

Venezuela and Imperialist Confrontation in Latin America

What are our tasks and perspectives to defend Venezuela?

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"Today, 200 years later, we can say it: After having lost that independence that cost so much, Venezuela, in these last ten years...has recovered its independence...and this recovered independence is a door that we should keep open so that for the next years and decades we can recover all the needs of the people: Freedom, equality, happiness, living, life, a humane country, a full country."

President Hugo Chavez said [these words](#) at a civic-military parade in Caracas, Venezuela on July 5, 2011, during the 200th anniversary of Venezuela's Declaration of Independence from Spain. As Chavez explains, through the achievements of the Bolivarian revolutionary process, now, the people of Venezuela not only mark their independence from Spain but also their tremendous advances towards independence from U.S. imperialism.

Today, together with Cuba, the democratically elected government of President Maduro and the Bolivarian revolutionary process are now the biggest threat to the hegemony of the United States in the Western Hemisphere.

U.S. Imperialism Vs. Venezuela's Independence

The 16th Summit of the ALBA-TCP was held in Havana, Cuba in December 2018. The ALBA-TCP, which was founded in 2004 by Cuba and Venezuela, is the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our Americas – People's Trade Treaty. It is an inter-governmental organization and series of ongoing trade agreements established as an alternative to the U.S.-controlled FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas). [In his remarks](#) during the Summit the President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, clearly laid out this critical confrontation between imperialism and independence in Venezuela. He said,

"Latin America is a disputed zone. It is a hard-fought dispute between the neocolonial, imperialist project of the United States versus the project of liberation, independence, shared happiness of our Latin American and Caribbean peoples. It is an area amidst an intense dispute; there is an offensive against progressive governments. We are certainly in the eye of the hurricane. We are the objective of the threats by the Empire and its satellite governments in the continent, of a brutal campaign against the Bolivarian Revolution and our democracy."

U.S. President Trump and his administration have also framed this confrontation in their own

interests. By using words such as “democracy” and “human rights,” the U.S. government and their allies are attempting to paint a picture that is dangerously similar to that used to justify their bloody attacks against Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, all countries that have been torn apart at the seams by U.S.-led war, sanctions and occupation. None of these countries have seen the promised “return to democracy” or flourishing of human rights, because that was never the true objective of the U.S. government and their allies. Their objective was always, as it is with Venezuela today, to bring these countries back under the control of U.S. imperialism, no matter the human cost.

Iraq, Libya, Syria and now Venezuela are not the only countries that have been callously slated for destruction by the U.S. war machine during this new era of war and occupation, which began with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. In 2007, retired U.S. General Wesley Clark did an [interview on Democracy Now](#) in which he revealed a classified memo that he saw in 2001 that described how the U.S. was, “going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.”

This memo is significant in understanding why the U.S. government is targeting Venezuela. Those seven countries share something with Venezuela today – which is their independence from the control of U.S. foreign policy. Yes, some of these countries are rich in oil or other natural resources, but not all of them. All of them, however, had either achieved their independence from U.S. hegemony or were fighting for it, at the time that the memo was written.

U.S. War Against Venezuela Rages On

To stall Venezuela’s march towards independence, the U.S. government and their allies have unleashed war, economic terrorism and a vicious media campaign against Venezuela.

The U.S. sanctions, which began to be intensified under the Presidency of Barack Obama in 2014, consist of over 150 measures aimed at destroying the Venezuelan economy and forcing the overthrow of President Maduro. In total, sanctions imposed by the U.S., Canada, the E.U. and Switzerland are estimated to have cost Venezuela more than \$130 billion since 2015, this amount is equivalent to Venezuela’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in one-year. In addition, there is nearly \$5.5 billion being illegally held by international financial institutions including Citibank and the Bank of England.

The imperialist blockade against Venezuela has cut the country off from normal and established methods of international trade and financing. It is a deliberate campaign by the U.S. government and their allies to sabotage the economy of Venezuela and deny the people of Venezuela access to needed food, medicines and other basic goods.

One example of the human impact of the imposition of the sanctions regime against Venezuela is in the health sector. The U.S. government and their mainstream media mouthpieces never mention a word about the sanctions imposed against Venezuela. Instead, they would like people around the world to believe that shortages in medicines are caused by the neglect of the government of Venezuela.

