that had ruled for many decades through the “two-party system” — all too familiar to Americans — alternating from one discredited party to another... that also soon became disgraced and so on. On February 4, 1992, Chávez and other officers and civilian revolutionary leaders organized a coup to overthrow the corrupt wealthy political elite to be replaced by the Bolivarian principles of independence and social justice. It failed, but then Chávez returned from prison to declare to the people on state TV that “for the moment” [por ahora] the rebellion had failed. This now iconic image and perspective words had further cemented the union between the military and the civilian population who had never before seen a political-military leader ready to give his life for a new Venezuela.

This union rose to the fore again on April 13, 2002 when the civilian-military alliance brought Chavez back to power as the legitimate president after a short- lived US-backed coup executed on April 11, 2002.

“Maduro and the other leaders have been working to organize and inspire all the sections of the armed forces all over the country.”

What then is this civilian-military union, its history and tradition?

Chávez said that he found the idea of the civilian-military alliance in the political thought of the Venezuelan intellectual, guerrilla leader, Fabricio Ojeda, who wrote in his 1966 book *La guerra del pueblo* (The People's War):

“The anti-feudal and anti-imperialist basis of our revolutionary process suggests a form of alliance that can accommodate differences in background, political credo, philosophical conception, religious convictions, economic or professional status, or party affiliation among Venezuelans. The strength and might of the common enemy calls for a united struggle to defeat it... The forces most inclined to fight for national liberation are the workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, students, intellectuals, and professionals as well as the majority of officials, Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), and soldiers of the air, sea, and land forces...” In Ojeda's vision, which Chávez shared, all these civilian and military sectors are called upon to come together in a genuine national revolutionary alliance. (Ramonet, Ignacio, Hugo Chávez: Mi primera vida. Conversaciones con Ignacio Ramonet, Vintage Español, Nueva York, 2013. [Translation by Arnold August]).

“The civilian population had never before seen a political-military leader ready to give his life for a new Venezuela.”

Today, more than ever before, in the face of a potential U.S. military intervention, this feature of the people being the authors of *their own* Bolivarian Revolution, rather than just participants in it, Venezuela is displaying a protagonist democracy to the world. It can be the death knell to any military adventure.

The U.S. should not be mistaken. While Maduro declared in his February 4 Caracas speech to us that his government is ready to participate in any efforts at mediation, he also made clear that Venezuela is ready to defend its country: “Not one Yaqui soldier will enter Venezuela.”

The threat of U.S.-led military intervention is more real than ever. The issue for us all: No to military intervention in Venezuela and full support for the right of Venezuela to defend itself in the worse-case scenario. Polls in Europe and other countries show support for this position, while the main unions in Canada have issued and are issuing statements rejecting the pro-Trump position of the Justin Trudeau Liberal Party position and demonstrations are taking place in the U.S.

“The strength and might of the common enemy calls for a united struggle to defeat it.”

The Justin Trudeau government hosted the so-called Lima Group in Ottawa on that same day, February 4, when we were in Caracas meeting with the Maduro government leadership. The official communiqué reaffirmed its support for the Trump position on Venezuela, consisting of foreign interference in the internal affairs of that country with full support of its puppet as the so-called president. The position of the Justin Trudeau government is a major and historical (in the very negative sense of the term) *change* in Canadian foreign policy, including within his own Liberal Party. In contrast for example, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Iraq War (March 2013) former Liberal Party Prime Minister Jean Chrétien said in an interview regarding Canada’s position to NOT support the U.S. war in Iraq, that he [Chrétien] has no regrets about rejecting Canada’s participation in the U.S.-led mission. It was a very important decision, no doubt about it. It was, in fact, the first time ever that there was a war that the Brits and the Americans were involved, and Canada was not there, Chrétien told CTV’s [Canadian national news network] *Power Play*.

The move also helped assert Canada’s independence on the world stage, he said.

Unfortunately, a lot of people thought sometimes that we were the 51st state of America. It was clear that day that we were not.

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Chrétien said he refused to commit to military action in Iraq without a resolution from the UN Security Council. He said Canada always followed the UN and intervened in other conflicts when asked to.

Chrétien also said he was not convinced that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction — the threat that fuelled support for a U.S.-led invasion of the country — and that turned out to be true.

Chrétien also addressed his visit to Venezuela last week [March 2013] (to attend President Hugo Chávez's funeral).

He said he went because he knew Chávez personally and "never had any problem" with the controversial leader, even though he didn't agree with him "on many things." He also wanted to show his respect for the people of Venezuela.

He had support of the people and he was loved by the poor of his country. He was kind of a Robin Hood, Chrétien said.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper [of the Canadian Conservative Party] angered the Venezuelan administration by saying in a statement that he hoped the country can have a better, brighter future after Chávez's death.

Chrétien said the Venezuelan authorities were very, very happy to see him at the funeral, [because they were very unhappy with Harper's remarks.](#)

Let us recall what most political people in Cuba, Latin America, and many in the West know: Justin Trudeau's own father, as Liberal Party Prime Minister of Canada, went to Cuba when he stood next to Fidel Castro in June 1976 and shouted in a public meeting "Long live Prime Minister Fidel Castro!," and had taken other positions independent of the U.S.

"Everyone in Canada hates Trump for all his policies, yet Justin Trudeau is aligned with him."

As the Canadian and other peoples increasingly recognize now, like any other family in whatever system, family relations and characteristics change. Regarding foreign relations, Justin Trudeau is not at all like his father. The press can quote me here as a Canadian: "Justin Trudeau's father would turn over in his grave if he knew what his own son was doing." Everyone in Canada hates Trump for all his policies, yet Justin Trudeau is aligned with him.

While the Trudeau government admonishes Venezuela for its supposed lack of democracy, it does not seem to recognize cynical incongruities, such as when, last January 2019 (while the Lima Group anti-Venezuela "pro-democracy" conspiracy was in full swing), the Canadian government's Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) — as part of the century-long racist colonial occupation of indigenous lands — arrested 14 native people and entered a fortified checkpoint on a forest service road in northern B.C., where people at the Gidimt'en camp were barring a pipeline company from access ([CBC](#)). That led to more protests ([YouTube: Toronto Star](#)).

"Democracy" in the North is one thing. The constantly developing protagonist democracy in Venezuela is entirely the opposite. Furthermore, it is the main shield to defend the fledgling Bolivarian socialist path against U.S.-led foreign interference which we must all fully oppose.

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