

Venezuela's Opposition: Attacking Its Own People

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The corporate media would have you believe that Venezuela is a dictatorship on the verge of political and economic collapse; a country where human rights crusaders and anti-government, democracy-seeking activists are routinely rounded up and thrown in jail. Indeed, the picture from both private media in Venezuela, as well as the mainstream press in the U.S., is one of a corrupt and tyrannical government desperately trying to maintain its grip on power while the opposition seeks much-needed reforms. In fact, the opposite is true.

The sad reality of Venezuela is that it is the Bolivarian Revolution that is being undermined, targeted, and destabilized. It is the Socialist Party, its leftist supporters (and critics), Chavista activists and journalists, and assorted forces on the Left that are being victimized by an opposition whose singular goal is power. This opposition, now in the majority in the National Assembly, uses the sacrosanct terminology of "freedom," "democracy," and "human rights" to conceal the inescapable fact that it has committed, and continues to commit, grave crimes against the people of Venezuela in the service of its iniquitous agenda, shaped and guided, as always, by its patrons in the United States.

This so-called opposition – little more than the political manifestation of the former ruling elites of Venezuela – wants nothing less than the total reversal of the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution, the end of Chavismo, and the return of Venezuela to its former status as oil colony and wholly owned subsidiary of the United States. And how are these repugnant goals being achieved? Economic destabilization, street violence and politically motivated assassinations, and psychological warfare are just some of the potent weapons being employed.

Making the Economy Scream

In what is perhaps the most infamous example of U.S. imperialism in Latin America in the last half century, the Nixon administration, led by Henry Kissinger, orchestrated the 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende, the Socialist president of Chile. In [declassified CIA documents](#), it has been [revealed](#) that President Nixon famously ordered U.S. intelligence to "make (Chile's) economy scream," a reference to the need to undermine and destabilize the Chilean economy using both U.S. financial weapons, and a powerful business elite inside Chile, in order to pave the way for either the collapse of the government or a coup d'état. Sadly, U.S. efforts proved successful, leading to a brutal dictatorship that lasted nearly two decades.

The same effort is currently underway in Venezuela, where the economic difficulties the country is facing can be directly attributed to the insidious efforts of Venezuela's right-wing opposition, and its backers in the United States. While corporate media reports over the last two years have shown viscerally shocking images of [empty store shelves](#), blaming supply

problems on the incompetence and corruption of the Maduro government, none of the stories bother to examine the question of why supplies have dwindled in the way they have.

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There is analysis pointing to corruption, an important problem to be tackled, to be sure, as well as lack of access to capital, and myriad other issues. But never does one find the real crux of the problem being discussed: supply and distribution remains in the hands of the right-wing elites whose interests are served by making life unbearable for the masses of poor and working people.

As renowned economist and former Venezuelan ambassador to the United Nations, Julio Escalona explained in Caracas on the eve of the December 2015 elections which ushered the right-wing back into the National Assembly:

"The majority of Venezuela's imports and distribution networks are in the hands of the elite ... Many of the goods needed for Venezuelan consumption are diverted to Brazil and Colombia. We are experiencing manufactured scarcity, a crisis deliberately induced as a means of destabilization against the government ... This is psychological war waged against the people of Venezuela in an attempt to intimidate them into abandoning the government and the socialist project entirely."

The significance of this point cannot be overstated, as the lack of basic necessities, coupled with daily obstacles such as [long lines at supermarkets](#), is enough to bring hardened Chavista activists, let alone ordinary Venezuelans, to question or even abandon the political project. And that is precisely the goal - make the economy scream, so the Chavistas will shut their mouths.

Of course, there's little doubt that the scarcity of goods is largely manufactured for political ends. One need only look at the conspicuous [reappearance of goods](#) in the immediate aftermath of the right-wing Unity Roundtable victory in the December 2015 elections to see how connected the supply problems are with political agendas. Additionally, [massive hoarding of basic consumer goods](#) in warehouses owned by prominent Venezuelan business interests sheds added light on the lengths to which the right-wing opposition and elites will go to make their own country's economy scream.

