

Johnson's Law in Action: Venezuela and the Foreign Policy of Mass Presumption

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Political philosophy is not an American strong suit. Maybe this is a blessing. Journalism is the currency of mass society where labels fill in for reality and glib one-liners fill in for debate. This gets worse when the topic is foreign and obscure to most Americans.

In Venezuela, former President, the late Hugo Chavez and the present chief executive, Nicholas Maduro, are today called “Nazis” by people who couldn't tell you the first thing about the National Socialist program. That is, when they're not being called “communists,” often by the same people. Labels are destructive because they permit someone to believe they know something when they don't. It's the very heart of superficial knowledge. A label might be useful in conversation, but as a description, it's a veil over reality. This paper is a needed correction to the media and academic mythology on Venezuela, the country is the largest proven oil reserves on planet earth.

As a technical field, the political economy of the third world isn't open to public opinion. Because of this, the System's journalists can say what they please about it. “Johnson's Law,” a startling and earthshaking discovery by this author – and named after himself – states that, to the extent a place is obscure to Americans, analysts can say whatever they want without fear of contradiction. It can be a lie or a mistake, the only key element is that there are very few people who can challenge it.

Today in Venezuela, President Maduro is being challenged by a self proclaimed, American-backed “president” Juan Guaido. The recent presidential elections were challenged by the losers and the US almost immediately demanded a pro-US president be installed. Normally, it would be a man who ran for president and who was allegedly robbed of the victory. In this case, Guaido is an absolute nobody and is entirely new to politics.

Predictably educated in the US, this man never ran for President. Election rigging is universally blamed when an anti-American and anti-liberal president is elected. There are no exceptions to this, the only difference is that when it happens in Russia, the ability to do much about it falls drastically. Venezuela's not so lucky. The truth is that the “opposition” was backed by an array of corporate NGOs worth billions of dollars, a strong CIA presence, threats to the ruling party from Washington and a massive anti-Maduro corporate presence. This, it is said, was irrelevant to the election. Only governments that are anti-American can rig elections.

The press says without deviation that “the opposition” controls the “popular Assembly.” Very few readers know what the “Assembly” refers to, or what the major parties are. While the press is unanimous as always, the ruling United Socialist Party has 55 out of 167 seats. This is Maduro's party and it's the largest and by far the most popular in the country. It's allied with the third largest party, Democratic Action, and they have 25 seats. Maduro's opposition was elite, wealthy and usually educated in the US. They were also deeply divided.

To deal with this, the CIA created the “Democratic Unity Roundtable” (MUD, to use its Spanish initials) to bring everyone from the communist party to neoliberals into one huge coalition. Only foreign force can explain this ludicrous set of partners deciding to “cooperate” to unseat Maduro. They would never have cooperated otherwise. The US has spent about \$20 million since the death of Chavez to overthrow his government and social revolution, though the

private sector has spent far more.

The Supreme Court, said to be pro-Maduro, though no evidence is provided, had disqualified several sitting members of the Assembly for electoral fraud in 2015. The results were predictable, but it deprived the “Alliance” of its veto-proof majority. The US yet again sought to overthrow the state and denied that the pro-American candidates could ever rig elections.

The problem is that, on April 11, 2002, the Venezuelan opposition ignored their Constitution and staged a coup d'etat. Then, it was Pedro Carmona Estanga who declared himself president. Following instructions, he immediately revoked the 1999 Constitution and repealed most of Chavez's laws. He also dissolved the Supreme Court of Justice, the Attorney General of the Republic, the Ombudsman, the National Electoral Council, the National Assembly and the General Comptroller. All of this was considered “legitimate” and praiseworthy in Washington.