However, as explained by Marcel Quintana, co-founder of the LGBT AIDS awareness group ASES Venezuela, in [an interview](#) with Michael Fox for the Real News Network, the blockade

is even impacting Venezuela's ability to cooperate with international health organizations to secure the supply of medicines. He explains

"We understand that the Pan American Health Organization has had to change the accounts [used to purchase the medicine] four times because they keep getting blocked. The blockade is not just against the government, it's against the people who are living with HIV, it's against the people living with cancer because they don't allow the medicine to come into the country. They are blocking not just the country, but the health of the people living with HIV. And this is serious. Very serious."

The U.S. government continues to threaten Venezuela with further military intervention. At a [press conference](#) on June 25, 2019, the U.S. government's special envoy to Venezuela, war criminal Elliot Abrams once again insisted that the military option against Venezuela was still on the table. At the same time, he announced that a U.S. Navy hospital ship had left Miami headed towards Venezuela. Much more than a hospital ship, this U.S. Navy vessel is part of U.S. military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, and is intended to demonstrate that,

"U.S. Southern Command is committed to the region in support of our Caribbean and Latin American partners, as well as displaced Venezuelans who continue to flee the brutal oppression of the former Maduro regime and its interlocking, man-made political, economic and humanitarian crises" [as was stated](#) by the commander of U.S. Southern Command.

This is a further provocation against the Venezuelan government, as well as an affront to Venezuela's sovereignty and dignity as if to say that the people and government of Venezuela are not capable of taking care of their own affairs.

The government of Canada has also continued to take a leading role in the imperialist campaign to overthrow the government of Venezuela and reverse the gains made by poor, working and oppressed people in the Bolivarian revolutionary process. This includes illegal and unjust sanctions against nearly 100 Venezuelans.

As [tweeted](#) recently by the Foreign Minister of Canada, Chrystia Freeland, in reference to the pro-imperialist, right-wing Lima Group,

"Canada and our Lima Group partners Argentina, Brazil and Chile met on the sidelines of the #G20 to discuss the human rights violations of the Maduro regime and our shared commitment to a peaceful return to democracy in #Venezuela."

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— Chrystia Freeland (@cafreeland) [June 29, 2019](#)

Recently, Freeland has also had discussions about Venezuela with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, as [reported](#) by the CBC news network in Canada.

The capitalist ruling class of the United States and other imperialist countries are imposing war and blockade on Venezuela to strengthen their position in Latin America and the Caribbean as they drive to regain hegemony in the region. Their support for the so-called “interim President” of Venezuela Juan Guaido and their continued backing of Venezuela’s violent counter-revolutionary opposition also demonstrates that they are committed to improving the position of the capitalist class in Venezuela against the government of Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

Venezuela Defends Their Sovereignty and Self-Determination

It has now been over five months since the U.S. government and their imperialist allies appointed Juan Guaido as “interim President” of Venezuela. Despite U.S. backing, their puppet has completely failed to carry out a coup d’état against the democratically elected President, Nicolas Maduro. In fact, Juan Guaido’s lackey’s in Colombia have now been [exposed](#) by the Panam Post for embezzling more than \$100,000 intended to be used for “humanitarian aid” and the upkeep of deserters from Venezuela’s military.

In contrast, people in Venezuela have faced a criminal blockade; sabotage to their electrical grid; continued right-wing violence; and further attempts at coup and assassinations, with dignity and constant mobilization. Bravely, the people of Venezuela have continued to defend their democracy, their President, and their Bolivarian revolutionary process.

The government of Venezuela has also defended its independence through their commitment to solidarity and cooperation with other countries and social movements throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. This includes their participation and building of organizations such as ALBA-TCP and CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), as well as their continued commitment to Petrocaribe. One component of Petrocaribe is a program that delivers oil from Venezuela to participating countries in exchange for goods and services.

Venezuela’s steadfast defence of their sovereignty and independence is creating a deepening confrontation with imperialism.

Discussions and Debates are Good, But Building Venezuela Solidarity Movement is a Priority and a Necessity

Let us be clear, the U.S.-led imperialist assault on Venezuela is not about ideology. It is not about abstract ideas about the political character of Venezuela’s government, nor a battle between notions of good and evil, nor some emphasis that this is about oil.

