

## Venezuela, international solidarity, and survival

By Tom Whitney

Who in the world stands with a country when it is under the looming threat of a major U.S. government intervention? When Guatemala (1954), the Dominican Republic (1965), Chile (1973), and Haiti (2004) were in trouble, there was no one. Cuba was different; over the years, at different times, the Soviet Union, Latin American countries, and nations voting in the UN General Assembly all weighed in with support and solidarity. And Cuba's socialist revolution survives.

Now the U.S. government targets Venezuela, its socialist government and national sovereignty. This time, however, the intended victim is not alone.

For the nearly 15 years of Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution, the U.S government has lavished funds on forces opposing governments headed by President Hugo Chavez and his successor, Nicolas Maduro. The U.S. media have uniformly condemned both administrations on grounds of repression. The two embassies have gone without ambassadors since 2010.

The U.S. government enacted sanctions against Venezuela in late December 2014. Sponsors of the legislation alleged government resort to violence in its response to street protests earlier in the year. Yet U.S. and European media said nothing about the demonstrations having taken place mostly in well-to-do, urban neighborhoods, nothing about protesters themselves having been responsible for almost all the killings carried out during the turmoil.

U.S. pressure mounts in the context of media hype advertising the Maduro government as vulnerable. And not without reason: the charismatic Chavez and his overwhelming election victories are gone; Maduro won the presidential election in April 2013 by only a slim margin. And Venezuela's economy is in big trouble.

In December, Venezuela's Central Bank declared the economy to be in recession, also that inflation for the previous 12 months [had been 63.6 percent](#), one of the world's highest rates. High demand for dollars, exit of which is restricted, is fueling a black market. Now oil prices having fallen to levels barely enough to cover production costs. Because crude oil sales account for 95 percent of Venezuela's export income, the economy has recently experienced a 30 percent drop in [foreign exchange revenue](#). Business reporters warn of a likely default on bonds coming due soon. Blackouts and shortages of basic consumer goods are common. The government attributes the shortages in large measure to hoarding by commercial interests opposed to Maduro.

There is good news, however. Government ministers journeyed to China in December to be followed by President Maduro in early January. They attended the first ever conference between high Chinese government leaders and representatives of almost

all the CELAC nations (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean Nations). Maduro told reporters that China would be providing his country with \$20 billion in new investments, augmenting some \$45 billion already loaned over the [past ten years](#). Oil exports to China, presently half a million barrels of crude per day, will be doubling over [the coming year](#).

Leaving China, Maduro went on to oil-producing nations in the Middle East. After visits to Iran and Qatar, he told a [TeleSur reporter](#) that, “We [of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries] will be taking corrective measures so that the petroleum market returns to the level where it should be.” He counseled that, “We must not utilize petroleum as a cover for forcing countries to submit. That would be to return to wars and barbarism, and cannot be.” Maduro obtained a new credit line from banks in Qatar.

To rely on numbers, statements, and news reports to show that Venezuela has allies hardly does justice to Venezuela’s role in a drama of history. But Venezuelan analyst Jesús Rafael Gamarra Luna has words equal to the task.

He titles [his recent article](#), “Venezuela and the beginning of the end of Yankee imperialism.” Venezuela, he says, is dealing “the last political blow that ... defines in a pristine and clear way the beginning of a new epoch for humanity.” Specifically, “a strategic alliance was made with China that assures development of the Plan for the Homeland. A major international rearguard is being built for the development of socialism, of a world at peace. It gives Latin America and the Caribbean the best prospect for sustainable human development, better by far than the United States and Europe.”

He describes a “definitive turn of Venezuelan, international, and Caribbean international politics that distances us from the development parameters the United States and Europe impose as the capitalist model. [Now] Venezuela is not alone ... Commander Chavez planned it that way, to fashion a new geometry of power, a new multipolar world.”

Cuban journalist Hedelberto López Blanch agrees, but is more restrained: “The times are past where a single country can promulgate international decisions unilaterally. That’s because in recent decades many groupings have appeared that make this world more multi-polar.” He mentions alliances like “UNASUR, MERCOSUR, ALBA, CELAC, CARICOM, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), G-77, and the Euro-Asiatic Economic Union.” They “impede the effects of [these arbitrary measures](#).”

Presidents Jacobo Arbenz, Salvador Allende, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and Dominican “Constitutionalist” rebel Francisco Caamaño paid the price of not having their backs covered in the way President Maduro is being protected now. So the prognosis may not be all bad for Venezuela’s emancipatory project to continue.