In early September 2012, David De Lima, the former governor of Anzoategui, published a paper exposing the agenda of the MUD. Secretly, the group will pursue free trade and US control of capital, but that's not what they say in public. On September 6 2012, William Ojeda, an opposition legislator, also discovered these plans and assisted in exposing the CIA's role in creating the group. He was thrown out of his party the next day. Once exposed, four small parties withdrew from the coalition. Aldo Carmeno from the Christian-Democratic party COPEI, withdrew his support for the coalition and made it clear that MUD was a fraud. Immediately afterwards, he announced his support for the ideology of Hugo Chavez.

MUD and many more groups like it were created in DC. Starting in 2002, USAID founded the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) in Caracas to unseat Chavez and his allies. From then until 2014, over \$100 million have been given to the “MUD” and other CIA based groups. The flow of money has – despite local laws against it – gone up more recently. Under Obama and the early Trump, the “opposition” gets between \$6 million and \$12 million a year, but again, that's just government money.

Its interference in local politics was so great that the OTI was thrown out of the country after being found guilty of violating numerous electoral laws. The government had to pass the Law of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination that forbade foreign money in politics.

The National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a US government agency, according to its 2014 annual report, gave \$2.3 million to Venezuelan opposition groups. It created the group FORMA initially to overthrow Chavez and is headed by banker, Garcia Mendoza, who runs the *Banco Venezolano de Credito*, the main channel for US money into the country. He's funded *Sumate*, *CEDICE*, *Sin Mordaza*, *Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones* and *FORMA*, among others, as writers such as Eva Golinger have pointed out.

NED cash in Venezuela has attempted to buy the “independent” media. “Independent” is a neologism that refers to media sources owned by corporate bodies rather than those owned in part by the state. Of course, these new media firms are ordered to discredit the government and fan the flames of opposition, blaming current problems on Maduro. The new media groups financed by the US include *Espacio Publico*, *Instituto Prensa y Sociedad* (IPYS), *Sin Mordaza* and *GALI*. Since at least 2014, the American funded media has become more and more hysterical in its attacks against the government, especially Maduro personally.

Right in the Annual Report of the NED, the MUD is shown to be a DC creation. It is to

Develop the ability of political and civil society actors from Nicaragua, Argentina

and Bolivia to work on national, issue-based agendas for their respective countries using lessons learned and best practices from successful Venezuelan counterparts. The Institute will facilitate an exchange of experiences between the Venezuelan Democratic Unity Roundtable and counterparts in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Argentina. IRI will bring these actors together through a series of tailored activities that will allow for the adaptation of the Venezuelan experience in these countries.

The MUD is hardly a popular force. Suspiciously, most of its parties are tiny and recently founded. Justice First is its only major party with 33 seats in the Assembly. It was founded only in 2000. “National Convergence” is minuscule and founded in 1993. It has zero seats. The “Fearless People's Alliance” is based around one person, Antonio Ledezma, who in 2015 won an award from the National Endowment for Democracy itself. Since it's only one man, it has no seats. The Ecological Movement of Venezuela has only a handful of members and was founded in 2010. The Movement for a Responsible, Sustainable and Entrepreneurial Venezuela, apart from having the longest name among political parties there, has a defunct website. It might not exist at all.

“Come, Venezuela” is worth spending some time on only because its almost certainly a direct creation of the CIA. It is not even a local group. It's as if The Onion were to do a mocking caricature of a CIA organization of “citizens” in a country. Come, Venezuela has a single member in the Assembly and technically, isn't a political party. This permits it to hide its sources of funding, since a party must disclose this. Rather, they're a “movement” that managed to run in a few legislative races as independents. They've yet to be recognized as a “party” largely because they cannot get even the minimum of signatures needed for this.

