
The US Bears Blame for the Crisis in Venezuela, and It Should Stop Intervening There

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The best thing that the United States government could do with regard to Venezuela, regardless of political outcomes there, would be to end its intervention there.

Washington has caused enormous damage to Venezuela in its relentless pursuit of “regime change” for the last 15 years. In March, President Obama once again absurdly declared Venezuela to be an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States,” and extended economic sanctions against the country. Although the sanctions themselves are narrow, they have a considerable impact on investment decisions, as investors know what often happens to countries that Washington targets as an unusual and extraordinary threat to US national security. The sanctions, as well as pressure from the US government, helped convince major financial institutions not to make otherwise low-risk loans, collateralized by gold, to the Venezuelan government.

Washington was involved in the short-lived 2002 military coup against the elected government of Venezuela, and the US government acknowledged providing “training, institution building and other support to individuals and organizations” who carried out the coup. Afterwards, it stepped up funding to opposition groups and has continued to this day to give them millions of dollars. In 2013, Washington was again isolated in the region and the world when it refused to recognize the presidential election results (even though there was no doubt about the outcome); the US thereby lent its support to violent street protests that were seeking to topple the government. Washington gave political support to similar efforts in 2014.

All this is well-documented and well-known to journalists covering Venezuela, but try finding one at a major news outlet who has the courage to write about it. It’s a bit like reporting on Ukraine and never mentioning Russia.

US intervention in Venezuela, as in other countries, has contributed to political polarization and conflict over the years, as it encouraged elements of the opposition at numerous junctures to also pursue a strategy of regime change, rather than seeking peaceful political change.

A switch to a policy of non-intervention in Venezuela would be a sea change for Washington, and would set a healthy precedent. After all, the world is awash in bloodshed and refugees as a result of the US pursuit of "regime change" in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and other countries. Why not try something different in the Western Hemisphere?