The war on Venezuela today is a war on a country that is asserting its independence from imperialism.

Independence from imperialism and sovereignty, not socialism, is the message today broadcast from Venezuela to the people of Latin America and the world. The U.S. government and their allies cannot accept and cannot tolerate a growing anti-imperialist movement, one which has the capacity to bring colonial and semi-colonial countries in Latin America and around the world united against the imperialist bully and their endless drive for

capitalist market hegemony, neocolonialism and super exploitation.

Many respected progressive and leftist intellectuals and analysts in North America and Europe are paying perhaps too much attention, or are carried away by, the internal dynamics of the Bolivarian revolution, without realizing that our main task is not to speculate about the revolutionary process in Venezuela. We must understand what Venezuela needs right now and consequently what our main and immediate tasks are – especially as people living in the U.S. or Canada, in the belly of the beast. The best way to contribute to the struggle of Venezuelan people against the reactionary pro-imperialist right-wing opposition inside Venezuela and against the constant attack, sanctions, and interventions of imperialism, is to build a strong antiwar, anti-imperialist movement that also focuses on building a Venezuela solidarity movement in defence of self-determination for the Venezuelan people.

We have no option and no responsibility other than to build an effective mass movement to defend Venezuelan people and their struggle against imperialist aggression, focusing especially on that of the United States and Canada. We have too many conferences, but not enough mass actions. We have too many discussion clubs and discussion circles, without militant actions. Why are so many groups and organizations supporting Venezuela, but not demonstrating unity in action? Together we can organize thousands of people in Washington DC and Ottawa, while the last two national and international protests in Washington DC brought only 700-1,000 people into the streets!

The Venezuelan revolution and defending its independence have created a golden opportunity for progressive, leftist, pacifist, and all other human-loving activists to overcome this fragmentation. Working and oppressed people in the U.S. and Canada must hear us; must see us in united action, in order to believe and join us. Let's remember the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) Movement. Yes, we can!

Final Thoughts and Conclusions

A recent [article](#) by Venezuela's Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, printed in this issue of Fire This Time, clearly lays out our task as human-loving, progressive, anti-war people, "Venezuela is the epicentre of a historic dispute." Progressives, leftist intellectuals, and activists – rather than focusing on which way the Venezuelan revolution must develop and what the best options are for the leadership of the Bolivarian revolutionary process to take – must focus their efforts, time, and energy on building a strong and effective solidarity movement with the Venezuelan people and their revolutionary government.

Our job, as people outside of Venezuela, is not to occupy ourselves with what is happening in Venezuela internally in terms of what is good or bad for Venezuelans. It is not our job to discover, just now, that the battle of imperialists with Venezuela is over plundering oil and natural resources – an obvious ambition of all colonial powers. Our job is to focus entirely on the war of imperialists against Venezuela as an independent country. With a little critical thinking, we need to clarify the objective situation and imperialist intentions for ourselves. Why have the U.S. and its imperialist allies imposed war and occupation since 2001 on Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and now threaten Iran? Are all these wars, occupations, and sanctions really about oil and stealing resources? If one's response is yes, then we trap ourselves with simplistic thinking and completely misunderstand the nature of imperialism and the deep unsolvable capitalist market system and economic crisis today.

At the root of all conflicts and battles of imperialist countries against independent countries, including colonial and semi-colonial countries, is the drive to deny them their sovereignty and self-rule. Everything else is secondary.

We have very clearly seen that the heroic people of Venezuela and their revolutionary government, under Comandante Chavez and now democratically elected President Maduro, are extremely capable of dealing with all kinds of internal counter-revolutionary sabotage. We must immediately increase our effort to explain to the people in the advanced industrial countries that shortages of goods, food, medicine, and basic necessities are the result of inhuman, brutal and heavy imperialist sanctions and blockade. We must build a movement in defence of the Venezuelan people with the main slogan of “U.S., Canada and All Other Imperialists Hands Off Venezuela!” and “End the Blockade Against Venezuela!” We must build a movement to defend the self-determination and sovereignty of Venezuela. Let’s work and focus together in a united effort on these basic demands. We will win.

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Featured image: Activists gather in front of the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, DC in March, 2019.

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