Its party description reads like a French Revolution pamphlet and puts “property without adjectives” as the center of society. It's an excellent case study in American manipulation. It has very few members and is one of the more cynical aspects of the CIA's agenda in Venezuela, since its entire purpose is apparently a secret and its rhetoric is purely American. They will not publish a platform anywhere, which is a first for me. In 30 years studying politics full time, I've never come across a political party that refuses to publish its platform. In fact, they say that their platform “isn't really a political agenda, but rather a set of principles.” Still, they barely even tell us what those are. Here's one quote that gives away its purely American origin:

Our focus is on the free individual as the best alternative to the collectivist, populist and totalitarian agendas that traditionally are associated with Venezuela and Latin America. That is why, in *Vente, Venezuela*, we break with the traditional discussion between the left and the right, and propose a new paradigm in which oppression and freedom are opposed. Our proposal goes beyond traditional ideologies: it is about values and rights, and its focus is on the free and responsible citizen.

No citizen of Venezuela wrote this. Condemning his own civilization as “totalitarian” is only something an American liberal will say. Its clearly written from the point of view of an outsider. How the difference between “oppression and freedom” constitute a “new paradigm” in politics is not a question that will likely be answered by the handful of members this “party” has, but it does show the minimal amount of thought that was put into this. The platform as a whole

says exactly nothing. The use of the term “populist” also gives it away as being an American creation, since only within the American establishment is that term seen as a negative. In fact, it's a common attack against non-globalist parties in the American press. The section of their website called “Statutes,” that is, the laws that govern its internal structure, are discussed in purely American terms, but they will not publish it. There is also a picture of the main party meeting in Caracas that has about 15 people, all looking suspiciously non-Latin.

Its main candidate and public face is Maria Corina, the daughter of a steel tycoon whose business was nationalized by Chavez. She founded several feminist political groups in the country and, of course, was educated at Yale. She seems to live in North Carolina, but I've not verified this.

The government accused her of approaching the military to foment a coup. She acts outraged. Well, right on her website (which strangely, has an “English language” version), has an “Appeal to the Army” among its few published essays. Growing up in a life of indulgence and luxury has left Ms Corina with a stunted intelligence. One can't scream “foul” when you're implicated in fomenting a coup with clear evidence on your website. Still, why have an “English version” option? Are there many Venezuelan citizens that only speak English? This is yet more evidence it's a CIA creation. They refuse to publish a platform or mention any candidates but they have an English website option?

Then there's William Caballero. If any more proof of this group's purely American origin is necessary, he's it. His entire “platform,” if you can call it that, is the return of capital nationalized by Chavez to the Americans. Published on the 28th of January, his article “President Guaido Must Request the Repatriation of Capital” makes this demand on the new “President” of the country. Another article, unsigned, is called “We Have Shown on the Streets We're a Majority,” but this grouplet has only one representative. Every picture of a rally shows a handful of people. There are other “leaders” of the party on the page, but they are only names with no biographies. It's not only a total fraud, it's a poorly constructed one.

One of the most prolific writers on this topic is Eva Golinger. She says:

Detailed in a report published by the Spanish institute FRIDE in 2010, international agencies that fund the Venezuelan opposition violate currency control laws in order to get their dollars to the recipients. Also confirmed in the FRIDE report was the fact that the majority of international agencies, with the exception of the European Commission, are bringing in foreign money and changing it on the black market, in clear violation of Venezuelan law. In some cases, as the FRIDE analysis reports, the agencies open bank accounts abroad for the Venezuelan groups or they bring them the money in hard cash. The US Embassy in Caracas could also use the diplomatic pouch to bring large quantities of unaccounted dollars and euros into the country that are later handed over illegally to anti-government groups in Venezuela.

As nationalists have been saying for decades, liberal democracy is identical to permitting foreign millionaires to run the country, since no candidate for office can function without lots of cash and media attention. He must get mainstream approval. “Civil society” is controlled by those with the money to make their voices heard. The “rule of law” is a strange thing to be proud of since it doesn't say who's law is actually ruling. The “rule of law” just means the rule of foreign capital. The USAID assists in crafting campaigns and speeches for candidates at all

levels of government. This is election rigging.

