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## Venezuela: A Revolution That Will Not Die

By Eric Draitser  
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This is not a revolution that can be undone with one election, nor can it be simply legislated out of existence.

Much has been written about the outcome of Venezuela's Dec. 6 legislative elections, with many of the analyses justifiably focusing on the shortcomings of the Socialist Party (PSUV) and the difficulty of the current state of affairs in the country. Indeed, even before the political body was cold, post-mortem examinations abounded in the corporate and alternative media, with dissections of seemingly every aspect of the Bolivarian Republic's political, economic, and social life.

But what these journalists and political analysts often overlook is the determination of the core of the Bolivarian Revolution, the radical base that is committed to preserving what Hugo Chavez began building more than 17 years ago. This is not a revolution that can be undone with one election, nor can it be simply legislated out of existence. This Revolution will not, as some cynics have argued, be brought down by the weight of its own contradictions, or by internal rot and corruption, or by external forces such as assassinations and economic destabilization.

Instead, the Revolution will survive. It will be resurgent. It will be reborn thanks to the commitment of millions of dedicated Chavistas.

While one may take this as an article of faith, it is instead a conclusion born of experience in Venezuela, one that is informed by dozens of conversations with activists and organizers whose words of love and dedication to the revolution are matched only by their actions to build it.

In building the Revolution, these men, women, and children are pledged to defend it.

### **The Revolution's Flesh Wounds**

The election results, and the social problems from which they sprang, are undeniably a comment on the level of discontent that many Venezuelans feel, both toward their government and the general state of affairs in the country. To read the corporate media, one would think this is the end for the Bolivarian Revolution, that the defeat at the polls is a repudiation of the entire program of the PSUV and its allied political parties. But such a reading belies the reality and resilience of the revolutionary process, one that has seen and overcome great challenges before.

In April 2002, the U.S.-backed opposition in Venezuela staged a coup against then President Chavez in a desperate attempt to reassert their control over the country and extinguish the Bolivarian Revolution. Hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans poured into the streets of Caracas, with millions more in other parts of the country, calling for Chavez to be restored to his rightful office, and for the coup leaders to be arrested. There was really no doubt that the U.S. was responsible for this attempt at forced regime change, with many mainstream news outlets reporting within days that high-ranking officials in the Bush administration were intimately involved in orchestrating the coup.

Although it may seem like a mere historical footnote 13 years later, the failed coup was a watershed moment in Venezuela –a proving ground for the Revolution – when the people for whom Chavez and the Bolivarian process meant a better future dared to challenge U.S. hegemony and the attempted reestablishment of political power by the capitalist ruling class.

But April 2002 represented even more than just resistance to Washington. The restoration of Chavez to power was a demonstration of the steadfastness with which Venezuelans were prepared to defend their Revolution from external threats, even ones that until 1998 had seemed omnipotent. It showed for the first (but certainly not the last) time that the Revolution would not, and could not, be undone by the dirty tricks of the Empire and its comprador class inside the country.

In the years since 2002 Venezuela has repeatedly been the target of political, economic, and social destabilization by the United States. These coordinated attempts have increased exponentially since the death of Chavez in 2013 and the election of current President Nicolas Maduro. Such subversion has taken many forms, including the use of highly effective and well-planned forms of psychological warfare through the manipulation of media and public opinion.

In 2007, author and investigative journalist Eva Golinger revealed that Washington was funding a program to provide financial support to Venezuelan journalists hostile to Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution. Indeed, the effort was aimed at influencing public opinion through the right-wing media, shaping the views of Venezuelans against their government. A battle-tested method of destabilization by the CIA, such tactics of psychological warfare were documented in the CIA's Psychological Operations in Guerilla Warfare, a manual distributed to the contras in Nicaragua as Washington attempted to bring down the Sandinista government in the 1980s. As noted here, the CIA wanted to determine "the needs and frustration of the target groups ... [and create a] generalized anti-government hostility." The objective was to create the false impression in the minds of the population that the government was "the cause of their frustration."

This has been done to great effect in Venezuela. The right-wing media in the country has done everything in its power to undermine the government, and heap all blame onto the PSUV, including for the effects of the economic war waged against it. According to the right wing media, it is President Maduro and the entire government, along with the movement they represent, that has created and exacerbated all these problems with ineptitude and failed policies. While undoubtedly mistakes have been made, it is equally true that many of the major problems in the country were compounded by economic sabotage. The salient point here though is that an economic war is transformed into a psychological war, one that figured prominently in the recent elections.

Indeed, the economic war is critical to understanding the current state of the country. In the wake of the opposition's victory at the polls, basic goods started magically reappearing on store shelves in Venezuela, yet another indication that much of the scarcity can be attributed not to failed economic policies, but rather to a coordinated campaign of economic subversion. Similarly, some of the problems of inflation and sale of contraband can be directly attributed to the U.S.-backed opposition and its patrons in Miami and Washington. This is certainly not to absolve the government of all blame, but rather to point out that Venezuela and its Revolution have been directly targeted by the forces of the Empire.

The destabilization of the country is also very much overt, with assassinations playing a key role. 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. A young, photogenic, and deeply committed activist and legislator, 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.

Walking through the radical, working class neighborhoods of 23 January and El Valle, one is likely to find posters and/or graffiti scrawled on walls with the simple phrase “Robert Vive” (Robert Lives), and the iconic image of the young Serra – the future of the Revolution, gunned down before he even had a chance to lead.

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These elections, which took place amid deteriorating economic conditions and an intense psychological and economic war, still saw more than 5 million Venezuelans cast votes for the PSUV and the Revolution, for socialism and anti-imperialism.

Rumors of Chavismo’s demise have been greatly exaggerated. This dream, this revolution, will not die.