

United States: Both Democratic and Republican Parties Threaten Venezuelan Coup

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Capitalist-party politics in the United States remains in turmoil. There are investigations into Trump's alleged collusion with Russia to steal the 2016 elections, as well as into his corrupt business practices on one side, and Trump's mobilization of his white racist base on the other. Republicans and Democrats are at each other's throats. Factionalism exists in both parties.

It may seem surprising, then, that almost all Democratic members of Congress (with exceptions like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who is a member of Democratic Socialists of America, and Afro-American Muslim Ilhan Omar and a few others) are joining with the likes of Donald Trump, Mike Pence, John Bolton, and Elliot Abrams in support of the Washington-organized attempt at a coup to overthrow the government of Venezuela.

The reason for this grand alliance is obvious - the whole U.S. ruling class has sought to overthrow the Venezuelan government ever since Hugo Chavez was overwhelmingly elected in 1998. In 2002, the U.S. organized a military coup that for two days ousted Chavez. At the time, the *New York Times* hailed the coup, claiming it was a step forward for democracy to have what amounted to a military dictatorship. The military junta was quickly smashed by a mass popular uprising that had the support of most soldiers.

A recent editorial in the anti-Trump *New York Times* bemoans the fact that the supposed triumphant march into Venezuela from Colombia led by the Trump-anointed "president" Juan Guaidó to deliver U.S.-supplied "humanitarian assistance" as the spearhead of an uprising — fizzled.

The whole corporate media previously confidently predicted that the Venezuelan army would disintegrate in face of this farce, but it didn't. Citizen militia, ready to back up the army, didn't need to do so. The media believed its own hype that the regime headed by Nicolás Maduro was on its last legs.

The *Times* was forced to note "a sizable portion of [the people] still harbor attachment to the 'Bolivarian socialist' claptrap of [Maduro's] predecessor and mentor, Hugo Chavez." This theme of denouncing not only Maduro but Chavez too is widespread in the media, making clear that the U.S. objective is to overthrow the whole Bolivarian revolution launched by Chavez, not only its weakened condition under Maduro.

The *Times* says the U.S. "must maintain united and constant pressure on Mr. Maduro to leave, and on the army to abandon him."

The *Times* says Maduro is "a dictator who has already destroyed his country" All the media say he is a "dictator" and that the 2018 election that returned him to office was "fraudulent".

It's worth repeating what John Pilger wrote in last week's *Green Left Weekly*: "A section of the opposition boycotted the election, a tactic used against Chavez. The boycott failed: 9,389,056 voted; sixteen parties participated and six candidates stood for the presidency. Maduro won 6,248,864 votes or 67.84 percent."

The opposition is fragmented, and couldn't come up with a united candidate, which is why a section of the opposition tried to discredit the election by boycotting it.

The *Times* cynically says "It must be clear that Mr. Guaidó should be installed as interim leader only to allow new, fair elections. Any suggestion that Mr. Guadó was acting on behalf of Washington would

undermine that message.”

But the whole world knows that the Trump administration is vociferously and quite openly demanding the overthrow of the Venezuelan government, and replacing it with a Guaidó-led regime, which is not just a “suggestion”. Guaidó didn’t even announce that he was “president” until U.S. Vice President Pence telephoned him to do so.

The *Times*, the “respectable” face of U.S. imperialism, in its editorial calling for Maduro’s overthrow is by that fact alone making it crystal clear that Guaidó is “acting on behalf of Washington”.

Let’s look at the *Times*’ assertion that Maduro “has destroyed his country”.

A Marxist economist who publishes a blog titled “A Critique of Crisis Theory,” points out that “Venezuela suffers from what is called by economists a monoculture economy” based on oil. It was U.S. imperialism through its domination of the country for many decades that distorted its development by imposing its dependency on oil, for the massive profit of the Rockefellers and the other oil magnates.

“In such an economy, the world market price of a single commodity largely governs the state of its economy. When the price of oil is high, money represented by U.S. dollars flows into Venezuela. The resulting inflow generates plenty of effective monetary demand for local businesses. The Venezuelan economy booms and employment grows. But when the price of oil drops, money flows out. When this happens, effective demand contracts and the economy falls into crisis.

“If the Venezuelan government attempts to make up for the lack of money in the form of U.S. dollars by printing more legal-tender local currency, the local currency falls sharply against the dollar

“A process of currency devaluation begins. Prices rise in terms of the local currency obliging the Venezuelan central bank to print still more local currency to meet rising costs and interest rates ... which causes an even sharper rise in prices.”

Such a crisis has happened to Venezuela before when the price of oil in dollar terms dropped, for example in the 1980s, which led to severe economic crisis and popular unrest, ultimately resulting in the rise of Hugo Chavez.

When world oil prices rose in the past the Venezuelan capitalist oligarchy reaped the lion’s share. But, “Chavez was not just another ‘prosperity’ Venezuelan president, however... his government distributed the oil revenues to the working class and the poor of the cities and countryside. Massive housing construction programs that built more than 2.5 million homes were carried out, education was expanded, and a crash program to tackle illiteracy was carried out, while health care became available to the mass of poor and working-class people for the first time.

“These programs were more than enough to make Chavez the most popular president in Venezuelan history.” And, they also earned the wrath of the Venezuelan rich as well as the U.S. ruling class.

“But Washington hates Venezuela for another reason. Chavez came to Cuba’s rescue during the hour of Cuba’s greatest need. While high oil prices are good for Venezuela, they are bad for Cuba, which has few oil reserves. As oil prices rose on the world market in the 2000s, Cuba lacked U.S dollars necessary to purchase the minimal amount of oil it needed to maintain its economy. Under Chavez, a deal with the Cuban government was worked out where Venezuela provided Cuba with oil in exchange for Cuban doctors.” It was these doctors who were the driving force behind the big expansion of medical services to the Venezuelan people.

“Both the Venezuelan and Cuban people benefited.... This shows that the road out of the monoculture economy that plagues Venezuela can only be achieved through the integration of the economies of Latin America....

“Starting with the oil-centered recession of 2015-16 ... then-President Obama announced the first anti-Venezuelan sanctions. The liberal Obama was determined to make the the developing economic crisis in monoculture Venezuela as bad as possible....

“Despite the many pro-working class and pro-poor people reforms carried out under the Chavistas, the Venezuela economy remains very much a capitalist economy and a monoculture economy at that. It is therefore subject to all the laws that govern capitalist economies in general and monoculture economies in particular.”

Venezuela is not socialist in any sense, in spite of the stupid assertions in the media. An additional drain on the economy has been sabotage by the capitalists, exacerbating shortages, hoarding, etc.

“As Obama’s initial sanctions have developed into a full-scale blockade, Washington is now moving to make it impossible for Venezuela to sell its oil - or anything else - at all. The U.S. government is acting as a gigantic money pump draining Venezuela of what is left of its money as well as vital commodity use values. The Trump administration [and its Democratic supporters] expect that as the pay in real terms of the human beings making up the Venezuelan armed forces drops toward zero, desperation will compel them to obey the order of commander-in-chief Donald Trump and accept Guaidó...”

International opposition to Washington’s coup drive is needed to drive it back and stop it.

Barry Sheppard