American corporations, wealthy and experienced, with a massive international presence, can outperform any local firm and undersell them – even at a loss. This soon hollows out the country's economy, placing it in the hands of the US or EU. This includes the media and the universities and is the legacy of democracy.

Both in policies and ideology, Maduro is following the lead of the late Chavez. Chavez remains the most popular figure in the country. Every election he's won he's done so by at least 10 percent. All international bodies, from the European Union to the Organization of American States, to the Union of South American Nations and the Carter Center, were unanimous in recognizing the fairness of the process. Even Jimmy Carter declared that Venezuela's electoral system was "the best in the world," that is, until last year.

Universal access to education was a hallmark of Chavez's government. About two million Venezuelans learned to read. The number of children attending school increased from six million in 1998 to 14 million in 2012 and the enrollment rate is now 93.2 percent. This far surpasses Detroit. The rate of secondary school enrollment rose from 54 percent in 2000 to 73 percent in 2011. In addition, the number of college students increased from 900,000 in 2000 to 2.3 million in 2011 (these and all following statistics are from the World Bank or the UN).

With regard to health, Chavez's government created the National Public Health System to ensure free access to doctors. Between 2005 and 2012, over 8000 new medical centers were created. The number of doctors increased from 20 per 100,000 in 1999 to 80 per 100,000 in 2010. All told, almost 600 million medical visits were made possible here, affecting about 17 million people. In the late 1990s, fewer than two million people had regular access to a doctor. The infant mortality rate fell from 20 per thousand in 1999 to 10 per thousand in 2012. Average life expectancy increased from 72.2 years in 1999 to 74.3 years in 2011. Child malnutrition was reduced by 40 percent since 1999.

From 1999 to 2011, the poverty rate decreased from 44 percent to 26 percent and the rate of extreme poverty fell from 17 percent in 1999 to 7 percent in 2011. American sanctions have destroyed this. Importantly, the GINI coefficient, which measures wealth inequality, fell from 0.46 in 1999 to 0.39 in 2011. The GINI figure uses 0 to represent total equality, everyone having the exact same amount of wealth, while 1 is total inequality where one person would control all wealth. World inequality is expressed by the index at 0.38. The US is at 0.47, though this is understated since so much capital is spirited abroad and invested globally, its a meaningless figure. It's likely more like 0.5 or higher. According to the UN, Venezuela held the lowest recorded GINI coefficient in Latin America. Today, that's a pleasant memory only.

Land reform gave land to those who could till it. In total, Venezuela distributed more than 3 million hectares. In 1999, Venezuela was producing 51 percent of its own food, but that went up to over 70 percent in 2011. In total, food consumption increased 81 percent since 1999. Since 1999, the caloric intake of Venezuelans increased by 50 percent thanks to the creation of 22,000 food stores where products are subsidized up to 30 percent. Meat consumption increased by 75 percent since 1999. The malnutrition rate fell from 21 percent in 1998 to less than 3 percent in 2012 according to the FAO.

The nationalization of the oil company PDVSA in 2003 permitted the country to chart its own economic path. The creation of *Petrocaribe* in 2005 allows 18 countries in Latin America a secure energy supply, using oil subsidies of between 40 to 70 percent. Venezuela also provides assistance to disadvantaged communities in the United States by providing fuel at subsidized rates.

The nationalization of the electrical and telecommunications sectors allowed the end of private monopolies and guaranteed universal access to these services. Since 1999, more than 50,000 cooperatives have been created in all sectors of the economy. The unemployment rate fell from 15.2 percent in 1998 to just over six percent in 2012, with the creation of more than 4 million jobs. The minimum wage increased from 100 bolivars (roughly \$16) in 1998 to 247.52 bolivars (\$330) in 2012. This is the highest minimum wage in Latin America. In 1999, 65 percent of the workforce earned the minimum wage, but 13 years later, only 21 percent did. Working hours were reduced to 6 hours a day and 36 hours per week, without loss of pay.