And then there's the economic elephant in the room: oil. According to OPEC [figures](#), oil revenue accounts for roughly 95 percent of Venezuela's export earnings, with the energy sector comprising roughly a quarter of the gross domestic product. In eighteen months, from April 2014 to January 2016, [the price per barrel of crude oil](#) has dropped from US\$108 to under US\$30, a drop of nearly 75 percent. This price collapse has devastated Venezuela's economy as oil revenue is needed to provide everything from basic services to the continuation of the public housing mission. And while President Maduro has refused to implement austerity, the drop has undeniably impacted the overall economy.

But is this price collapse merely the product of "simple economics" as the [New York Times](#) recently wrote? Or is it yet another orchestrated assault on oil-producing nations targeted by the U.S.? Russian President Vladimir Putin certainly implied that in late 2014 as the oil plunge took shape. [Putin stated](#), "There's lots of talk about what's causing (the lowering of

the oil price). Could it be the agreement between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia to punish Iran and affect the economies of Russia and Venezuela? It could.” Indeed, the collapse of oil couldn’t have come at a more opportune time for the U.S. globally, or for the U.S. proxy opposition inside Venezuela, as the effects of the plunge had obvious and immediate political ramifications.

One should also include hyper-speculation against Venezuela’s currency on the list of economic weapons being employed. Everything from the removal of currency and commodities out of the country, to the fostering and promotion of black market currency exchanges, has driven inflation through the roof in the country. While economic policy and mismanagement indeed play a role in this, it is equally true that the bolivar is yet another victim of the economic war.

It would be very difficult for any country to manage to ride out the confluence of negative economic developments and domestic economic subversion that Venezuela has had to endure. But coupled with a campaign of political violence and psychological war, the destabilization has taken on new dimensions.

In the U.S., and throughout North America and Europe, when one hears of violence in Venezuela, it is almost always either in the context of street violence or alleged “brutal crackdowns” on political protesters. However, the real political violence is carried out by the right-wing opposition, its paramilitary allies, and their backers in the U.S.

Violence sends a very clear message throughout Venezuelan society: do not stand up for your rights, do not try to defend the Revolution.

Perhaps no targeted killing has had a greater impact on the country and the Revolution than the 2014 [assassination of Robert Serra](#), a young, up-and-coming legislator from the PSUV who was [murdered by individuals connected to former Colombian President](#) and self-declared enemy of the Bolivarian Revolution, Alvaro Uribe. Serra was seen by many as the future of the PSUV and of the Chavista movement in the country. His murder was interpreted by millions as a direct assault on the Revolution and the future of the country.

Just this year, Venezuela has seen a number of other assassinations carried out by the same networks backed by the right wing and their international allies. The well-respected journalist and prominent Chavista Ricardo Duran was [murdered](#) outside his home in Caracas. Likewise, Fritz St. Louis, International Coordinator of the United Socialist Haitian Movement and Secretary General of the Haitian Cultural House Bolivariana de Venezuela, was [assassinated](#). Recently, Venezuela also saw opposition “activists” in the western city of San Cristobal [brutally run down two police officers](#) after the “protesters” hijacked a bus.

Sadly, there are many more killings that could be listed here. Such political violence is yet another indication of the “dirty war” – to borrow a term all too familiar in Latin America – being waged against the Bolivarian Revolution and Venezuela’s government.

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And that message is continually hammered home by a right-wing media that is, in effect, the propaganda arm of the right-wing opposition and the United States. As author and investigative journalist Eva Golinger [revealed](#) in 2007, the U.S. funded a program to provide

financial support to Venezuelan journalists hostile to Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution. This was a concerted effort aimed at influencing public opinion through the right-wing media, shaping the views of Venezuelans against their government. And that propaganda assault continues to this day, utilizing every possible means of disinformation and misinformation to turn the people of Venezuela against the Bolivarian Revolution, and against the socialist project.

The opposition and its U.S. patrons ceaselessly trumpet democracy and human rights, while having no regard for either in Venezuela. From quite literally taking food from the mouths of Venezuelans, to wantonly killing Chavistas and citizens alike, the opposition has proven itself to be not just reactionary and anti-democratic, but brazenly criminal.

In these times of political and economic turmoil in the Bolivarian Republic, one must recall just what exactly the so-called "opposition" is. And one must equally consider what sort of country Venezuela will become were they to be given even the slightest bit more power.

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