Public debt fell from 45 percent of GDP in 1998 to 20 percent in 2011. Venezuela withdrew from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, after they paid their long term debts early, as the Russians had done. In 2012, the GDP growth rate was 5.5 percent in Venezuela, one of the highest in the world. GDP per capita rose from \$4,100 in 1999 to \$10,810 in 2011. All of this is today a memory. Yet again, imperial liberalism has taken a nation on the verge of first world status and thrust it back to the third world or lower.

Sanctions bite hard for a country so close to the US. They force citizens to make a choice: do we accept increasing poverty or overthrow an otherwise popular ruler? It's a means of overthrowing a ruler without having to lift a finger. Its using food, basic goods and even access to currency as weapons of war. In Washington, this is what "democracy" means this month.

National socialism works. Venezuela is strong evidence. Maduro was elected based on these facts. Today, its all gone. Sanctions have created hyperinflation, hunger, and a devastated health care system that was once the envy of the continent.

In 2015 President Obama issued an executive order declaring Venezuela to be "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States." Such a declaration is necessary in order to impose economic sanctions, but what could he mean? He could only be referring to the nationalization of oil firms. No one can send or receive money from abroad there. No one may trade with the country and there's no way for the government to schedule its debts. In his appeal to the world, Maduro says:

This coup attempt is an abject illegal interference in another country's sovereignty, with the ultimate violent and vicious goal that Washington has been practicing over the past 100 years around the globe – and ever with more impunity – of "regime change" to steal a non-conforming, non-submissive government's resources, and of course, to reach eventually the ultimate goal of full spectrum world dominance. Venezuela has by far the world's largest known hydrocarbon (petrol and gas) reserves which is two days of shipping time away from Texas oil refineries, versus the Arabian Gulf from where today the US imports 60% of its petrol – a shipping time of 40-45 days, higher shipping costs, plus the risk of having to sail through the Iran-controlled Gulf of Hormuz. . .

Clearly the Fifth Column is and was at work in Venezuela for years, bringing about the downfall of the economy by monetary and oil price manipulation from outside and from within, [also] by diverting food and medicine shipments from being delivered to supermarkets and instead being transferred as contraband into Colombia, where they are sold at dollar-manipulated inflated local currencies.

The American media screamed (and still screams) that the "Russians," in nebulous terms, somehow influenced voters to reject Hilary Clinton. Even those deep into this absurd idea aren't

quite sure how they did it, but reason isn't the issue here. Today, they make a government they dislike unpopular by starving it of trade, currency and diplomatic recognition and blame it on "socialism." This is *not* considered election rigging, however. In 2017, the order was renewed in order to provide "a smooth transition" to the Trump presidency. "This will ensure that the new administration will not need to immediately undertake renewals necessary to safeguard our national security as it works to put its national security team in place and secure Senate confirmation of relevant appointees." What has Venezuela done to receive this treatment? Even alleged socialist Bernie Sanders dismissed Chavez as "a dead communist dictator" proving what Sanders really is.

Therefore, without much doubt we can say that Juan Guaido is being financed by the CIA and related agencies. Before the other day, he was a nobody. He was just elected in 2015 with fewer than 100,000 votes and was made the president of the legislature three years later. Isn't this very rapid? There aren't more senior people available for this job? Only CIA involvement explains this. He was recognized by the OAS largely due to fear of losing the American market. Sanctions on Venezuela apply to any firm doing business with that country. Without the US market, Latin America is doomed.

Russia's role here is to point out, with her substantial forum, the absurdity and lies of the American attack on the country. The Russian position is not only clear, but correct: the US government is merely an arm of capital. Sergey Lavrov attacked the American freezing of \$7 billion assets of the state-run oil company PDVSA and its US subsidiary Citgo.

"US companies operating in Venezuela are excluded from the sanctions regime. Simply put they want to overthrow the government and gain profits at the same time," Lavrov stated. As the "Come Venezuela" party says, the American backed civil war and coup is meant to take back nationalized property. These billions can be distributed to oil firms to continue to do business in the country.

Venezuela's economy was booming under Chavez, as seen above, but today is in collapse. The policies have been the same consistently, so what's changed? How could the same policies create economic growth yesterday, but destruction today? Lazy writers say something vaguely about "oil prices," but Venezuela is not dependent on oil domestically. Rather, its American sanctions that are causing the issue.

John Bolton, a White House "National Security" bureaucrat, said of the attack on Maduro: "We're in conversation with major American companies now. It would make a difference if we could have American companies produce the oil in Venezuela. It would be good for Venezuela and the people of the United States." he told Fox Business host Trish Regan. Bolton added that ousting Maduro would be a "potential major step forward for business opportunities" in the region. Recall he said the exact same thing about Libya: "We'll help you, but we want 50 percent of your oil."

These new sanctions are aimed at impeding Venezuela's exports of gold which have become an important source of foreign exchange for the country's poisoned economy. American officials claim, with outrage, that Venezuela has exported some 20 tons of gold to Turkey, a country soon to be leaving NATO. Russia and China have agreed to continue to develop her gold mining, among other things, and remain their only outlet to the world.

The gold sanctions announcement claims that by evading other US sanctions strangling the Venezuelan economy, the country's trade in gold involves "deceptive practices" and "corruption." It is important to realize how these terms are defined. "Corruption" is the rejection of American demands. Gold isn't the only target, since the purpose of the sanctions are to destroy

the economy and create so much suffering that the government will be forced out. Oil accounts for roughly 85 percent of the country's export earnings and, needless to say, all sales are banned by American decree. Analysts the world over claim that Venezuela and Russia are based on oil, yet only 25 percent of the Venezuelan economy is based on it, though exports are dominated by it. With Russia, its only seven percent.

More importantly, there has been little media reporting on the further economic damage provoked by American financial sanctions, announced in late August last year. Opposition leader Henri Falcon, a former Chavez ally until 2010, remains popular, but MUD called a boycott of the most recent presidential elections. The claim of "fraud" comes down to the argument that the date of the election was too early. Yet, "vote fraud" conjures up images of masked men stuffing ballot boxes and scaring old women from voting. It's laughable that the date for the election is too early – suggesting that they won't have the time to mount strong campaigns – since American NGOs are running these using the best technology and methods from the US. The government is at a disadvantage, not the "opposition."

While opinion polls are often distorted or inaccurate, it seems that Falcon, running on a platform of a modified Chavez-style socialism, would win an election as of late last year. Even still, since Falcon was too close to Chavez, the US vehemently sought to destroy his candidacy, threatening *personal* sanctions if he didn't give it up. The US created the "boycott" movement which at first was only accepted by the most militant of the opposition. Both Falcon and the Venezuelan government requested that the UN send an international observation team to monitor the elections, but the US State Department kept the team from ever showing up

No one denies that the issue here is that Venezuela has a government that seeks to be independent from Washington and, worse still, floats on a river of oil. If the Chavez revolution had continued, Venezuela would be a first world country by now and Russia would have a major ally on America's doorstep. While Washington has overthrown governments in Georgia and Ukraine in order to ring Russia with enemies, the US pretends to be outraged when Russia replies.

To the horror of liberal and conservative alike in the US, Venezuela grew in popularity in Latin America under Chavez partly due to his *Petrocaribe* initiative, his Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), which were based on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and respect national sovereignty. His ultimate goal was the creation of a global "Bank of the South" where Latin America, at first, would be independent of the US dollar.

It takes little argument to show that these concerns force Washington to do the bidding of the super elite in corporate America, especially in the energy and military sectors. Just as depressing is the popular journalistic ignorance on the matter and the parroting of corporate NGO propaganda skillfully packaged as "news." Venezuela makes it even clearer that today, the only schism in global politics is between nationalism and liberal globalism.